

The Pennsylvania State University

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**EXPLORING EDUCATION IN ISLAM:
AL-GHAZALI'S MODEL OF THE MASTER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP APPLIED
TO EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE ISLAMIC FAMILY**

A Thesis in

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by

Latefah Alkanderi

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examined the philosophy of the medieval Muslim thinker, Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE), especially as it applies to the Master-Pupil relationship. I consider his ideas in terms of the roles and responsibilities of educators and learners, then superimpose them on his core concepts for the Parent-Child relationship. I then extend this examination to include women as equal partners with their husbands in childrearing.

I utilized two approaches to understand and to interpret the material: Hermeneutics, which is the interpretation of texts (i.e., the Muslim sacred texts and Al-Ghazali's publications), and Ethnographic Content Analysis, which provides an understanding of the material in terms of the culture, society, and values of the people affected by this information.

There have been many schools of thought throughout Islamic history. To depend on a single scholar or school of thought as the basis for establishing a foundation for education is misleading. Other scholars and schools of thought need to be considered. This process must therefore include a comprehensive examination of a variety of key contributors to Islamic education throughout history.

Al-Ghazali was very specific about the curricula, both informally in the family setting and formally in a school, and proposed that the curricula be an integral part of the model. Thus, these curricula are the key links in the Master-Pupil and Parent-Child relationships. Since motherhood is an integral part of the family unit, my study includes a re-examination of women's education from Al-Ghazali's point of view, because some

Muslim women have been denied opportunities or have not been encouraged to become fully educated due to several influences, including that of certain Muslim scholars who have been promoting personal ideas rather than Islamic principles, and that exerted by other cultures.

My findings indicate that Al-Ghazali's legacy contains the seeds of many powerful ideas that can be applied to contemporary Islamic education. The pursuit of knowledge was Al-Ghazali's highest priority, one that he considered to be among the highest forms of worship. Al-Ghazali's theory of knowledge systematically formulated a series of interrelated processes for gaining such knowledge. He discussed the role of the intellect, the way of knowing, the learning process, and the obstacles to the learning process. This is his legacy. Al-Ghazali's philosophy corresponds with the importance placed by Islam on religious and spiritual formation, which is integral to the infrastructure of Muslim families. The practical aim of family education is "to motivate and assist believers in living the Islamic way of life, both externally and internally" (Gianotti, 1998, p. 23).

This research also discusses the possible implications for Al-Ghazali's philosophy on the future of Islamic educational policy. First, in order to make Al-Ghazali's teachings more accessible, the body of his resources could be published in a wider variety of media. Perhaps what we need, as one UNESCO educational specialist suggests, is media exposure of the interconnectivity between Al-Ghazali's philosophy and "modern" education in Muslim countries, in order to demonstrate how his concepts actually can enrich contemporary education in Islam (Idris, 2001). While all Kuwaiti women are officially encouraged to pursue higher education, in reality few of these women are actually able to

seek this level of education. Some of the policies that are in place that are intended to facilitate their education actually sabotage the effort.

My study also concludes that there has been very little examination of Al-Ghazali's ideas concerning family life and interpersonal relationships (e.g., husband-wife, parent-child, and child-child). This, too, leaves a wide variety of topics still to be explored.

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For the last two years I have been studying Educational Theory and Policy at The Pennsylvania State University, and researching the topic of the Master-Pupil relationship. As part of the entire process of study, research, and writing, I had the help of many people who deserve my deepest gratitude.

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Through my research of Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil relationship and my application of this model to the Parent-Child relationship, I have gained greater insight into my own family's dynamics. My research has influenced the circumstances under which Bader and I have established our family both influenced my research; the effects have been reciprocal. I would hope that all families—both Muslim and non-Muslim—find this material useful within their families.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my late brother, Ali Alkanderi, who encouraged me from the very beginning of my studies, but did not live to see the fruits of his love.

