AMERICAN COLLEGE TOWN MOSQUE

A Thesis

by

ELHAM FAIRUZ

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Chair of Committee,	Andrew Reed Tripp
Committee Members,	Stephen Mark Caffey
	Rebecca Hankins
Head of Department,	Gregory Luhan

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ABSTRACT

The mosque as a social and communal space has transformed through time, and over geographical regions. But it is also people's practices, specially their social practices, in keeping with their own times and contexts that have shifted and nudged the ways in which mosque as an architectural edifice has been observed. This thesis is an attempt to understand the underlying phenomenon that affect a small college town community in the United States, and how architecture can, through use of anthropology and ethnography, take a deeper dive into understanding community needs and thus inform design practices.

The thesis hopes to raise questions of representation, the problems thereof, the idea of participation and concludes by asking if and how participation can translate into better architectural representation and practice.

DEDICATION

To my mom and dad.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by expressing my most profound appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Andrew Tripp, for guiding and advising me throughout this endeavor. This thesis would not have seen the light of day had he not taken the initiative to piece together a project and a thesis in half a year's time. His kindness and generosity with his time and knowledge have taught me much. I have received invaluable help with developing ideas, formulating questions, tailoring the boundaries of the topic, and even in writing this thesis. The laser-focus with which he pursues his many interests has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. I have been introduced to schools of thought and bodies of knowledge that range from anthropology, history, to ethnography and philosophy that helped ground this thesis. Over the last few months, he has provided me with scaffoldings to build my work upon, and has helped me explore areas, subjects and associated meanings to the most basic of ideas. His compassion and friendship has pushed me through and has given me strength to bring this project up to this point of completion. He has been an outstanding mentor, and shown me how to take initiative, and he has always led by example. It has been an absolute privilege and an undeserved opportunity to work with him. And even though these few lines do little justice to the gentle care I received as a student and to all the times he held space for my curmudgeonly complaints, I can only say thank you, as sincerely as sincerity allows – thank you for not giving up on me.

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Finally, I am blessed and grateful for my sister, for always having my back, for pacifying my tantrums, and for being my biggest critic. I would also like to thank my dear friend Sarah, who through every one of her own storms, also helped me weather mine, and Nazia for raising all the polar opposites to the arguments I am making in this

paper. And without question, I am blessed and am intensely grateful to my parents for teaching me what I know, and for making me who I am.

To end, I apologize sincerely if any work, written, or otherwise in this paper and throughout the whole process of this thesis has upset or hurt anyone, which was never the intention. I also apologize if I have naively suggested or iterated points or questions that have already been emphasized and discussed in other literature and sources, or if I have surmised and concluded by misconstruing the original authors' intentions. This was my feeble attempt at exploring the questions that cloud my own understanding of architecture, design and practice, and although not complete, I concur – *Alhamdulillah 'ala kulli haal.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Muslim community in the United States is as diverse as it is small. In a country of roughly 330 million people, Muslims account for only about 3-6 million. Metropolitan centers like Chicago and Dallas are home to a substantial proportion of the Muslim population living in the United States. While there is a growing body of literature on the Muslim community in these large cities, there is almost no research focused on their presence in small college towns. These geographical locales with their distinctive mix of residents, students and a fair share of transient population, are home to a heterogeneous Muslim community. The presence of this community is physically manifested when they come together to build a mosque.

It is said that wherever a Muslim goes, they carry the mosque with them. And yet, further and further away from the perceived Muslim geographical and cultural centers, and more importantly, away from the metropolitan centers, the community of African Americans, converts and immigrants in these college towns, passionately deliberate on whose representation of the mosque should be reproduced in the physical space. The architect, tasked with designing such a mosque, is thus faced with the question: *How does architecture of the mosque represent the heterogeneity of the Muslim community in a small college town?*

One response to this question can be found in the proliferation of the concept of Islamic Architecture, which explains the architecture of the mosque by way of the concept of style. This explanation falls short in several ways. Most important to this

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thesis, by privileging visual and formal explanations of the mosque, this explanation tends to overlook the diversity and variety of concrete practical relations that hold the Muslim community together in the diaspora and at the periphery. Furthermore, by identifying exemplary models in the history of a style, this approach also tends to exclude the less than ideal models that emerge at a distance from the metropolitan centers. For the architect designing a mosque in a small college town, constructing the representations of the Muslim community on the premises of Islamic architecture is less than ideal; it fails to recognize the diversity and variety of practices that hold together this community in these special circumstances. But if we set aside the concept of Islamic Architecture, what then? *How are we to understand the architectural representation of the Muslim community?*

What this question conceals is a growing suspicion of the concept of representation. Understood as a sign or symbol that stands in place of someone or something that is otherwise not there, representation in architecture tends to emphasize a visual or formal kind of production and reproduction. The production and reproduction of architectural style is very different from the production and reproduction of social practices which, over time, cultivate the mosque as a cultural institution within the Muslim community. Whereas the reproduction of visual styles depends on representation, the reproduction of culture depends on participation.

This thesis argues that it is the production and reproduction of social practices in small college towns establishes these Muslim communities and establishes the basis for their architecture. Hence the critical question is no longer: *How does architecture*

represent…? But rather: *How does participation in the production and reproduction of social practice (i.e., enculturation) establish a basis for building in the Muslim community?* More speculatively*: Can participation (and not representation) be the basis of architectural design? What can a theory of practice lend to the design of the small-town mosque? What are the key elements of this approach and which particular social practices require critical reflection?*

These final questions are advanced in this thesis through a sequence of four subsequent chapters (not including the introduction or conclusion). Chapter 2 takes up a review of the literature on Islamic Architecture with an eye toward explaining the limitations of this *generic* concept in the application to the small-town mosque in the United States. Chapter 3 deepens the historical focus by explaining the *specific* history of these mosques since the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Chapter 4 summarizes the theoretical contributions of ethnography and anthropology to the understanding of social practice. Chapter 5 describes one outcome of this research: the creation of a surveying method to prompt participation in the architectural design of mosques. Chapter 6 describes a second alternative outcome of this research: the creation of a drawing method to emphasize social practice within the disciplinary context of architectural drawing.

CHAPTER II

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AND THE MOSQUE

Since the context of this thesis is the American college town, it might not seem necessary to critically discuss the historiography of Islamic architecture. After all, both traditional and contemporary mosques have been studied quite extensively over the years by art and architecture historians. Mosque architecture is not an independent development; the mosque as an institution and representation of Islamic religious practices forms the hearth of the Muslim community. The study of its development as an architectural building type is integrally situated within the larger discourse of Islamic art and architecture. Evaluating the historiography, even if briefly, will reiterate the existing frameworks utilized in analyzing this building type. This study will also help tease out the progression of scholarly work as our focus shifts from the narratives of grand mosques in the 'east', to questions of identity and symbolism, and finally to the more 'ordinary' mosques in the west.

In the United States, mosque architecture is still looking for solid footing in its architectural expressions. As a building type that also functions as an identifier for a community, the apt architectural expression for the American mosque has become the contending topic for discussion. The current theoretical and conceptual writings informed by new purpose-built mosques such as the Dar al Islam mosque in Albuquerque and the Islamic Cultural Center of New York appear to be synthesizing an

aesthetical approach in the assessment of architecture.[1] Contrast this with the anthropological approach to scrutinizing mosque design in Amsterdam,[2] or the documentation of all mosques in London,[3] or the proposal to look for an architectural tradition in the 'appropriated' mosques in Canada.[4] Surely, there must be other means of studying and designing mosques in the United States other than succumbing to the debates concerning the dichotomy of modern and traditional designs.

The analysis of what is considered to be modern or traditional, and who has the legitimacy to claim these classifications for which mosques, and whether or not such classifications add to the actual practice of Islam, are pertinent. Some of these questions have been raised in the confabulations on Islamic art and architecture. In keeping with these pre-existing discussions, the first part of this section will first briefly discuss the existing contentions on what constitutes "Islamic architecture," the second part will ask what Islamic architecture represents and how it is represented through time. The last part of the section will take a general approach to summarizing the history of mosque architecture and describe the features of a mosque. These three parts will propose that the majority of the leading discourses on Islamic architecture focus mainly on the visual and tectonic expressions while overlooking the social and cultural dimensions of

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[1] Akel Ismail Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics* (University of Texas Press, 2010).
[2] Oskar Verkaaik, "Designing the 'Anti-Mosque': Identity, Religion and Affect in Contemporary European Mosque Design," *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 20, no. 2 (2012): 161–76, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2012.00198.x.
[3] Fatima Gailani, *The Mosques of London* (Elm Grove Books, 2000).
[4] Nadia Kurd, "Sacred Manifestations: The Making and Meaning of Mosques in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art Canadien* 33, no. 2 (2012): 148–69.

architecture. This section will not discuss in any detail the volumes of extant literature on the historiography of Islamic art and architecture. The inferences here will be based on the review of contemporary and current literature. In conclusion, this section will propose that the current historical appraisal is appropriate for cataloging how 'styles' formed and transformed over time, under various political aegis and economic sovereignty – an observation that will be echoed in Chapter 3 – but collapses as a design principle and method of analysis when the context and times shifts to mosque architecture in the United States.

Defining Islamic Architecture

There have been many contentions on the use of the term "Islamic architecture." Does the term refer to a particular style or a particular period, or does it refer to the architectural manifestations of a religion? How do we characterize "Islamic architecture," and how do we categorize it? Can this concept of "Islamic architecture" help us understand modern day mosques in small college towns in the United States? This part of the section will first look at how the term "Islamic architecture" has been used by academics, then it will ask whether "Islamic architecture" as a concept is an expression or physical manifestation of the religion that perpetrated it, and lastly, this section will ask why existing geographical and regional variations did not detract from familiar patterns that emerge as one looks through the various building and art forms.

The end of the 19th century marks the general time period when the term "Islamic architecture" began to gain widespread usage.[5] Even though terms such as "Christian architecture" or "Hindu architecture" would be absurd in the face of what "Islamic architecture" generally indicates, this term has been in ample use since. Islamic art and architecture is generally understood to encompass the buildings designed and the artifacts produced in Islam's "social and religious universe."[6] Whatever the terms might indicate, the 'objects' that are generally understood to constitute Islamic art, gained prominence as Islam began spreading through neighboring lands. Common everyday items like carpets, lanterns, vases and ceramics as well as buildings with particular systems of structure, ornamentation and function were created, absorbed and improved by this new civilization. Towards the end of the seventh century as the Umayyads rose to power, mosques took precedence amongst architectural works, and buildings like palaces, forts, bathhouses, caravanserais, and mausoleums became common building 'typologies.' Association with Muslims and their practices added to and transformed the meanings of previously existing non-religious buildings in the lands surrounding the early Islamic empire. The lack of iconography, the adaptation of intricate geometry and floral patterns, and the use of prolific calligraphy as one of the primary art forms, elucidate the influence of Islamic teachings on art and architecture.

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[5] Nasser Rabbat, "What Is Islamic Architecture Anyway?," *The Journal of Art Historiography* 6, no. 1 (2012): 15; Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field," *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 1 (March 2003): 152, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177331.
[6] Stefano Bianca, "Introduction: The Subject and the Approach," in *Urban Form in the Arab World - Past and Present* (Zurich, Switzerland: vdf, 2000), 20, https://archnet.org/publications/10765.

The 'terminology'

Several criteria have been proposed to distinguish Islamic architecture from other established architectural 'styles.' Oleg Grabar defines Islamic architecture as that which Muslims build for themselves in their countries and areas where they have freedom of cultural expression.[7] Art historian Ernst Grube, a contemporary of Grabar, suggests that Islamic architecture can only be understood through a study of its wholes and parts, with Islam as "a cultural, religious and political phenomenon" in the background.[8]

Considering the fact that "Islamic architecture" has within its purview, secular buildings, it might sound counterintuitive to suggest using the religion itself as a criterion for categorization. To add to the predicament, Islam is not a dead or unpracticed religion or tradition; as a faith and a religious practice it is internalized every day by its adherents and it is the structural framework that governs this adhering community's daily life. If it is such a ubiquitous phenomenon in the daily actions, thoughts, and practices of the adhering Muslim, can Islam be completely separated from the practice of architecture that often provides spatial dimensions to these practices? In some ways, the response to such questions may be found in the work of Titus Burckhardt, whose work is grounded in the Sufi tradition. In this school of thought, Islamic art and architecture is analyzed as regional and stylistic variation that is informed by a singular cultural language system.[9] This kind of understanding alludes to Islamic

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[7] Rabbat, "What Is Islamic Architecture Anyway?"

[8] Ernst Grube, "Introduction," in *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), https://archive.org/details/01isart/mode/1up.

[9] This single-lined exploration of how "Islamic architecture" is conceived by the Sufi tradition might do injustice to this line of inquiry and analysis. For an example of work produced on Islamic art and

art's universality and divinity, where beauty is understood as a manifestation of divine qualities.

This short account of how the term "Islamic architecture" has found use in the discussion of art and architecture is not, by any means, extensive. But here, for the purposes of this paper, we can conclude that there could be a cultural,[10] or structural[11] or universalistic method of analyzing Islamic architecture. As a terminology, "Islamic architecture" thus takes various meanings and connotations.

<u>Geographic and regional variations</u>

At this point, we turn to another understanding of Islamic art and architecture where it is seen not just as an object of study and analysis but as a foundation for design and practice. Consider this – geographically, "Islamic architecture" can be found over vast areas covering North Africa, parts of Asia, and Europe. The work produced during the classical period[12] of Islamic civilization is varied in their styles, intensity of work produced and even the types of work produced. The variations in the regional styles stemmed from material availability, the expertise of craftsmen, the climate of the region

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architecture, see: Titus Burckhardt, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Jean-Louis Michon, *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*, Commemorative ed, Sacred Art in Tradition (Bloomington, Ind: World Wisdom, 2009). For a very brief critic of the books contents, see: Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 8, https://doi.org/10.2307/1523068.

[10] For lack of a better word to describe the depth and breadth of Grabar's work.

[11] In the sense of structuralism, because Grube talks about the parts and the whole as they relate to the larger picture of Islam as a socio-political and religious phenomenon. Although his work primarily dealt with ceramics, his insight into how Islamic art and architecture could be perceived, seemed useful for this thesis.

[12] By 'classical period,' I'm not alluding to the classical period generally studied in architectural history. By using this term I am simply referring to the period from late 7th century to the late 19th century, the period during which the vast majority of the work considered to constitute "Islamic art" was produced. I am also not suggesting that "Islamic art" became a historic artifact after this period.

and existing building practices. All of these factors were still instrumental in creating similar 'types' of building structures.

The minarets from Samarkhand to Delhi, the domes from Isfahan to Istanbul, and the arts and crafts produced in between, share similar 'objects' that don't necessarily reflect the geographical requirements of the region. For instance, take the example of the two minarets, built around the same time, in two different geographical locations, with very different materials. The practice of the *adhan* or call to prayer, required the building of a minaret. But even within this relatively short time period within which these two minarets were built, the impact of 'location' or 'locality' is clearly visible. Compare this with today's mosque buildings, and the use of materials or the design's response to geographical location. How does the narrative change when we shift our focus from individual architectural elements to the entirety of the structures?

It is entirely fathomable that the courtyard or garden, which are prominent features of Islamic architecture, were a result of the response to climate, water feature and vegetation. The interpretation in certain literature that these were the artisans' depiction of the paradise and gardens could also be plausible. Borrowing from Talal Asad, could the effect and influence of the ruling dynasty, the economy and trade, and political climate also be considered as influential 'local conditions'? If so, can design of mosques in college towns respond to these factors without reproducing *de facto* the regionally varied architectural elements that were responding to certain specific conditions?

These changes in the individual elements which figure prominently in the historical analysis are easier to observe than changes in the buildings and institutions, such as the mosque and the *madrasa*. The conclusion here is that these changes in the usage of mosques and *madrasas* have not always translated into design practice.
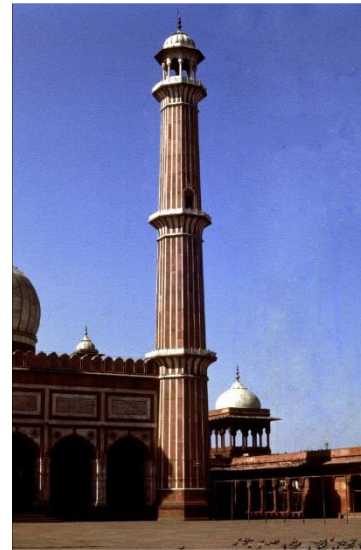
Figure 1. (*Left*) Shirdar madrasa (Registan complex),[13] minaret, Samarkand, 1636.
Figure 2. (*Right*) Jami masjid in Shahjahanabad,[14] minaret, Delhi, 1650-1656.

The 'concept'

This part will try to analyze two issues that could be associated with the concept of "Islamic architecture." First, the idea that Islamic architecture is the formal expression of Islam. This formal expression could be based on the understanding of Islam as a

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[13] 1636, AH 1045. Shirdar Madrasa (Registan Complex). Minarets. https://library-artstor-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/asset/AWADE_10311275650. Also note the addition of the loudspeakers at the base of the minaret.
[14] 1650-1656. Jami masjid in Shahjahanabad, minaret, Masjid-i-Jahannuma. https://library-artstor-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/asset/HUNT_61076.

religious, cultural, social, or political phenomenon. The second issue is in constructing a time period for "Islamic architecture."[15]

If the first understanding is based on Islam as a religion, then the question arises as to whether any building that is not directly related to the rituals and practices of Islam, should be considered as belonging to Islamic architecture. This understanding limits the set of buildings to mosques and mausoleums, although the latter is often considered *bidaah* or an innovation by the Sunni orthodoxy, and thus non-conforming to the "traditions of Islam." Excluding the cultural or social or political dimensions of Islam in exploring the history of Islamic architecture would detract from the narrative underlying the proliferation of these works. Situating Islamic architecture within a timeframe means considering whether the architecture of the post-colonial nation-states and the modern interpretations of buildings commissioned and designed in these areas should also be considered Islamic architecture,[16] when, as was evident, the New World order did not always conform to Islamic principles and values that dictated its social and community building practices.

History of Mosque Architecture

Mosques make up a significant portion of all the building types that are accepted as constituting "Islamic architecture." This is the only universally understood building 'type' that Muslims have continued to build and directly associate with the practice of

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[15] For a summary of how "Islamic architecture" has been studied within the shifting definitions of the term, see: Rabbat, "What Is Islamic Architecture Anyway?"
[16] Rabbat.

Islam. Like other 'types' of architecture produced in the Muslim world, mosques have evolved with time both aesthetically and stylistically. The study of architectural history of mosques has been mostly, if not entirely, focused on the chronological classification of styles. Elements such as minarets, domes and the calligraphy have come to be generally associated with Islamic architecture, and specifically with the architecture of the mosque. The visual aesthetics, forms and styles have gone through modifications that range from formal to abstract. Design of a mosque since the late twentieth century is either an exercise in functionalism, although it rarely happens that "traditional" symbols do not make their way into such designs by virtue of the 'users' irrespective of what the designer intended; or it is an attempt to 'reinterpret' "tradition" through modernity; or the design disregards prior signs and symbols, and "traditions" and reinvents mosques entirely. The following section will briefly examine mosques as architectural spaces.

Origin

The purposeful establishment of a space for congregational daily prayer is first recorded in the 6th century when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established a 'mosque' in Quba, in modern day Saudi Arabia. The Prophet is known to have prayed at the Ka'aba in Meccah before he migrated to Medina but regular persecution by the Meccans and their vehement opposition to him and his followers praying publicly may have prevented the establishment of a permanent congregational prayer space. The practice of establishing congregational prayers, the requirement for a raised platform and a place for communal gatherings are not known to have stemmed from pre-existing architectural forms. Instead, the courtyard surrounded by the Prophet's house in Medina,

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where the congregants made space for worship is considered to have been the template for creating later mosque buildings. With the congregation's growth, a portico or *zulla* was added for the congregants, and a shed or *suffa* was added for travelers who would often rest at the mosque at night. Communal discussions and deliberations often took place in the portico. Mosques as places of communal discussions still continues today, albeit much less prominent or visible with the growth of civic institutions and town halls.

The idea that the Prophet's (PBUH) mosque provided the architectural template for later mosques is the general consensus in the study of the history of mosques.[17] It is usually understood that the *sahn* (courtyard), or the *riwaq* (portico) are derived from similar spaces in the Prophet's (PBUH) mosque and thus form 'seminal' parts of the architecture of the mosque. If we were to step back from readily analyzing the mosque as an architectural work first, and instead looked at how the mosque developed, it then becomes necessarily clear that the religious practices of the Prophet (PBUH) and the requirements of the growing congregation created spaces like the *zulla*; and even the *qibla* wall became instrumental in orienting the congregation when the *qibla* was shifted from Jerusalem to Mecca. Even though these practicalities initiated the spaces that would later be termed mosque, the idea of the *masjid*, or place for prostration, a space where congregants should gather for their prayers, exists in the Qur'an. Of interest here is to note that all the mentions of mosque or *masjid* as congregational spaces in the

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[17] Jeremy Johns, "The 'House of the Prophet' and the Concept of the Mosque," *Bayt Al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, 1999, 59–112. This article discusses in some detail the archaeological evidences, the early analysis by Creswell and other accounts of the Prophet's mosque in Medina to establish that the earliest "architectural" evidence for the mosque.

Qur'an specifically deal with mosque management, maintenance, intention to build and accessibility. While specific provisions for the dimensions, or the specific elements that later became part of the mosque, are not provided, the *mihrab* is mentioned in the Qur'an in a time and context prior to what is generally taken as the timeframe for the study of mosque architecture. Thus, practical requirements led to transforming the Prophet's home into the first mosque.[18]

Form and function

The forms and styles that are associated with mosque design has evolved from the simple functional design of the first congregational prayer space to specialized basic elements. Historically, mosques are classified into either hypostyle, or *iwan* or the central-domed mosque. The exterior edge of the mosque has varied with its surroundings, while the interior prayer space is designed to be a regular rectangular space. In most early mosques, the opulence of decorations were reserved for the interior of the mosque. This was especially the case with large *jamee'*e mosques. Mosques are not categorized by volume but rather the size of the prayer areas. The *jamee'e* mosques are the large congregational mosques, designed and built especially to cater to the Friday prayer congregants. Small spaces designated in non-religious spaces such as offices, schools, or commercial areas are termed *zawiyas*.[19] Neighborhood mosques that usually

[18] Doğan Kuban, "The Central Arab Lands," in *The Mosque: History, Architectural Development and Regional Diversity* (Thames & Hudson, 2002), 77–99.

[19] Ismail Serageldin and James Steele, eds., *Architecture of the Contemporary Mosque* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 16.

cater to a single residential area or a commercial area became more prominent much later, and these mosques usually do not have facilities such as libraries and schools.

Sign, symbols and identifiers

Oleg Grabar suggests that the "Muslim faith" lacked the requirements for raising ornamented religious architecture, and was initially influenced by other existing secular structures.[20] While this thesis is not going to discuss the origins of the dome and the minaret and how they came to be parts of the mosque. What are the symbols and signifiers of the mosque, and whether they have changed enough overtime to affect the architecture of the space? The dome is associated with most buildings from the 'classical period' of Islamic architecture. The use of particular arches and the different styles of arches also act as laymen's visual cues. Calligraphy as a visual marker was used extensively as well. The loss of knowledge of the trade led to the decline in the types of decoration that are typically observed in buildings of this period. While the origins and meanings of the domes and minarets are contested, the influence of these architectural elements on the 'image' of the mosque in people's minds has been deep. The association of the dome and the minaret to the function of a building as a mosque has become an inherited memory. The issue then is not a reproduction of memory but in the disassociation of the memory and the object. But also consider, that during the time of the Seljuk or Umayyad or the Mughal empires, even the secular buildings sported

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[20] Oleg Grabar, "The Islamic Dome, Some Considerations," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 22, no. 4 (1963): 191–98, https://doi.org/10.2307/988190.

domes, or arches or some form of minarets. So why have these elements only stuck to the mosque in current times? One response could be the fact that Islam does not explicitly deal with symbols or signs; the status of text is given a higher priority than iconography or imagery. So if the building practice of creating particular feature like domes have declined, thanks to industrial molds for pre-cast concrete shells, or the use of minaret as a place to call for prayer is no longer a necessity, is it too egregious to suggest that in many areas these elements have become somewhat akin to art forms built for aesthetic purposes only? But even if these are just representational forms, they are also signifiers of something to a particular community. Thus the debates on whether a mosque should represent itself as 'mosque' in any community which does not share in this collective memory or if this representation should somehow translate into participation to create new exchanged memories. This question will be further explored in the section under American mosques.

Orientation, public sphere and private space

The orientation of a mosque to face the Ka'aba is one of the major indicators of the building's function. Of all the requirements in building mosques, cleanliness and orientation are absolutely essential. As indicated above, the orientation of the prayer space does not necessarily require the orientation of the whole building; Mosques like Sultan Hassan or the Imam mosque illustrate that the exterior of the building can respond to the climate and geographical location without having to sacrifice the regularity of the prayer space. This method of orienting also caters to physically engaging the mosque with the immediate urban surrounding – reciprocating the mosque-

bazaar alliance. Orientation toward the Ka'aba within the mosque is achieved by means

of the *mihrab*, the niche in the *qibla* wall. But the surface treatment and materials were

also used extensively to direct people along mosques to *iwans* and in the interior, to

direct people's attention toward intricately designed domes, i.e., towards the 'heaven.'

The 'traditional' mosque is also a construction of two way orientation – outside,

engaging with the exterior, and the inside, engaging with the worshippers or whosoever

is within the confines of its walls. Even though the mosque is generally understood to be

public space, for those wanting to step away from the 'usual' everyday life, the mosque

also presents itself as a private space. Thus the one who enters the mosque is also

oriented through entrances and porticos, to expect certain spatial characteristics that

govern the idea of a mosque. While these qualities of the mosque are often easier to

associate with the older mosques, these qualities could provide some guidelines to the

newer mosque designs.

The sacred and the religious

The mosque is often referred to as a sacred space. With the exception of the

Ka'aba, the Prophet's (PBUH) mosque in Medina and the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem,

the mosque is not necessarily a holy space – it is not sacrosanct or holy, neither is

situated in consecrated land or hallowed ground. The mosque is a religious space, it does

help in the practice of religious function, and it does require certain religious rules to be

upheld within its premises, but it is also a social and communal space. While the

separation of the state and religion are possible, separating the community from the

mosque would lead to a loss of identity and meaning similar to what is observed in the

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case of the minaret and the practice of *adhan* or call to prayer – the mosque would just serve as a monumental edifice, accepting nothing and returning nothing to the community. To conclude this part of the section, the study of the history of mosque faces the same questions about representation and reproduction of aesthetic and visual styles and elements as the other 'types' of architecture. But as it is directly tied to the everyday practices of ordinary people, the meanings of these representational forms and the translation of these representations into actual practice are far more fluid. The social and communal nature of the mosque could be reflected in design practices, but not by unconscious reproduction of 'traditional' architectural motifs. In the next part, a few mosques, old and new, will be briefly analyzed to draw a comparison between the how religious and social practices have shaped architectural design.

Mosque Architecture: The Old and the New

Any space occupied by a Muslim for their prayer becomes their "prayer space" for the time and duration of their prayer. In the United States, while the classifications for *jamee'e* (congregational mosque) and other smaller mosques still hold, the differences in their functions become blurred because of the community's requirements. This part of the section will look at three mosques in three geographical locations, and portray three different 'stylistic' variations in interpreting the mosque's visual expressions. The following mosques had an architect associated with the project. Not all the projects are large mosques, and none of them are situated in a college town. The Corniche mosque and the Bait ur Rauf mosque are contemporary mosques. The Sultan Hassan mosque, the oldest mosque in this list belongs to a historical period when

Muslim rulers had considerable sway over the architecture of their monumental

buildings.

Sultan Hassan Mosque, Cairo
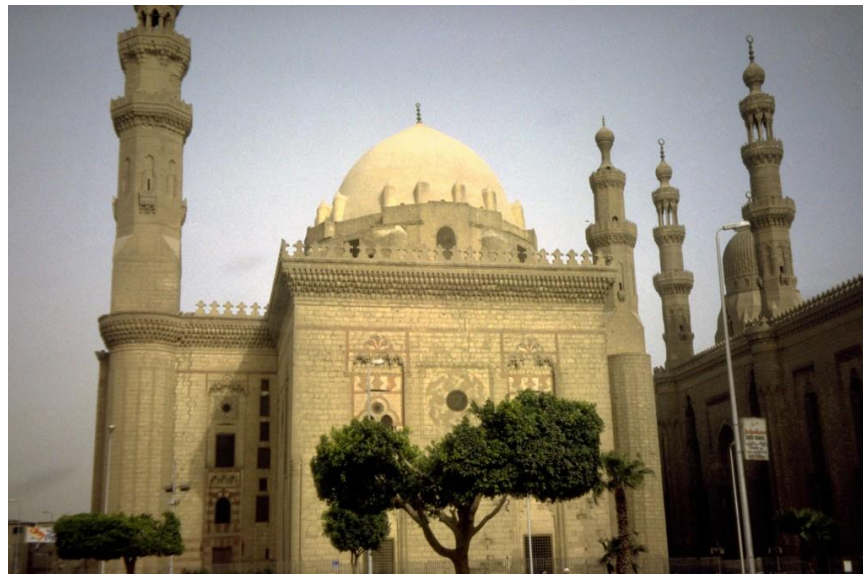
Figure 3. Sultan Hassan mosque and madrasa,[21] Cairo, 1356- 1361, Image © William Kessler

Commissioned by Sultan Nasir al-Hassan in 1356 AD, the Sultan Hassan mosque

is one of the most prominent architectural structures from the Mamluk period in the old

Islamic Cairo, Egypt. The four *iwan* plan, which has been likened to the cruciform plan,

was used to accommodate the four schools of jurisprudence. The presence of the

madrasa in the mosque is an indication of the socio-cultural shift of mosque design from

a space of congregational prayer and communal discourse to one which also embraced

the Sunni orthodox educational system as an integral part of its functional design. The

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[21] 1356-1361, Image: 1987. Complex of Sultan Hassan, View Description: Facade, dome, and minarets. Religious Buildings. https://library-artstor-org.srv-proxy2.library.tamu.edu/asset/AWSS35953_35953_34202045.

design is inwards looking with a *muqarnas*-hood entrance portal oriented off-axis slightly from the main street, thereby acting as a physical reorientation of the worshippers from the outside street to the interior of the mosque.[22] Part of old Cairo, this mosque is surrounded by a few other mosques and madrasas, markets and a bustling city life.

Corniche Mosque, Jeddah

Completed in 1988 and designed by renowned architect Abdel Wahed El-Wakil, the Corniche mosque was commissioned by the municipality of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It is a small mosque, part of a three mosque series, built on an artificial piece of land in an area developed for enhancing landscape character. This project was undertaken during th construction boom in the Middle East. The mosques is characteristic of El-Wakil's work, using traditional construction methods and materials to create a sculptural quality in the mosque. The entry into the prayer space is designed through turns, allowing entry from the mosque's *qibla* side through a naturally lit and ventilated portico. The mosque serves people who visit the corniche beach and remains open for Friday prayers.

Bait ur Rauf Mosque, Dhaka

Commissioned in 2005, and completed in 2012, this mosque in the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, was designed by Marina Tabassum on land given by her grandmother to build a mosque. This free-standing structure is a modern interpretation of

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[22] Kareem Ismail, "Sultan Hassan Mosque: An Islamic Architectural Wonder Analytical Study of Design and Its Effect on Islamic Cairo," *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 94 (01 2010); "Masjid Al-Sultan Hasan," Archnet, accessed February 15, 2021, https://archnet.org/print/preview/sites=1549&views=i.

the traditional elements of a mosque. Inspired by the Bengal Sultanate period architecture, the mosque has a porous brick facade enclosing a rectangular prayer space inscribed within a cylinder. The mosque is naturally ventilated and uses four light columns to bring in natural light. The prayer space is rotated towards the *qibla*, which is marked using a slit in the wall. The mosque is devoid of domes, minarets, *minbar*, or *mihrab*. The design of this mosque is respondent to the existing climatic and geographical conditions. But it is also does not respond well to the practices of the people, even though the resident of the area are happy to use the mosque. This building had a larger 'outreach' effect than most mosques – in receiving the Aga Khan award. This building is visited by architecture students from within the country and abroad, and the photographs of the mosque hardly portray its urban surroundings.

Mosque Architecture in the United States

In tandem with the work of Edward Said on orientalism, issues of appropriation, the West's fascination and romanticism with Oriental architecture are briefly analyzed by Nebahat Avcioglu in the article entitled Identity-as-Form: The Mosque in the West.[23] This article questions the impacts of colonialism on the image of the mosque and helps open up the discussion on the political and social implications of using 'images' that to some, are clear indications of Muslim presence while to others, are just an expression of luxury and extravagance. These images, whether imported or created, affect the Muslim

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[23] Nebahat Avcioglu, "Identity-as-Form: The Mosque in the West," *Cultural Analysis* 6 (2007): 91–112.

community in American college towns in their imagination of their religious spaces. In many mosques designed in the United States since the late 1900s, there has always been conflicts between the community, the leaders, the elders, the youngsters and the architects.[24] Often, architects assume superior understanding of context and prefer to guide design decisions based on their understandings of what the space should be. But in most cases, the community has the last say in how their funds are utilized.

Most mosques in the United States begin as prayer spaces in private homes or garages. As the communities grow, these mosques often end up being designed to provide all of the functionalities of a large *jamee'* mosque, although their sizes might be no larger than the neighborhood mosques. According to the 2011 survey,[25] the largest proportion (56%) of mosques in the United States were purchased spaces. How these purchased spaces are then transformed into mosques requires a deeper look. This section, however, will look at an 'architectural' example of the 30% purpose built mosques in the Unites States.

Islamic Center of New York, Manhattan, NY

The New York Mosque, formally called the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merill (SOM) for the Islamic Cultural Center of New York Foundation was completed in 1991. Often referred to as a modern interpretation of a mosque's traditional architectural elements, this structure boasts a minaret and a dome

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[24] Gulzar Haider, "" Brother in Islam, Please Draw Us a Mosque'Muslims in the West: A Personal Account," *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, 1990, 155–66.
[25] Ihsan Bagby, "The American Mosque 2011," US Mosque Study 2011 (Washington, D.C: Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2012).

in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. It serves the surrounding Muslim community, most of whom work in the vicinity. The mosque itself sits on a regular plot, and the orientation to the *qibla* is achieved by rotating the whole building on the site. Although other mosques existed in the vicinity during its design, this structure claims an urban presence, unlike the existing mosques. A cuboid form supported by Vierendeel trusses creates a column-free prayer space on the inside, and the exterior is clad mainly with stone and granite.

College Town Mosques

College town mosques are not a traditional mosque typology. They are not treated as architectural works of value in general and often regarded as mosques that only grow out of the community's extreme necessity. Architectural design in terms of "sculptural" value, or "aesthetics of light, space, and sound," are often the least prioritized in these buildings. The functionality of space takes precedence, and existing spaces are adopted to create these mosques.

The Islamic Center of Bryan-College Station

The land for the current Islamic Center of Bryan College Station was purchased in 1987, and the main building was occupied in 1995. The building was expanded with the addition of a student center in 2016. A group of students from Texas A&M University came together to purchase land for expanding their prayer space that was initially an apartment on Stasney Street.

The current structure is a two-story building with prayer spaces for men and women, ablution spaces, and office spaces. The city grid corresponds to the *qibla* axis,

and thus, the building sits aligned to the street in a residential area on a bus route to campus. The exterior of the building uses signage to inform people of the purpose of the building. No external visual markers are used, mostly because of funding constraints. The building's interior has a double-height space that ends in a rectangular *mihrab* on the North-East wall, and the women's area is a single-height glass-enclosed space behind the men's area. The double-height space has an 'octagonal' ceiling that emulates a dome's interior. Glass blocks mark the *mihrab* wall, and windows allow daylight into the spaces. It could be said that the prayer space only holds meaning and emanates feelings associated with spirituality because of what the congregants hold in their memories – their understandings of a mosque.

The newly added student's center includes an interior basketball court that doubles as a spill-out prayer space, MSA meeting space, or just a space for Ramadan buffets. The student center sits around the court and can be accessed using two different stairways. There are no specific visual markers that associate the space with the mosque.

The mosque expansion funded by the community has irked some and delighted others. Nevertheless, it has not solved overcrowding problems, inadequate facilities, high maintenance costs, and large areas that remain unused during most of the week. There are complaints about lighting, smell, accessibility, circulation, and ongoing parking issues, especially during the Friday prayers.

Post-colonial and Post-war Era

In the early twentieth century, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the demand for modern and thus, secular styles, and Western architects', archaeologists' and

anthropologists' interest in the East created some formative literature on what would come to constitute "Islamic architecture." The geographical variations, birth of nation-states, and freedom from colonial powers during the mid-twentieth century created a need for an in-depth look into the regional variations and styles. There was also a new interest in the study of national styles observed in the case of Persian and Turkish architecture. Architects like Hassan Fathy experimented with vernacular styles and traditional building and design techniques that were indigenous to Upper Egypt. His revivalist techniques integrated Nubian building technology, and Mamluk styles used by the caliphate that had ruled much of modern Egypt for years before the British colonial rule. Western architects like Jørn Utzon, Louis Kahn, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), and Caudill Rowlett Scott (CRS) were invited to design and build in the newfound nation-countries. During this time, projects from these architects include the Kuwait Parliament building, the Bangladesh National Assembly building, the Hajj terminal in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf International Bank headquarters in Manama. All of these countries were building to establish identities through architecture. This trend directly influenced the bloom of purpose-built mosque architecture in the United States, and this 'shift' also changed the demographical dynamics of Muslims in the United States. Establishing identity, and thus statements of power and sovereignty through architecture became a trend as new purpose-built mosques were sponsored in the West by countries like Kuwait, Turkey, and Egypt during the 1960-1990s.

Over time, as the structured study or rather, the historiography of Islamic architecture has taken shape since the Enlightenment in the West, different terms, such

as 'Mohammedan', 'Oriental', and 'Moorish' have been associated with this 'type' of architecture.[26] The gradual dissolution of the contexts in which these words had specific connotations and had initially flourished, also led to their dwindling usage. In the United States, these terms continued to be associated with anything resembling the dome, minaret, or "Islamic" patterns late into the 20th century.

Figure 4. Trump Taj Mahal casino resort,[27] Image © Kevin Wong

Instances of such use were the Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and the "Syria Mosque" performance center built by the Shriners in Pittsburg,

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[26] "Rabbat - What Is Islamic Architecture Anyway?" 2, accessed February 18, 2021, https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/rabbat1.pdf. 'Moorish' is generally associated with the work from al-Andalus and Spain, and also the style imported by the Spanish to Southeast United States, especially Florida, and parts of Mexico have been identified as Moorish. 'Oriental' has been used in association with specific geographical regions; people or ideas associated with Islam as a religion were referred to using the term 'Mohammedan.'

[27] Kevin Wong, *English: Trump Taj Mahal*, July 11, 2007, July 11, 2007, Self-photographed, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trump_Taj_Mahal,_2007.jpg

Pennsylvania,[28] among many others[29], even though Islam or teachings of Islam were not

remotely associated with either of these buildings On the other hand, conscious use of

what is perceived as belonging to the 'styles' and 'expressions' of Islamic architecture in

secular building forms was not an uncommon practice in countries like Spain.[30] The

examples of the resort and the theater are only meant to depict that the practice of

reproducing symbolic expressions often result in misappropriation. In the particular case

of mosque architecture in the United States, current discourse coupled with the current

socio-political and economic climate often has more sway in the decision of how the

mosque will be designed, and what elements and features get preference in creating a

new image of the mosque.

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[28] Gulzar Haider, "Muslim Space and the Practice of Architecture," in *Making Muslim Space in America* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1996), 31–45.
[29] For examples of "Islamic-looking/ Islamic architecture" in the United States, see Philip Pasquini's talk on this subject *Domes, Arches and Minarets: Islamic Architecture in America*, accessed March 23, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8523/. Of particular interest are the projects constructed in the twentieth century, and also those projects that Pasquini suggests are similar to mosques. Based on his book "Domes, Arches and Minarets: A History of Islamic-Inspired Buildings in America," this talk demonstrates how visual expression can often misrepresent 'identity'.
[30] Francine Giese et al., "Resplendence of Al-Andalus," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques* 70, no. 4 (January 1, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2016-0499. This chapter opens with a brief discussion on the "concepts of cultural exchange" and "cultural transfer." The concept of cultural transfer may be more applicable to the works seen in Florida and Mexico – the examples cited, such as the Shriner's temple, are probably lean more towards appropriation without context.

CHAPTER III

THE SMALL COLLEGE TOWN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

While the previous chapter looked at the history of mosques in general, and how

it is situated within the topic of Islamic architecture, this chapter turns to the history of

Muslims in the United States, and specifically to the college town Muslim community.

Within Islam, community often refers to the "*ummah*" which literally translates

to community or people. A commonly quoted verse suggests that the communities are

made up of smaller modules, which come together to learn from and exchange with the

others.[31] In sociology and anthropology, the idea of the community is not bound by a

single definition. Loosely speaking, a community comprises a group of people who have

shared interests or are related through an exchange of services, gifts, or sacrifice, or

bound by a shared sense of belonging through shared identity[32]. The community is not a

concrete body with definite boundaries; rather, it is "imagined" by people who share a

common understanding of social practices and expectations,[33] which are often embedded

in history and culture.[34] A religious community, specifically the Muslim community, is a

group of people who share common instituted practices, common spaces, and a common

understanding of those spaces and practices - all of which are intricately woven into the

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[31] *The Qur'an* (OUP Oxford, 2008), v. 49:13.

[32] Ann Grodzins Gold, "Conceptualizing Community: Anthropological Reflections," *Syracuse University.* 8, no. 1 (2005).

[33] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries.* Public Planet Books (Duke University Press, 2004).

[34] Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers : Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1990),
https://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=44177&site=ehost-live.

"discursive tradition" of Islam[35]. These participants' identities vary widely, and within the bounds of religious identity, they could conform to any of the sects of Islam.

For the purposes of this paper, another identity defines this community - their geographical inhabitance of a small college town in the United States. Therefore, a group of people in American college towns who conform to the basic ritualistic practices of Islam are the community under consideration for the purposes of this thesis. The diversity of the Muslim community, their enculturation and acculturation, collective memory, shared practices, and the discursive traditions of Islam influence the architectural practices of the religious spaces. This is observed within the smaller boundaries of the American college towns, whose inherent qualities and characteristics are expected to provide a rich strata for this particular analysis.

The following sections of the paper will look at a brief history of the Muslim community, the global changes that affected the local American Muslim population, the tragedies that mark the recent Muslim narrative, immigration, and the present cultural narrative of the Muslim diaspora in the United States.

History of Muslims in America

Although the Muslim community is very small, their history and their presence in the media and politics has skewed the community's narratives of themselves and of their

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[35] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (December 1, 2009): 1–30, https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.17.2.1.

building types. This part of the section will introduce the early history and the recent changes in this community, and suggest its transformation from diaspora to population.

Muslims in America: From Late 18th Century to Mid-20th Century

Historians have traced the first records of Muslim presence to 18th century Spanish Florida. The West and North African communities brought their culture, language, and regional variations of their Islamic practices[36]. While most accounts relate to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, a few stories of the early Muslim population give an insight into the socio-cultural dissonances of that time. Among these accounts, the life and stories of Omar ibn Said, "Job Ben Solomon", and Salih Bilali are of note.[37]

There are, however, accounts of people from the larger Bilali family being adherents of religious beliefs and practices that provide a strong indication that they were Muslims. Muslim names keep cropping up in historical records throughout the 19th century, yet there is little documentation of their practices. Muslims or at least people with Islamic names are recorded to have participated in the Civil war.[38] Although freed, many African Americans who were originally born into Muslim families, had gradually lost their language along with cultural and religious practices after Emancipation. There is hardly any mention of organized Islamic religious practices or of religious buildings from this time.

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[36] Michael A. Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *The Journal of Southern History,* 60, no. 4 (1994): 671–710, https://doi.org/10.2307/2211064.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Jeffery Lauck, "Profiles in Patriotism: Muslims and the Civil War," *The Gettysburg Compiler* (blog), March 1, 2017, https://gettysburgcompiler.org/2017/03/01/profiles-in-patriotism-muslims-and-the-civil-war/.

At the beginning of the 20th century, at the end of World War I, Muslim immigrants started trickling into the United States, mainly from the Levant. Immigration also took place from Asia and South Asia, albeit much less than the later surge in the 1960s. But even these numbers dwindled significantly with immigration quotas imposed in the 1920s. At this time, the Muslim community was small, scattered, and confined within their social territories. Some immigrants had moved into the rural farming areas, and over time acquired land and settled. They married locally, and by the second and third generation, they had been fully accultured to the American society.[39] From this later generations, some people went back to the Asian subcontinents and African countries in search of their roots and often returned with a new understanding of what it meant to be Muslim and what the practices entailed.[40]

The mid-20th century was the hotbed for significant socio-political changes that coincided with the massive influx of immigrants, large numbers of whom were of Asian descent. The Immigration Act of 1964 opened up the borders to nations and nationalities, some of who had recently gained independence from the colonial rules. On the one hand, contestations for identity and space through organizations like the Nation of Islam, the Civil Rights movement, changes in the political landscape of the United States, were also instrumental in the growth and representation of the Muslim community. While immigrants looking for new spaces were importing their own identities and

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[39] Samuel G. Freedman, "North Dakota Mosque a Symbol of Muslims' Long Ties in America," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2016, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/28/us/north-dakota-mosque-a-symbol-of-muslims-deep-ties-in-america.html.
[40] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (University of California Press, 1996).

understandings of what it meant to be Muslim, the existing American population were already building communities around their understandings of Islam. Both of these communities did not just import, or build on ideas from the scripture and text,[41] but they built their imaginations of "sacred" religious space based on their social and cultural contexts.

Organizations and Their Role in Community Building

Rapidly growing communities and the consequent increase in the number of mosques directly affected the need for familiar religious support. The need for communal support resulted in the formation of some of the largest Muslim organizations in North America. A group of international Muslim students gathered together to form the Muslim Students Association (MSA) in 1963. The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) was formed in 1968 by a majorly South Asian group. In 1983, the MSA, in association with other organizations of Muslim professionals, and the historically Sunni African-American Muslims (HSAAM) formed the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Of these, the MSA is a student body with chapters associated with almost all the major higher education institutions in North America. This organization has generally become associated with undergraduate Muslim students and campus activities. It has also helped students navigate the questions, changes and obstacles they face in college campuses. Outreach and volunteering activities often help students engage with the

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[41] Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers : Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990).

larger non-Muslim community on campus and outside. The MSA's has played an important role in securing prayer spaces on college campuses for students, and often, the students have later come together to form the first mosques in the community outside of the campus. Its role in creating "Muslim spaces" in college towns will be further explored in the next section.

The ISNA, on the other hand, along with other organizations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and ICNA have provided platforms for academics to research, debate and discuss issues directly affecting American Muslims. The foundational members of ISNA have been identified as "activists and cultural pluralists[42]" for their efforts to ground lay Muslims into normative practices, while paving the way for enculturation with the American society. The goal was to facilitate the conversation about Islam and help spread it, and "educate Muslims about correct Islamic practice," and provide a political setting for the community.[43] The founder wanted to develop a "public" organization that could bring together the existing African American community and the relatively new immigrant community. The issues of inclusion, race, identity and recognition could perhaps be negotiated by bringing these groups together. The efforts to bring people who had different aspirations from these organized communities were not left without scrutiny. The sentiments expressed about

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[42] Shariq Ahmed Siddiqui, "Navigating Identity through Philanthropy: A History of the Islamic Society of North America" (Indiana University,2014).
[43]Siddiqui.

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these communities has also been part of the dominant narrative on mosques and to Muslim identities.

The formation of these organizations are significant because they illustrate a change in the dynamics between the minority Muslim and the majority non-Muslim community. By extension, they elucidate the idea of power and tradition.[44] The backgrounds of their founding members, and their aspirations hint at the underlying complexities of organized Muslim communities. The growth of these "public organizations" created a new sense of embedding within the larger society. The shared identity now had a legitimate, democratic structural framework that could be used to foster community growth and help preserve, protect, analyze and evaluate the traditional practices associated with Islam in the modern Western context. The following decade also marks the beginning of state-funded, purpose built mosques in the United States.

Gender, Demography and Religiosity

A number of studies has been conducted by Pew, Gallup and ISPU which has helped establish data on the Muslim community in the United States. Other studies have focused on mosques as community centers, religious spaces, and institutions with specific needs for management, outreach and engagement.[45] Ethnographic studies

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[44] Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam."

[45] Bagby, "The American Mosque 2011"; Ihsan Abdul-Wajid Bagby, Paul M. Perl, and Bryan Froehle, *The Mosque in America, a National Portrait: A Report from the Mosque Study Project* (Washington, D.C: Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2001); Karam Dana, Matt A. Barreto, and Kassra A. R. Oskooii, "Mosques as American Institutions: Mosque Attendance, Religiosity and Integration into the Political System among American Muslims," *Religions* 2, no. 4 (2011): 504–24, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel2040504; Kathleen E Foley, "The American Mosque: Behind The Controversy," 2012, 22.

carried out in the United States include work done in African American communities,[46] Muslim female students on campus,[47] and on mosques and the people in particular cities.[48]Studies regarding women's presence and usage of mosques include a study conducted in Australia, but relevant to the context of this project,[49] a thorough undertaking on the history of women's spaces and segregation in mosques,[50] and a modern understanding of what women's spaces might mean in mosques.[51] These articles on women's spaces are three different views on what women perceive to be their spaces in their mosques.

Demographic data from existing surveys

      The following analysis is based on data from Pew's survey of 1001 Muslim in the United States in 2017, and they belong to around 75 different countries. Some of the topics included were religious beliefs and practices and social values. The study suggests that Muslims as a group are both younger and demographically diverse than the rest of the American population. More than half of Muslim adults were born outside of the

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[46] Zain Abdullah, "Culture, Community and the Politics of Muslim Space," *Journal of History and Culture* 3, no. 1 (2011): 26–42; Akel Ismail Kahera, "Urban Enclaves, Muslim Identity and the Urban Mosque in America," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2002): 369–80; Victoria J. Lee, "The Mosque and Black Islam: Towards an Ethnographic Study of Islam in the Inner City," *Ethnography* 11, no. 1 (2010): 145–63.

[47] Shabana Mir, *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity* (Chapel Hill, United States: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tamucs/detail.action?docID=1663521.

[48] Jerrilynn Denise Dodds and Ed Grazda, *New York Masjid: The Mosques of New York City*, 1st ed (New York, NY: PowerHouse Books, 2002).

[49] J. Hussain, "Finding the Women's Space: Muslim Women and the Mosque," ed. First (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 52–66.

[50] Nevin Reda, "Women in the Mosque: Historical Perspectives on Segregation," *American Journal for Islamic Social Sciences AJISS* 21, no. ii (2004): 77–97.

[51] Line Nyhagen, "Mosques as Gendered Spaces: The Complexity of Women's Compliance with, And Resistance to, Dominant Gender Norms, And the Importance of Male Allies," *Religions* 10, no. 5 (2019): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10050321.

United States, and they hail mostly from Asia and North Africa, but the majority of US

adult Muslims are also citizens. While a majority of the population identifies as white,

20% of the Muslims identify as black Muslims. In talking about the current political

climate, 50% think that being Muslims in the United States has become difficult. In

terms of education, 31% of the population are college graduates, and while they say that

their faith is not only about belief and rituals, 38% of them say that traditional

understanding is all that is needed; on the other hand, 52% of them belief that traditional

understandings need to be reinterpreted in modern context. Within this population, 43%

are mosque goers,[52] and although there is no clear data on how this data can be

extrapolated on the college town community, this survey gives the picture of a young,

educated community, who are as likely to be involved in other social and religious

activities as any other Americans.[53]

Ethnographic studies on Muslim community in the United States

     Existing ethnographic studies conducted on Muslim communities in the United

States about their mosques were used to ascertain the questions later asked in informal

interviews. These studies looked at the general Muslim community's mosque usage in a

particular geographical area that has its own dominant characteristics[54], and a new

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[52] PewReligion, "Demographic Portrait of Muslim Americans," July 26, 2017.
[53] Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii, "Mosques as American Institutions: Mosque Attendance, Religiosity and Integration into the Political System among American Muslims."
[54] Dodds and Grazda, *New York Masjid*.

Muslim's perspective on mosque usage[55], the engagement of the African American community and youth with the urban context of the mosque under study[56].

Muslim stories of their mosques in the media

This study did not undertake a comprehensive study of Muslim representation, identity, or experience portrayed in Western media. While none of the following films, documentaries, or comedies are taken as the sole source of information, they provide pieces of the narrative that inform the whole research study project. For this research, the focus was on selected documentaries on mosques and the situation comedy "The Little Mosque on the Prairie" by Zarqa Nawaz.[57] These documentaries provide insight into:

- How a Western journalist perceives mosques as great artistic works within the greater purview of "Islamic architecture,"[58]

- Glimpses of African American Islam[59],

- Segregation[60], identity[61], and meaning[62] within the Muslim community

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[55] Lee, "The Mosque and Black Islam: Towards an Ethnographic Study of Islam in the Inner City."

[56] Kahera, "Urban Enclaves, Muslim Identity and the Urban Mosque in America."

[57] Neil MacFarquhar, "Sitcom's Precarious Premise: Being Muslim Over Here," *The New York Times*, December 7, 2006, sec. Arts, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/07/arts/television/07mosq.html.

[58] Timeline - World History Documentaries, *The Hidden Secrets Of Islamic Architecture | (Islam Religious Documentary) | Timeline*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdOxBCpk39c.

[59] *Malcolm X*, Documentary (Kanopy, 2010), https://texasam.kanopy.com/video/malcolm-x-murder-new-york; Stanley Nelson, *The Black Panthers | Kanopy* (PBS, 2015), https://texasam.kanopy.com/video/black-panthers-0.

[60] *The Mosque In Morgantown*, Documentary (Kanopy, 2009), https://texasam.kanopy.com/video/mosque-morgantown.

[61] *Voices of Muslim Women from the U.S South*, Documentary (Kanopy, 2015), https://texasam.kanopy.com/node/2594349/preview.

[62] *UnMosqued*, Documentary, accessed February 25, 2021, http://www.unmosquedfilm.com/the-facts.

- The wider community's perception of Muslims and mosques pre and post 9/11, painting grim pictures of social reality.[63]

Newspaper and magazine articles dealing with similar issues were also assessed and evaluated.

College Towns

College towns, like Urbana-Champaign were the birth place of the MSA, which eventually led to the formation of the other organizations. Here, the case of College Station, Texas can be taken as an example to illustrate the effects of global politics, immigration and eventual assimilation and enculturation of the Muslim community.

Muslim Community in College Towns

College towns are distinguished from other towns and cities because of the specific characteristics and culture they create and because of their "dominant influence over the character of the community." [64]A large part of the towns' population is transient, and this part of the population often spends about 4-5 years on an average in the college town. There is also a percentage of the population who stay behind and create their own communities, enhance commercial activities and provide various other services. These towns are expected to be inhabited by raucous students, but also intellectuals and academics. Although these two groups often are vastly separated in

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[63] Janan Delgado, *The Man Behind the Mosque*, Documentary (PBS, 2011); David Washburn, *An American Mosque*, Digital, .flv file, Documentary (Documentary Educational Resources, 2016), http://proxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://texasam.kanopystreaming.com/node/233688.
[64] Blake Gumprecht, "The American College Town," *Geographical Review* 93, no. 1 (2003): 51–80.

their choice of residential neighborhoods,[65] religious spaces provide a meeting place for these two diverse groups. The narrative of the Muslim students and residents of college towns is not much different from other religious groups and societies. These towns are often gateways for a younger group of people are exposed to a myriad of ideas and possibilities. For Muslim students, college campuses are the places where identities of religion, nationality and gender overlap with the ideas of individuality in often conflicting ways.[66] Those who grow up in college towns have certain understandings of the college culture, and the presence of mosques or Islamic centers, with active community engagement activities often provide a niche of familiar territory for both national students as well as international students. The familiarity of space and place becomes grounding for cultural and religious practices for these people.

College Station, Texas

An early census of religious preferences at Texas A&M University in 1934 recorded one student as an adherent to the "Mohammedan" faith. An article from 1948 documented the celebration of Eid al Fitr, the first of the two yearly religious festivals, being commemorated by a group of Muslim students from various Texas universities. During these years, the world geographies were being reshaped, and the number of international students increased steadily. Invitations from churches and participation in UN clubs opened up opportunities for integration and these events recorded Muslim

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[65] Gumprecht.

[66] Shabana Mir, *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014)

student involvement. In 1960, around 70 Muslim students celebrated Eid Al Adha with their families by organizing a feast and sacrificing "a lamb in the quadrangle of All-Faiths Chapel."

The organizations previously mentioned have had a great influence in the growth of Muslim communities and building of mosques. The ICBCS in Bryan-College Station had a similar beginning. International Muslim students from Texas A&M University formed the MSA in 1985 and later on organized the committee responsible for the formation of a non-profit organization for the ICBCS in 1987. Currently, the community is largely made up of a student population, from various backgrounds, ethnicities and nationalities. Based on estimates of Muslim population in Texas, and the number of regular mosque attendees prior to the COVID-19, the Muslim population here could be around a 1000 to 2000 people. Based on projections of growth in the Bryan-College Station area, and the projected numbers for Muslim population, this community is set grow in the near future.

Statistics, studies and summaries

As indicated before, the Muslim population is tiny compared to the total population in the United States. As a religious group, their demographic makeup, the history of their presence, political and social engagement and more recently, their religious buildings and surrounding controversies and debates, underscore Muslim presence in the United States. While Muslim presence here can be traced back to a few hundred years, how they assimilated, or encultured into the larger society, the increased immigration from Muslim countries, the founding of nations and governments that were

willing and able to provide state-sponsorship for 'public property' outside of their own countries, and the growth of the community in general has been paramount in creating 'architecturally' recognized religious buildings. The studies indicate a growing Muslim population, and the expectation is that larger and newer space would be required to accommodate these new adherents. But then the question also stands as to whether this population will continue to be adherent to the point where they will need bigger and better mosques and Islamic centers. While this chapter provided the data—general, and specific—on who the Muslims in the United States are, the next chapter will try to persuade that it is through an analysis of this community that we might be able to propose a slightly different approach to mosque design in the United States.

CHAPTER IV

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE

The Muslim community and the architecture of religious 'spaces' come into a relatively sharp focus in the West. Here, the "homogeneity" of the ethnic or national communities loses its definitive margins. In keeping with the idea of an "imagined" community, [67] individuals seek out others who share common ancestry or religion, among other cultural and social identities and flock together to recreate a community of shared values. In the case of American mosque architecture, this is observed in the creation of the "Arab" mosque or the "Turkish" mosque, or the "African American mosque." Often, a study of the management of mosques and the people's cultures reveals these distinctions more acutely than architectural expressions. The college towns in America are expected to provide a common ground for the many ethnicities and nationalities who find themselves drawn together in this landscape. Although this project's primary concern is American college town mosques, the lack of literature specific to architectural practices concerned with these mosques forces us to look at literature dealing with more prominent purpose-built mosques in the United States.

On Architecture of the American Mosque

Of the major works on mosque architecture in the United States, the book titled "Deconstruction of the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics" by Akel

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[67] Benedict R. O'G (Benedict Richard O'Gorman) Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London ; New York : Verso, 2006), http://archive.org/details/imaginedcommunit0000ande.

Ismail Kahera appears to touch upon some major architectural issues. As is the case with other works on mosque architecture, this book deals specifically with purpose-built mosques. It attempts to explore what the mosque is in the context of a 'modern' society where the Muslims are a minority, where immigration and ethnic 'images' often beg for a defining boundary for the meaning of the "American mosque." The text's primary concerns are the architectural expressions, symbols, and semantics of the 'urban' mosque. The author briefly touches upon psychological space, the involvement of the community's collective imagination, and human expression but does not merit the discussion with how they affect mosque design. Instead, he suggests that a "borrowing" of aesthetic language dominates the architectural practice of mosque design in the United States.

As an alternative to applying Derrida's understanding of deconstruction, Kahera applies the philosophical framework of Ibn Arabi to propose a method for understanding the meanings of the "American mosque."

> "My use of the term 'deconstruction' concerns a concrete and serious study of Muslim religious aesthetics, which in the first instance is grounded in Muslim epistemology, and in the second is related to various ways of negotiating spatial relationships between tradition and modernity in the North American environment."[68]

On reading further, it becomes evident that visual aesthetics are central to the discussion in this text. This focus on aesthetics helps us formulate questions on whether the proposed method of using deconstruction for analyzing the "American mosque"

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[68] Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics*, 1.

architecture is adequate. In the following section, the major arguments presented in the

text will be questioned to lay out an alternative method for analyzing mosque

architecture – especially the architecture of those situated in American college towns.

Aesthetics, Form and Image

First, Kahera asserts that the understanding that Muslim religious 'aesthetics' are

grounded in Muslim epistemology. However, what are these Muslim religious

'aesthetics,' and why is this an essential criterion in defining mosque architecture in

North America? It would appear that the Muslim religious aesthetics is related to the

ideas of divine originality of creative art forms, where beauty or *jamal* is not just a

divine attribute of God but is also expressed in people's desire to create the most

beautiful works of art or poetry or architecture.[69] While this could undoubtedly be

posited as an indicator of 'how' Muslim religious spaces could utilize 'religious'

aesthetics, it does not explain why these aesthetics are instrumental in understanding or

'deconstructing' the American mosque, unless these aesthetics are deemed to be the only

tool available in the evaluation of architectural work.

Secondly, Kahera also suggests that the dichotomy between the 'modern' and the

'traditional' is primarily based on the mosque's form and function. The word 'tradition'

refers to the building tradition, and the term "spatial *sunnah*" refers to spatial building

practices that can be posited from the architectural traditions observed in the Prophet's

(PBUH) mosque.[70] Is tradition only limited to building tradition, or are there other

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[69] Kahera, 12.
[70] Kahera, 22.

means of understanding 'tradition' even when the subject matter is concerned with

architecture?

Third, the fact that the images, the symbols, and the use of calligraphy already

have underlying nuances. A new mosque designed by an architect unfamiliar with these

nuances, and situated away from the context of the origin of these images and symbols,

often become products of imitation.[71] Do the nuances lose value and meaning in such

cases? Can we propose ethnographic methods of analyzing a community to expand the

understanding of these architects?

On analyzing the American mosque, the author then draws the following

conclusion, which is just one of many:

> "… [We] posited a dynamic relationship between architectural meaning and
> aesthetic representation by illustrating three major aesthetic genres of Muslim
> religious architecture in America: syncretic, traditional, and avant-garde. The
> specific idiom of these particular aesthetic genres is what we have come to
> call the American mosque."[72]

The text recognizes that:

> "…no single authoritative aesthetic tradition exists in Islam that can be
> individually claimed by any community. Instead, what we find is an
> authoritative adherence to a litany of aesthetic principles that are common to
> dogma and religious practice among Muslims."[73]

Basing historical 'discontinuity' on existing appearances, or the reinforcement,

addition, or appropriation of visual elements and aesthetics alone, may not be sufficient

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[71] Kahera, 67.
[72] Kahera, 145.
[73] *Ibid.*

in exploring the many-faceted dimensions that govern mosques as an architectural 'typology' in the United States. In conclusion to the question of architectural identity, meaning and "space-making" processes by a culture away from its 'origin', and by contextualizing and recognizing the diversity of the Muslim community in the United States, and in attempting to situate architectural practices of creating Muslim religious spaces, the author asks:

"Can design principles embody cultural meaning…?"[74]

Kahera also indicates that aesthetics and images and their representations are often clouded by imitation, and here we propose that there may be other options worth exploring to create a better picture of the architecture of American mosques. The question then may be rephrased to ask whether and how the culture, the community's imaginations, narratives, and practices affect the design principles associated with their architectural practices. Can we suggest that these particular 'building traditions' only came to be because of certain practices that had already become typical in understanding the religion?

On a different note, an approach to space-making as a social practice, and not just architectural practice, the book "Making Muslim Spaces" introduces how Muslims in the late twentieth century, use, imagine and create their spaces. Here, practice is understood to precede establishment of physical space and Barbara Metcalf makes the following remark:

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[74] Kahera, *Deconstructing the American Mosque: Space, Gender, and Aesthetics*, 149.

"The emphasis on space allows us to explore Muslim cultural practices beyond the articulations of elites to the everyday practices of ordinary people."[75]

Though we can only surmise 'who' the elite are, or why their practices may have taken precedence in the creation and sustainment of the Muslim culture, we can nevertheless agree that in the historical appraisals of mosques and of "Islamic architecture" in general, the focus has always remained on the grand, luxurious and monumental. Metcalf also seems to suggest that space-making can open windows into Muslim cultural practices. Can we suggest a reversal of this method, where social practices and cultural theory to expand on our understanding of architecture?

In the introduction to "Urban Form in the Arab World," Stefano Bianca lays out his understanding of what might constitute the study of Islamic architecture in modern times. Bianca contends that a study of Islamic architecture should entail an analysis of "the deep-rooted human factors [that] gave birth to distinct formal and artistic expressions and to a specific type of built environment."[76] He suggests that the broad category of Islamic art and architecture has found coherency through a historic reproduction of historic and traditional practices.

Drawing on the conclusions provided in "Deconstructing the American Mosque," is it plausible to suggest that moving away from the aesthetic understanding of tradition, and orienting ourselves as designers to the practices of people might give greater

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[75] Barbara Daly Metcalf, "Introduction," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (United States: University of California Press, 1996), 1–30.
[76] Bianca, "Introduction: The Subject and the Approach," 8.

credibility to architectural design? Could the expertise of the architect be combined with an analysis of the meaning-producing and meaning-giving practices? In the case of mosque architecture, could those practices be social practices that are embedded in and stem from certain existing religious practices?

Cultural theory in exploring architecture

Using the questions raised in the previous paragraphs, here we propose a few concepts and theories that might help situate the use of aesthetics and architectural expressions in Islamic architecture and in mosques. In the study of anthropology of Islam, Talal Asad suggests that Islam is a 'discursive tradition' and adds that the "apt performance"[77] depends on the past and present practices are related, and thus necessary for tradition—but the "apt performance" is "not the apparent repetition of an old form."[78] This idea of "apt performance" could perhaps also be extended to architectural space-making, where cultural changes through human performance generate or change these architectural spaces.[79] If mosques are the social centers, i.e., hearths of the Muslim community, and if the practices that sustain or give meaning to the mosque are embedded in the discursive traditions of Islam, as well as in the social practices of the college town community, then could we suggest an analysis of these practices? Would an analysis of these practices generate understandings of individual spaces that can be brought together through a narrative of performance of these very practices?

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[77] Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," 20.
[78] Asad, 21.
[79] Harry Francis Mallgrave, "Enculturation, Sociality and the Built Environment," in *Architecture and Empathy: A Tapio Wirkkala-Rut Bryk Design Reader*, ed. Philip Tidwell (Tapio Wirkkala-Rut Bryk Foundation, 2015).

Habits and Practices

Here, Asad's idea of 'discursive tradition' could perhaps be thought of as analogous to Bordieu's understanding of *habitus*.[80] Thus, the underlying frameworks that provide precedence, meaning, expression and value to mosque architecture, is not necessarily just a framework that proliferates aesthetic expressions and visual styles. The framework is also of instituted practices that are not mere constructions that are replicated, but rather performances through participation. The preservation of practices through place and time and habits documented in the American mosques are an image of the earliest historical precedence of mosque design.

Existing Habits and Imported Practices

Although religious practices provide the fundamental underlying structure for the creation of practices a religious space, the socio-cultural context also dictates the use and design of these spaces. The American college town mosque is frequented by many ethnicities and nationalities, and the people bring their own understanding of images, identifiers and spaces. A brief overview of how existing practices, imported habits, and surrounding communal needs can create designed spaces can be understood in the following example. In most cases women from South Asian countries are not accustomed to going to the mosque, yet here, for the sake of community building and preservation of 'practices', this group often finds itself familiarizing themselves with the idea of community building in the mosque. In this case, the social practices of related

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[80] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 52.

with community support and engagement with people of similar 'understandings', almost dictates the creation of spaces within the mosque that cater to these needs.

While the above chapter looked at the concept and history of community, and reiterated the importance of anthropology in understanding the needs and requirements of any community, the next two sections will suggest two different methods that can be adopted by architects in order to propose a design method for college town mosques in the United States.

CHAPTER V

WRITING COMMUNITY: INFORMATIONAL SURVEY AS METHOD

In most academic discourses on mosques, whether it is on mosques from the early years of Islam or it is a discussion on the contemporary mosques, there is an emphasis placed on and the expressive form of the building. The history and study of mosque design leans heavily on existing design practices where the form and function of the spaces take precedence as the typifying dimension in creating physical space. In order to go deeper into people's use of space, and in order to reduce the number of times architects get to say 'clients choose how they use their space, irrespective of what we design', it may be necessary to engage in better dialogues created through existing or newer methods of ethnographic practices.

In the particular case of the American Muslim community, there is an emphasis on the ethnographic study of Muslim communities to see how these communities attached to particular mosques are changing/ affecting/ bettering their immediate communities either through political[81] or community engagement,[82] or there are statistics produced on Mosque usage in the United States.[83] While each of these approaches, in their own right, addresses and explores the engagement of the Muslim community with their built space and to the larger society in which they are embedded, these studies are

[81] Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii, "Mosques as American Institutions: Mosque Attendance, Religiosity and Integration into the Political System among American Muslims"; "National Survey of American Muslims Finds Mosques Help Muslims Integrate into American Political Life," 2011.
[82] Kahera, "Urban Enclaves, Muslim Identity and the Urban Mosque in America."
[83] Bagby, "The American Mosque 2011."

not necessarily focused on how the cultural practices of the community influence how they build, maintain and use mosques.

To best explore how practices of the community can provide a better understanding of the spaces that are designed on their behalf, a mixed-method study design is proposed. Ethnographic methods can be used as the underlying framework for creating the survey question, the interview, and the experiential observations. The primary data can be obtained through interviews, personal experiences, and a survey questionnaire. Existing data from national surveys, ethnographic studies on the Muslim community in the United States, and a limited review of mosques in five chosen American college towns provided the basis for secondary research data. Other visual and audio documentaries, drama and film, and newspaper articles and op-eds can be used to explore the Muslim community's stories about their place in society and their religious space in the media. Data analysis can be carried out using theoretical frameworks of anthropology (culture, community, tradition, and identity), and conceptual frameworks of architecture (space, place and design principles).

Primary data

Two different surveys could be sent out through the University's internal email listserv for the primary research data. The three-part conditional survey was designed using Qualtrics Survey Creation Tool, where the choice of religion or belief and then the choice to participate in a zoom interview regulated the path the survey takes. The first part of the survey can be common for all participants, but it should be targeted towards a non-Muslim audience and can be designed to explore how non-Muslims experience

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religious space and understand what a mosque might mean to them. The questions in this section can be aimed at teasing out how people's perception of a religious building and space also informed their imagination of a smaller community that is part of the larger social fabric. This particular part of the interview can be used to analyze and compare how Muslims imagined and experienced their religious spaces. The second part of the survey targeting the Muslim community, and eligibility can be ascertained with the question, "What is your religious disposition/faith/belief system/worldview?" Those who choose "Islam" as the response were later directed to the question on mosques. In terms of participant selection, the University-based email listserv can be used to reach out to that group of the population who make up the largest proportion of the college town community. Snowball sampling was used to encourage participation in the Muslim community, especially the Muslim undergraduate students on campus.

Informal interviews

Experiences informally narrated by Muslims situated in Bryan-College Station can be noted to provide a framework for creating the initial questionnaire. Interviews with the mosque board committee members can provide valuable insights into the monetary and regulatory aspects of maintaining and designing mosques and prayer spaces. Many interviewees will have been associated with mosque boards for almost a decade or so, and have worked with the Muslim community for even longer. These notes provide:

- Expertise and insight into the existing problems and conditions from the interviewee's position in society,

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- The issues they had previously encountered in similar settings as they
  served on various committees, and

- Their appraisals for a mosque's future requirements as community
  centers.

- These conversations added value to the design aspect of mosques and the
  post-occupancy and maintenance requirements that are often overlooked
  in the initial design development stages in academic design studios.

This chapter suggests that using demographic data that is general can help
contextualize the design project, but it does not provide enough information about the
end-users unless these end users are part of the data collection and design project. This
method of data collection and participation of the end-user in the design process is close
to participatory design practices. A sample survey questionnaire has been included as a
suggestion at the end of this paper with appendix A.

CHAPTER VI

DRAWING COMMUNITY: ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AS METHOD

In the United States, many mosques start as appropriated spaces, and few

community mosques are built ground up.[84] The building 'typologies' reused through

various 'adaptations' include churches, stores, warehouses, and offices. Based on this

observation and the fact that there are no physical dimensional requirements for

mosques, six different buildings belonging to four different 'typologies' were selected for

an initial analysis. One of these typologies would be then utilized to situate the practices

associated with the Muslim community's everyday activities in their mosques.

These 'sections' are depictions of people and their everyday practices. These

sections are not sewn together on a linear timeline – the stories each of these sections

narrate are not depictions of a single day, from morning to night. Rather, these are

windows to the snippets of a community's practices. These 'sections' should not be

viewed only as typical architectural sections showing structure, volume, lighting,

circulation and mechanical systems.

Drawings: Representing community participation

The following sections comprise of sketches depicting religious practices, social

habits and practices, and identity and signs. Each of these sketches focus on the people

and their movements, the colors, orienting lines on the carpets, and in some sketches the

main 'character' is given color in clothing. Facial features and skin colors were

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[84] Bagby.

deliberately left out. The depiction of the spaces is based on generic horizontal and vertical planes. In some sketches, the horizontal planes take the form of raised platforms, and in some the vertical plane takes the form of a barrier. These sketches are not dimensioned, and they are not meant to be rich representations of significant moments in mosques. The sketches will aim to situate the various practices with consequent design implications.

Practices: From the religion

This part of the chapter represents practices that are directly linked to the religion and to rituals; the aim is to depict how these practices are affected by people's perception over time and different contexts. In the case of such religious practices, it is not the religious practice itself that is under scrutiny for the benefit of design directions. Rather it is the social practices that grow around these rituals and religious practices, which will be critically reflected upon through the following sketches.
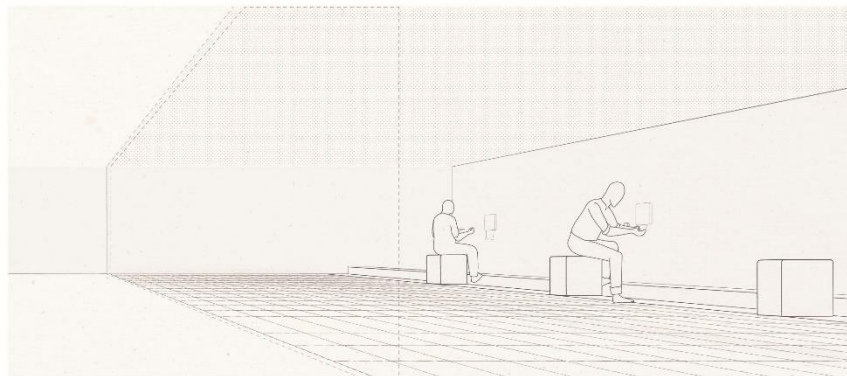

Figure 5. Ablution

Ablution or rather *wudu,* is a water-intensive cleaning practice that is mandatory before prayer. It is interesting that the ritual of performing *wudu* is more or less uniform

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across the religious sects, and yet there are a variety of ways in which people carry out this practice. Sitting on a raised platform, or standing next to rows of taps, or using water from a courtyard pool, or using an existing natural water body – the practices of making *wudu* vary from place to place. This practice possibly has the most implication on dimensioning, sustainable design practices, ergonomics, material safety and accessibility.
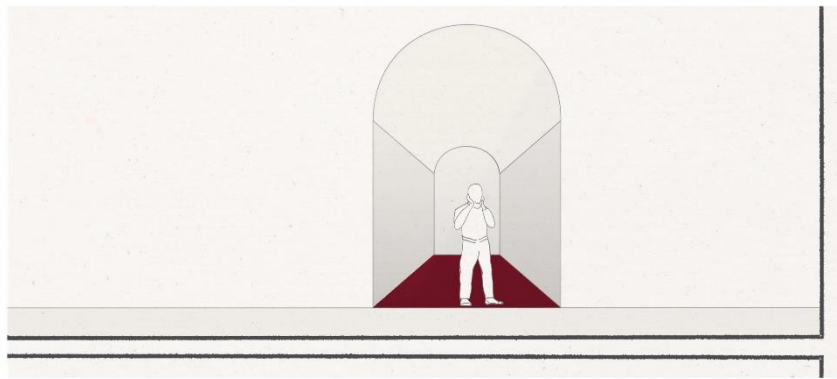

Figure 6. The call for the prayer.

The call for the prayer, the *adhan*, is called to indicate the time of the prayer. The caller, or the *mu'addhin*, would climb up to the minaret to call the prayer. But this was before the loudspeakers. In Muslim countries and areas where the call is to be broadcast loudly, the *mu'addhin* calls the prayer from within the mosque. In college town mosques, the community expects to hear the *adhan* within the mosque premises. Maybe a space could be designed where the loudspeakers would not be required - the surface treatment and the curvature of the space would amplify and reverberate the sound through the mosque.
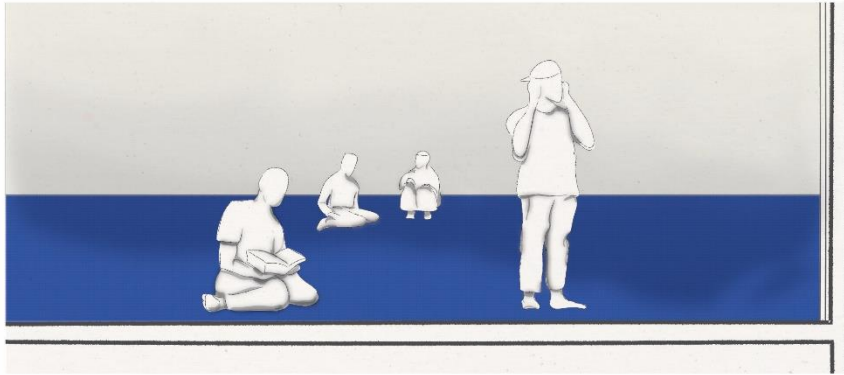
Figure 7. The next call to prayer.

The *iqamah*, is the second call to prayer that indicates to the worshippers that they should fall in line and get ready to start following their *imam,* the person who leads the prayer. Even if no *adhan* was called, using the *iqamah* one can indicate to others that they are free to join with him or her in the prayer. In older times or rather, in the pre-loudspeaker times, a person would call out the *iqamah* from raised a platform in large mosques. If a place was designed for the *adhan*, then it could also double as a place for the *iqamah.* Needless to say, the most important design factor for this part of the mosque would be the acoustics of the space.
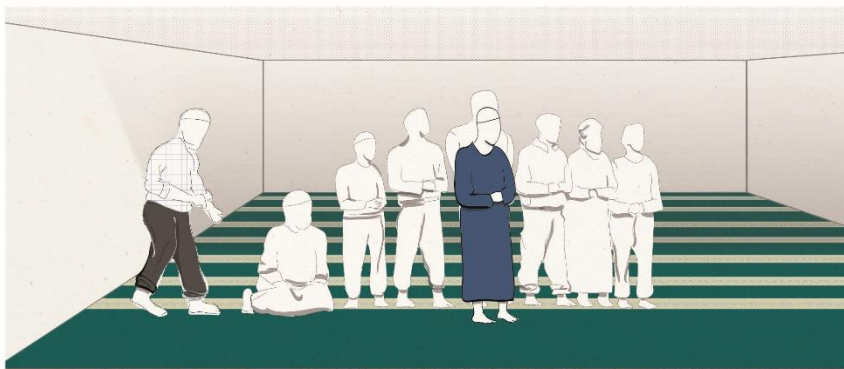

Figure 8. Filing in.

It is a traditional practice (*sunnah*) to begin filling the prayer space from behind the *imam,* then to his right, and then the first row. While this a practical to approach to maximizing the space, providing a single entrance to the prayer area, significantly hinders the performance of this practice. It is especially cumbersome and frustrating when the entrances are placed behind the *imam.* Imagine the scenario where a doctor, who came in for the Friday prayer, needs to leave immediately after the prayer for an emergency. Such a scenario is sufficient to render the need to rethink access to prayer areas.
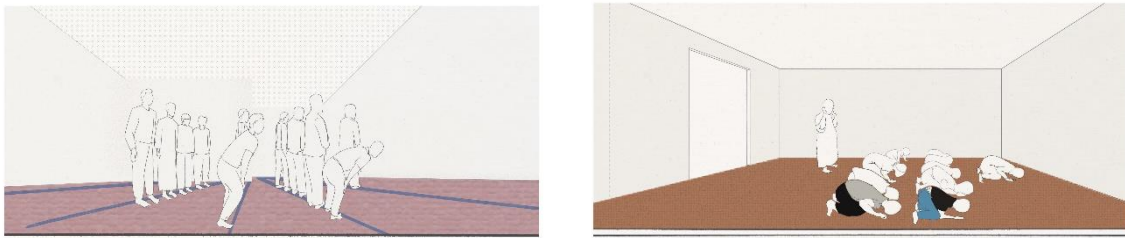

Figure 9. Parts of prayer.

The bowing (*ruku)* and the prostration (*sujud* – the practice that gives mosque its name – *masjid*, the place of prostration) are religious practices, they are the dimension producing practices within the prayer area. In most mosques, there is a demand to place carpet strips that have been designed to provide guiding lines for the congregant. These industrialized and manufactured 'orienting' and 'guiding' devices become obsolete as the crowd of congregants stand 'feet-to-feet' and 'shoulder-to-shoulder'. It is also interesting to note that in those who frequent mosques, would not necessarily need the guidelines to straighten the rows. In the absence of a clearly marked *mihrab* though, these lines becoming the primary guides for orientation. These different phases of prayer

are also indicators of time within the prayer, the observation of which does not

necessarily impact space design, but it does affect the narrative of time by the observer.
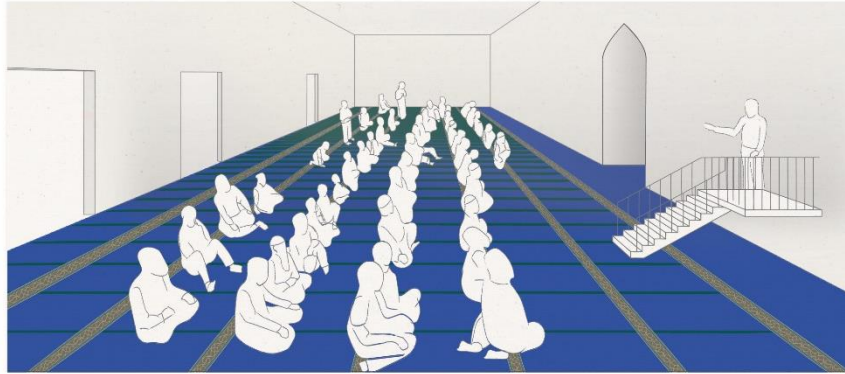
Figure 10. Friday sermon.

The Friday sermon, or the *khutbah*, is delivered by a speaker who usually also

leads the prayer after. It is an obligatory ritual practice for the Muslim men to attend this

Friday prayer or *salatal juma'ah*, which is essentially a two-part practice of sermon and

prayer. The act of giving sermon to the community without the help of microphones, was

the probable reason for the creation of the *minbar*, the raised platform from which the

Prophet (PBUH) is recorded to have delivered the talks to the congregants. While the

history of how the *minbar* developed from a practical addition to an intricate art form,[85] is

intriguing in its own right, it might be worth noting that this progression from 'practical'

to 'representation' underlies the progression of mosque designs as well.

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[85] *Stairway to Heaven* (London, England: fl. 1975, West Park Pictures, 2007). Although not strictly academic, this short visual piece skims through history, reproduction, and power structures, which might provide interesting insights into how these inter-relationships create representational work.

Turning back to the *juma'ah*, the mosque 'type' associated with this is the '*jame'e*' mosque, the largest of mosques in terms of facilities and space. As was discussed in Chapter II, this categorization of mosques is prevalent in predominantly Muslim areas. In American college towns, whatever mosque exists in the neighborhood, takes the role of the '*jame'e*,' thereby breaking down the classification, categorization and image of the grand mosque.

<u>Habits and practices: Community and society</u>

The sketches below will be used to represent social practices associated with mosques in general, and most of these practices are much more visibly affected by people's habits, their social contexts, cultural conditionings and dispositions. Unlike the previous section which looked at rituals, the following depictions are inclined more toward the social, and communal practices that refer to mosque architecture as a cultural dimension to creating spaces.
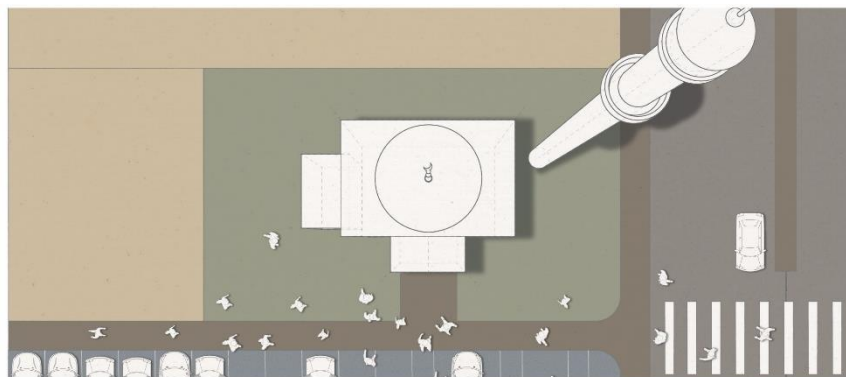

Figure 11. Moving in and moving out

This figure is probably the most 'representational' of the problem of representation in architecture. The image uses a building with a dome and minaret to

show the presence of a mosque in the urban area, the movement of people towards the mosque, and the consequent 'disruption' of regular traffic. And here, the impact of the mosque is beyond the building and even the site boundaries. In the urban area, any mosque that is frequented by the community will at some point cause parking spill overs. Congregants also spill out in the surrounding areas, especially during peak times on Fridays, during the last few nights of Ramadan and during the eids. Remarkable here is to note the shifting of the mosque's physical boundaries, for it is the people who are spilling outdoors, and praying outside the mosque, thereby creating immediate 'mosque space' that only last as long as the prayer lasts. This practice of creating, recreating and ending prayer spaces is performed simultaneously by the congregation, and it is only restrained in physical space by the practicality of having to shelter people from the natural elements.
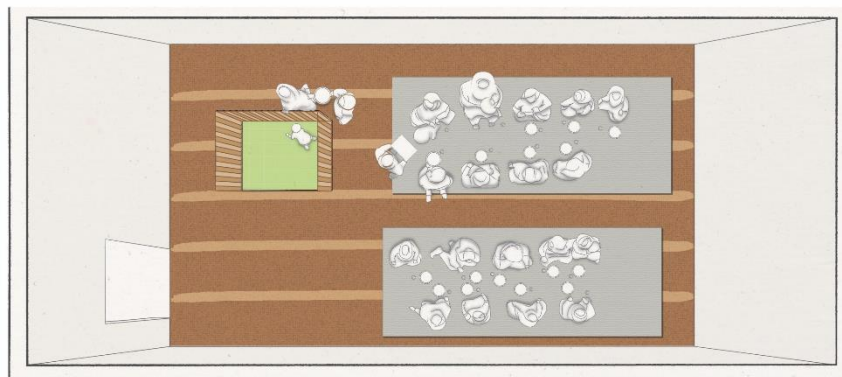

Figure 12. Breaking the fast with moms.

Breaking the fast with the community is a common social practice that is often not extended to the women and children in communities that restrict their access to the mosque. But in college towns where the community is very small and other areas where

women's right to participate is enforced by the law of the land, such a scenario maybe common – women sitting in a narrow, confined area, and in charge of the kids. The design implications for breaking fast in Ramadan are many, and for women's spaces, these implications may even affect which groups of the community are allowed to participate in such social gatherings. In college towns, for students living away from home, the ability and the ease of accessing these gatherings are far reaching. Consider these – for twenty odd years these young adults have known the joy of breaking fast with their families, and in the confines of a college town, they are no longer connected to one of the most important religious rituals which is embedded in the 'social practice' of sharing a meal. The portrayal of these 'snippets' of practices is to bring to the forefront such small, but often overlooked requirements of the 'clients' who commission the 'creation' of 'appropriate' space.
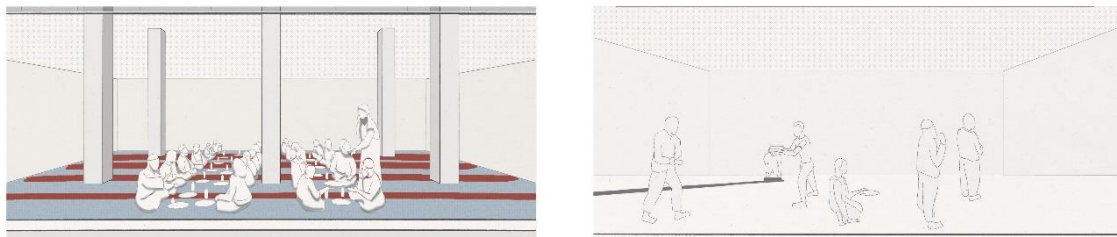
Figure 13. Multipurpose prayer spaces.

These images also depict the practice of breaking fast with the community, but the purpose for depicting these are to bring to attention not just the multi-purpose quality of prayer spaces (although one could argue for a separate space for sharing meals during Ramadan or other events), but also the rapidity with which the scenario changes from waiting to break the fast, to breaking the fast and to praying. Similar to the figure. 4

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above, these practices also require planning on how people enter and exit while others are stationary or moving in the opposite direction. Although these images may not depict the full extent of the rush during this particular 'hour' of Ramadan days, they are a hint and a pointer to some of the problems faced by the congregation irrespective of whether they appropriate spaces or build them ground up.
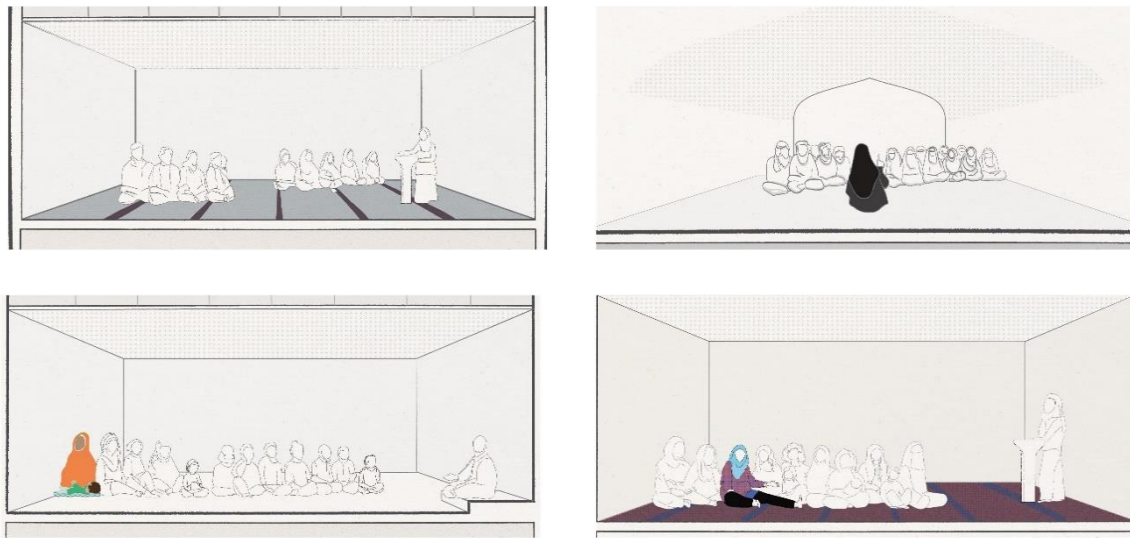
Figure 14. Speaker's corner.

Teaching, public speaking, or holding a *halaqa* (educational sessions) – even though all of these could be linked back to religious practices, the images above are categorized under social practices for a number of reasons. One, the practices listed out are not common to every mosque, nor are they carried out in a manner that is not distinguishable for the college town mosque, and two, because these practices are dependent on the habits of the existing community. In all of the images, the speaker is directly accessible to the community – just contrast this to all the images and snippets

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from the documentary "Unmosqued"[86] or from Nawaz's "Me and the Mosque."[87] Whether or not those scenarios are prevalent or common in college towns, can only be revealed through surveys that ask pertinent questions. For architects then, it becomes necessary to know whether or not the community would accept such a space that is accessible to everyone, and whether the biases of the designer affect certain design decisions that could discourage parts of the community from participating in social spaces altogether. The suggestion here is not to cater to the need of each and every individual but rather to look for subtle nuances in the community's practices that can encourage better design decisions.
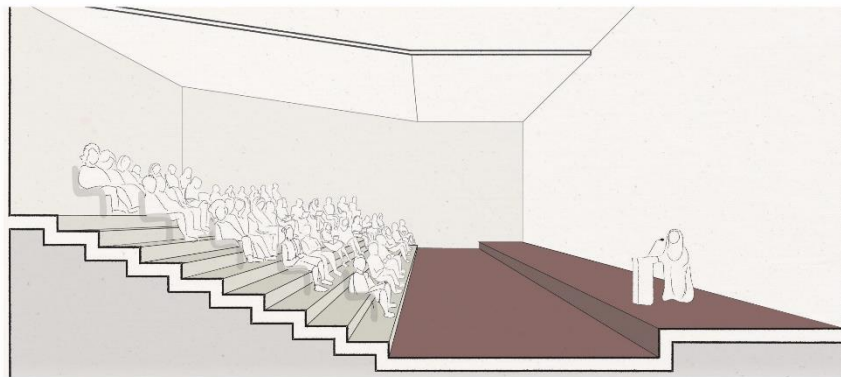

Figure 15. Community engagement or higher education.

Imagine this scenario in a mosque – it is almost inconceivable. This image is an attempt to show that social practices of communities, religious or otherwise, are

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[86] *UnMosqued*.

[87] Zarqa Nawaz, *Me & the Mosque*, Video. (National Film Board of Canada, 2005).

constantly evolving with time and context. Such a space could be conceived for that

community which seeks outreach through information exchange, where there is

engagement with the larger society at a scale that is possible only through institutions.

While this research has not looked at the presence of mosques within university

campuses, re-imagining a mosque in college towns that cater to the educational needs of

those who wish to study the religion and also the needs of those who wish to study the

culture, might, among other avenues, open up new design opportunities that can go

beyond just representation or reproduction of architectural expressions.
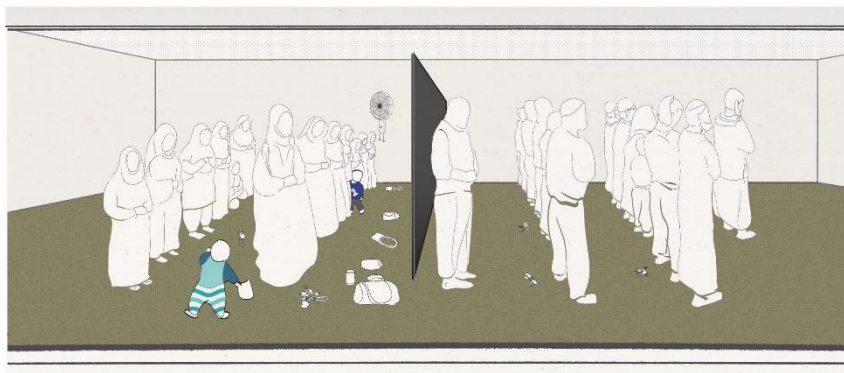
Figure 16. Play.

Whether or not the community decides to put up a barrier to separate men and

women, or place bookshelves high enough to keep books and prayer rugs away from the

children, this particular age group of the community usually finds ways to create play-

grounds and play-spaces. Playing hide-and-seek amongst the stationary adults, and using

the phones, water bottles, keys and purses as playthings, these kids spontaneously

engage in game play. While these observations are exciting, they do not often translate

into practical design decisions. Creating designed spaces for children is not a common

practice even when the mosques are purpose-built. In the United States, and especially in the West because of the multi-faceted utility of the mosque as social spaces and community centers, daycares, kindergartens and schools are often also designed into the 'program' of the mosque. The role of mosques in community building have only been touched upon briefly in Chapter 3. A deeper analysis, however, will reveal how the structures and relations underlying the community, their fears and aspirations inspired by the social and temporal context in which they find themselves, often led to these design decisions for including playgrounds, and educational institutes within mosques.
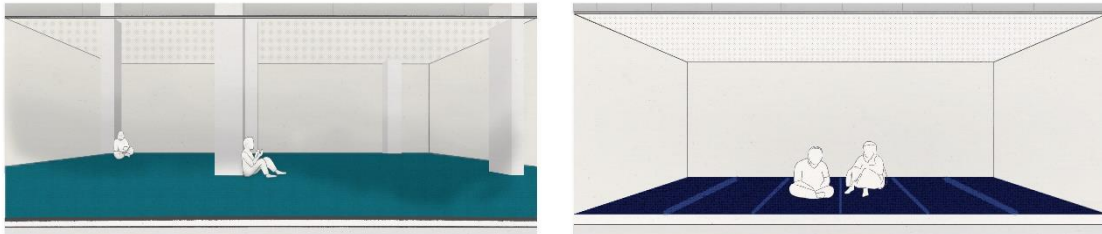
Figure 17. Private space

The mosque is generally understood to be a public facility, albeit catering, mostly, to the Muslim community. The prayer area, which is the most spacious community space within the mosque, also becomes private spaces for contemplation. The waiting period between prayers, and the times at the beginning or at the end of prayers, are often characterized by casual conversations or reflective practices. For example, when someone wants to sit in a secluded space and engage in individual prayers, or recitations, they are not necessarily looking for enclosed spaces or particular rooms or cubicles to move in to. Whether the prayer area is perceived as intimate or expansive, often is not just dictated by design but also by the people's past experiences,

memories and expectations of spaces. Despite the fact that these experience, and memories are often immeasurable, the observable habits of the individuals and over time, that of the community may be utilized in designing affective spaces.
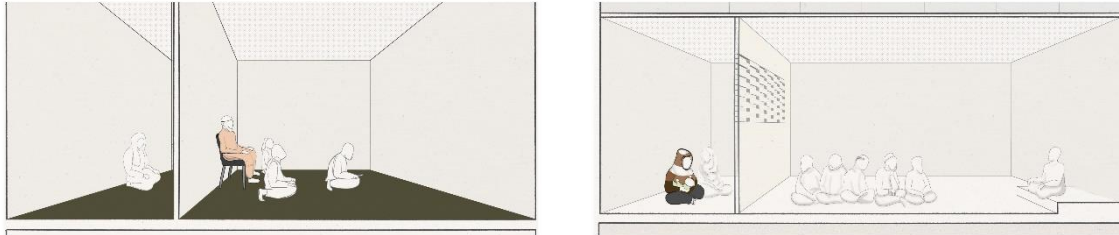
Figure 18. Walls.

The quietly raging debates on whether or not the mosque needs a wall to keep the men and women separate in the prayer spaces are only validated in communities where women actually have access to the prayer spaces. Contrary to popular belief, segregation is not mandated for a mosque, except that traditional practices dictate that women should take the last rows and men should be in the front. Like many other practices in these traditions, there is practicality associated with this delegation of spaces. But people's habits and their social conditionings have dictated the creation of screens, walls and barriers to the point where women are not welcome in the mosques at all. Be that as it may, some women are, in reality, comfortable behind walls and screens – what is barrier to one community may provide a sense of protection to the other. These interpretations are rooted in the culture and conditioning of the community, and the interpretations are decided by those participating in the 'space.' With this in mind, how much of the designer's own understandings and interpretations should affect the design of the women's space? Is a designer equipped with the tools to analyze the relations people

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have with spaces? Can we as designers design something that has both a physical and, a greater, psychological impact on the community we are designing for?

<u>Signs and Identity</u>
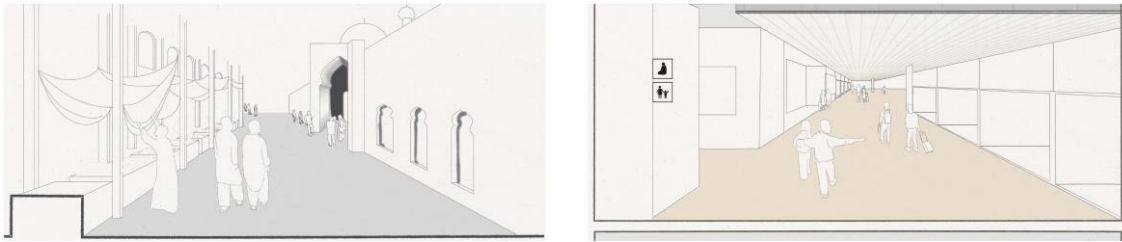
Figure 19. Context.

These images are another representation of how social practices change over time, and how the change of practices affects the meanings and relations between signs, symbols and the objects being represented.

Drawings: Practices in created spaces

The following drawings are representations of practices within created and designed spaces. Compared to the sketches in the last section, these drawings are only slightly different in content – these are also depictions of practices, mostly social habits and practices in the contemporary college town mosque. But in addition to the practices, these drawings are overlaid with the architectural section – the architectural representation of how the sections come together as a built space. What lies beyond the foreground (the architectural section), is the plane of practices. These practices could also be used to construct the built space, by using images, words, materials and textures embedded in the cultural practices of the college town Muslim community in the United States.

Figure 20. The living room

The Muslim community in college towns, depends on group meetings, discussions, and committee meetings. Congregants gather to discuss parking issues, prayer times, program schedules, and opening hours. The mosque is maintained on the basis of relationships between committee members, in their capacities as agents within the community and outside of it. These underlying relationships, sometimes become obscure when architects undertake mosque design, and they resurface when we start theorizing about spaces. College town mosque affiliations with ISNA/ICNA, IERA and MSA, to name a few, often allow these mosques to conduct training and education workshops for students, academics, and the managerial committee. These are spaces of participation, but they also embody representation of memory and nostalgia, through text and image. Providing a physical space for participation, thus becomes important in such mosques.

Figure 21.Student center

Participation is not just among the elders, between members of the management committee and the leaders. Participation in space making and place-making equally involves the students as well, although their practices and habits are often distinctly different when compared to their elders. For a college town mosque, these practices associated with students in higher education, and with a younger population who have stepped away from home, spaces for engagement and dialog may seem appropriate.

Figure 22. The hearth

As discussed before, the mosque is the central social and cultural institution and space for the Muslim community. Culture and practice are produced and reproduced within the confines of the prayer area, every day. This area is where the Muslim community's heterogeneity is best expressed – in their practices, their textiles, and in their interactions with each other.

Figure 23. All sections

Chapter VII

CONCLUSIONS

The mosque as a physical construction has its own history, practice and tradition associated with it. Whether it is studied as architecture, art, or sculpture, this building 'type' will always be based on participation in the practices that give it meaning in the first place. While some of these practices are 'time bound' others are 'timeless' and some are constantly changing, thereby changing the spaces associated with such practices.

As one explores the practices that give meaning to spaces, the representation of those spaces needs to be taken into consideration. Architectural drawings, such as plans, elevations and sections, while invaluable in creating and understanding the actual space, and unanimously used in the architecture, engineering and construction industry to communicate ideas across disciplines, are only representations of parts of the whole. Is it possible and perhaps preferable to situate the social and cultural practices within the architectural representations that intend to go beyond partial representation of spaces? While this thesis does not delve into this, it raises this question as a means to open up discussions on representations.

Islam began in a particular geographical and cultural context, and yet its adherents have developed certain practices that can be recognized as belonging to this religion. Many of these practices permeate the variations of the different sects, and the apparent strata that holds these community together is also translated in their building practices. Whether or not Islamic architecture is only history, with nothing to offer to

those who come after it, or if mosques, and mausoleums are the only architectural practices that continue to this day, are important questions. But in the wider discussions of what Islamic architecture is or was, whether or not visual elements, and aesthetic expressions are irrelevant to a community that is making their own spaces in lands that are unfamiliar to the 'new' building typologies, may be understood by expanding the scope of the discussion, even if, minimally. In the particular case of the United States, the scene is populated by the recent anti-Islamic rhetoric. While the argument could be made for the exceedingly low presence of Muslims in the United States, their 'intimate' relationship with the media or the politics thereof, has pushed their narrative to the forefront. Exacerbated by the lack of early historical records of mosque buildings, there appears to be a tendency towards relying on motifs and symbols while designing mosques in the United States. While these are important and essential, there's also a possibility that in our frenzy to create the best architectural space, we often forget the communities narrative. As students of architecture, we rely heavily on demographic data on the community, and forget about the rich cultural understandings of space that ethnographic studies generate.

Architecture is not just an exercise in design that can ignore the sudden interest in building grand mosques within politically charged discourses in the midst of centers like Manhattan or Washington D.C., or the stigma associated with the Muslim community in general. This project hoped to open up the mosque, not through design ideas of 'transparency' through materials, but by exploring the everyday practices of the Muslim community.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of Research Study: College Town Mosques in the United States: An Exploratory Study of Mosque Design in American College Towns with Islamic Center as a Case Study**.**

Investigator:

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are inviting you to participate in this study because we are trying to learn more about: People's perception of mosques in college towns. We want to know more about how people feel in a religious space and outside it. We also want to know the concerns of people using this religious space and how architecture can play a role in navigating some of those issues. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a part of the community or because you are part of the Muslim community, or because of your involvement with University at some capacity. You are directly or indirectly involved with the Islamic either as an observer, user or as a part of the management team.

Why is this research being done?

We have designed this survey to interpret people's understanding of space, their sensitivity to it, and their feelings of the spirituality of spaces. We also intend to note

what people think of mosques and how their backgrounds and current situations shape their image of the mosque.

How long will the research last?

The survey questions take about 15-20 minutes to fill up. If you are participating in an oral interview on these questions, it will take about 45-60 minutes. As we conduct the surveys, we will invite interested individuals for a focus group discussion. The entire research is expected to be completed by ----.

What happens if I say, "Yes, I want to be in this research"?

If you decide to participate, please do the following: Give your consent to participate in the research. Go to the given link and choose whether you would like to fill a form for the survey, or if you wish to join in a zoom interview instead. Based on your choice, you will be guided through the interview process. If you would like to participate in a focus group discussion, please indicate that at the end of the survey.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to participate in this research, and it will not be held against you. You can leave the study at any time.

Is there any way being in this study could harm me?

There is a risk of discomfort, which is not unusual in such a survey. You can exit the study at any point.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

You may view the survey host's privacy policy. Your (email address or other contact information) will be stored separately from your survey data. We will only

collect the email addresses for contacting you for the zoom interview and a focus group

discussion if you provide consent. All information will be kept on a password-protected

computer and is only accessible by the research team.

Who can I talk to?

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may also contact the

Human Research Protection Additional help with any questions about the research:

voicing concerns or complaints about the research, obtaining answers to questions about

your rights as a research participant, concerns in the event the research staff could not be

reached, the desire to talk to someone other than the research staff.

If you want a copy of this consent for your records, you can print it from the screen. If

you wish to participate, please click the **"I Agree"** button and you will be taken to the

survey. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please select **"I Disagree"** or

select **X** in the corner of your browser.

- o I Agree

- o I Disagree

✳

1. If you would like to proceed with this fill-in questionnaire, please click continue.

If however, you wish to be interviewed over zoom, please leave your email address, and

we will contact you with further information. The zoom interview will be conducted

using a loosely structured set of questions that are similar to this fill-in questionnaire.

If you would like to participate in both, please indicate below. (There will be an

overlapping of questions.)

☐ Email _____

☐ I want to participate in both the surveys

1. You identify as:

o Female

o Male

o Prefer not to answer

o Other... _____

2. You are about:

- o   18 - 24 years young

- o   25 - 44 years young

- o   45 - 64 years young

- o   65 years and above

- o   Prefer not to answer

----

3. Your ethnicity:

- o   White

- o   Black or African American

- o   American Indian or Alaska Native

- o   Asian

- o   Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- o   Prefer not to answer

- o   Other _____

----

4. Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?

- o   Yes

- o   None of these

- o   Prefer not to answer

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5. Your country of origin:

▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

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6. You are:

- ☐   A student

- ☐   In academia

- ☐   A service provider

- ☐   A home-maker

- ☐   Other _____

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7. You are a:

☐ High school student

☐ College student

☐ Graduate student

☐ International student

----

8. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have

received?

o Less than high school degree

o High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)

o Some college but no degree

o Associate degree in college (2-year)

o Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)

o Master's degree

o Doctoral degree

o Professional degree (JD, MD)

o Other _____

----

9. Your religious belief/ faith tradition/ spiritual inclination, if any:

- o Christianity

- o Judaism

- o Islam

- o Buddhism

- o Non-theistic world view

- o Prefer not to answer

- o Other: _____

---

10. Were you born in a Muslim family?

- o Yes

- o No

- o Other _____

End of Block: About you

Start of Block: Zoom interview

1. What day works best for you for a zoom interview?

*

2. Time:

*

1. Your favorite space or place:

----

2. You are most aware of the space you are in:

(Please arrange in order of relevance)

_____ At work

_____ While learning

_____ While practicing mindfulness

_____ While relaxing

_____ At home

----

3. What comes to mind when you hear 'well-designed' space?

(Select all relevant)

- ☐ Comfortable

- ☐ Convenient

- ☐ Accessible

- ☐ Quiet

- ☐ Peaceful

- ☐ Clean

- ☐ Well - lit

- ☐ Well - ventilated

- ☐ Not crowded

- ☐ Pleasant colors

- ☐ Other _____

Display This Question:
   If Device Type Is Mobile

4. "Architecture" reminds you of:

4. "Architecture" reminds you of:

Architect	Structure	Building	Design	Computers	Aesthetics
Langford	Construction	Arches	Engineering	Modernism	Space
Minimalism	Comfort	Light	Sustainability	Profession	Accessible
History and Heritage	Renaissance	Tectonics	Graphics	Color	Home
Art	Cost	Facility	Eiffel Tower	Empire State Building	Colosseum
		Hagia Sophia	Fallingwater		

5. How familiar are you with architecture as a topic?

- o Extremely familiar

- o Very familiar

- o Moderately familiar

- o Slightly familiar

- o Not familiar at all

End of Block: Your thoughts on spaces and places in GENERAL

Start of Block: Spiritual and religious spaces

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "3."

X→

1. Select all that apply:

	Spiritual Space	Religious Space	Sacred Space
Comfortable	☐	☐	☐
Convenient	☐	☐	☐
Accessible	☐	☐	☐
Quiet	☐	☐	☐
Peaceful	☐	☐	☐
Clean	☐	☐	☐
Well - lit	☐	☐	☐
Well - ventilated	☐	☐	☐
Not crowded	☐	☐	☐
Pleasant colors	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐

2. According to you, are religious spaces and spiritual spaces different?

- o Yes, they are always different

- o Maybe, they are sometimes different

- o No, they are the same

3. How often do you visit a spiritual and/or religious space?

- o Daily

- o Weekly

- o A few times a month

- o A few times a year

- o Never

Skip To: 6. If 3. = Never

4. How accessible is your spiritual/religious space? (Pre-covid conditions)

- o Excellent

- o Good

- o Average

- o Poor

- o Terrible

6. Do you think you would be able to recognize a space someone else might consider to be SPIRITUAL, without any signage, but by its ambiance/ sight/ smell/ or reputation only?

- o Definitely yes

- o Probably yes

- o Might or might not

- o Probably not

- o Definitely not

7. SHOULD a spiritual space be immediately recognizable?

- o Yes

- o Maybe

- o No

8. What is your ideal 'spiritual space'?

_____

_____

9. Have you ever visited a religious/sacred/spiritual space that does not belong to your faith tradition?

- o Yes

- o Maybe

- o No

10. Have you ever attended/participated in a ceremony or sermon in such a space?

- o Yes

- o Maybe

- o No

11. Are you familiar with tenets of faiths that are different from your own?

- o Yes

- o Maybe

- o No

12. Do you think you would be able to recognize a space considered RELIGIOUS without any signage, but by its ambiance/ sight/ smell/ or reputation only?

- o Definitely yes

- o Probably yes

- o Might or might not

- o Probably not

- o Definitely not

13. SHOULD a religious space be immediately recognizable?

- o Yes

- o Maybe

- o No

14. Of all the places and spaces you have visited, where have you felt most connected to the spiritual or divine? Could you please describe your experience?

_____

_____

End of Block: Spiritual and religious spaces

Start of Block: General questions on mosque

1. In the images below, which one do you think is a mosque?

- ☐ Image: Taj Mahal

- ☐ Image: Djenne Mud Mosque

- ☐ Image: Islamic Center of North America, Plainsfield, Indiana

---

3. According to you, what features would allow you to identify a building as a

mosque/Islamic center?

(Please click on all the relevant areas on the image)

Image: Partial of Taj Mahal

---

1. How often do you go to a mosque/masjid/Islamic Center? (Pre-covid)

 o Daily

 o A few times a week

 o Once a week

 o Once a month

 o A few times a year

 o Never

----

4. Should mosques be used for:

 ☐ Religious prayers

 ☐ Education

 ☐ Community work

 ☐ Rishta

 ☐ Other: _____

----

5. How happy are you with the existing conditions of the Islamic Center:

	Extremely happy				Extremely unhappy
	0	2	4	6	8	10

Parking	████████████
Accessibility	████████████
Sound	████████████
Lighting	████████████
Ambiance	████████████
Spirituality of space	████████████
Maintenance	████████████
Community engagement	████████████
Gender Separation	████████████
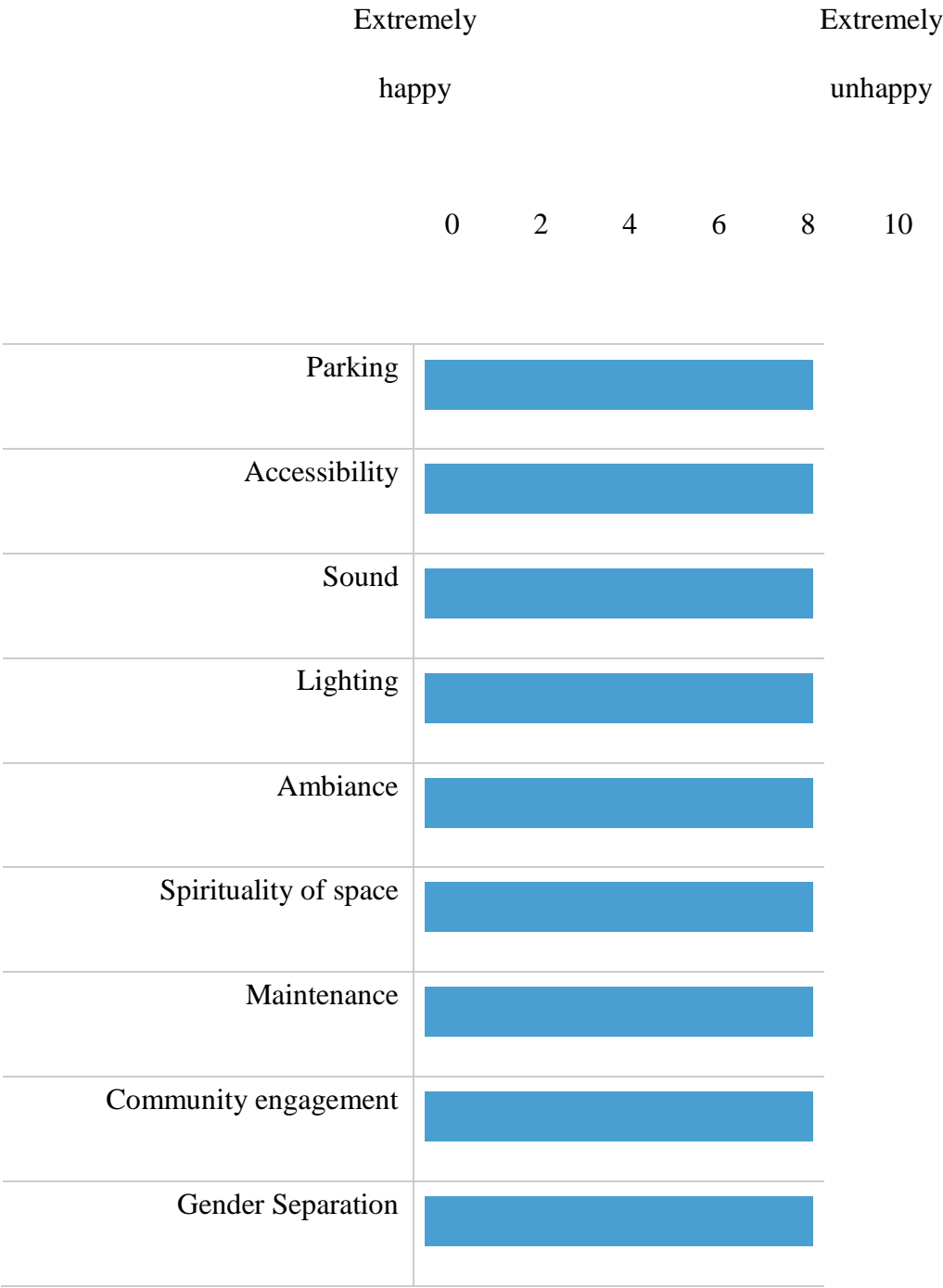
6. Your vision of the Islamic center as a communal religious space:

_____

_____

_____

7. Are you part of the volunteering group, management committee, mosque board, the student committee or any other boards/committees/organizations at the ICBCS?

o   Yes

o   No

8. You are a member of :

(Please select all that apply)

☐   Volunteering Group

☐   Management Committee

☐   Mosque Board

☐   Community Outreach Committee

☐   MSA

☐   Other: _____

9. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group discussion on mosques and your experience of mosques?

    o   Yes

    o   No

Display This Question:
    If 9. = Yes

8. Please enter your email address so we are able to contact you with further information regarding the focus group discussion:

    o   Email: _____

End of Block: Muslims and mosques:

Start of Block: For non_Muslims

2. Have you ever visited the Islamic Center of Bryan-College Station?

    o   Yes

    o   Maybe

    o   No

    o   Prefer not to answer

3. Your views on mosques/Islamic Centers:

_____

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