Prophet Muhammad said,

O Allah, forgive our living and our dead, those present and those absent, our young and our old, our males and our females. O Allah, who amongst us You keep alive, then let such a life be upon Islam, and who amongst us You take unto Yourself, then let such a death be upon faith. O Allah, do not deprive us of his reward and do not let us stray after him (Al-Qahtaani, 1996, p. 183).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE) was an Islamic theologian and educational theorist. His writings, which he openly acknowledged to be based on Islamic principles, have provided a foundation for Islamic educational practices for generations. His teachings are still so influential that contemporary Kuwaiti teacher training includes coursework on his philosophies. His many publications are a magnificent body of resources on the principles and practices he recommended be applied to both formal and informal education.

Hegazi Idris, a contemporary specialist in Islamic educational policy and theory for UNESCO, said:

You can say the spirit of Al-Ghazali's educational principles is affecting our way of thinking in many ways, and, the [way] Muslims are approaching education trends. But his ideas on the importance of early childhood [education], his approach of interconnectivity among subject areas in education, that teaching methodologies should affect mainstream schooling goals and methodology...some of these thoughts are already in place, but the educators—even in Muslim countries—think they are modern thoughts (personal communication, February 27, 2001).

Before implementing Al-Ghazali's teachings, including his concepts of curricula and teaching methods, however, one must first determine whether his information is still applicable in light of contemporary societal needs, as well as ensuring that it does, in fact, conform to the Islamic faith and principles upon which Islamic education and family life should be ideally founded. Many groups—both religious and secular—are discovering that they have strayed from the original intent and goals they established. Thus, they are undertaking programs to re-examine their sources to determine whether they still comply with their fundamental mission, as well as considering whether they will be able to meet their contemporary needs more effectively by either a return to the original goals or by an overhaul of the purpose of the organization. Therefore, the approach of re-examining these original resources to facilitate modern education in Islam is appropriate.

In Islamic organizations, as in others, there are instances in which idiosyncratic personal interpretations of spiritual matters have been accepted as tradition and integrated into daily life. Some of these traditions, however, deviate from genuine Islamic principles. For example, education for some Muslim women is being severely limited, even though there is no foundation for this limitation in the sacred texts. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine Al-Ghazali's writings to consider what his teachings can offer contemporary Islamic education, especially to correct traditions that have deviated from the original Islamic principles.

According to Al-Turabi (1997), the medieval scholars did make important contributions to Islamic law. However, at the time in which Al-Ghazali lived, society's understanding of women's rights concerning education was limited. He and other scholars of this time were able to separate some of the educational concepts from Islamic principles,

perhaps because of the influence of other cultures, but probably more because of their particular interpretation of the Islamic law in which women's rights were not denied but were not given the importance demanded in the texts. The verses concerning men were expanded, while those concerning women were kept to a minimum without actually violating Islamic principles (Lang, 1994). In this dissertation, I will critically examine this aspect of Al-Ghazali's thoughts, focusing especially on the problems that subsequent re-interpretations of Al-Ghazali's teachings have created for women's education in Muslim nations.

Therefore, I will compare Al-Ghazali's writings to the sacred texts to point out consistencies, inconsistencies, and gaps, and to ensure that they conform to Islamic principles, especially the all-important one that states that the pursuit of knowledge is the highest form of worship. Once I have established the validity of these writings, I can make recommendations concerning potential improvements or enhancements for education in primarily Islamic nations.

Al-Ghazali stressed that his model for the Master-Pupil relationship supported the delivery of information from educator to learner, and also that virtually anyone could be either the educator or the learner. This research is also concerned with the process of conveying knowledge among family members—primarily parents to children, but also from children to adults and among one's chronological peers, so my study includes an examination of what Al-Ghazali said about family life and relationships. After comparing his teachings on these models to the original documentation in the *Holy Qur'an* and

*ahadith*¹, I superimpose his Master-Pupil model on three other interpersonal relationships: informal education of youngsters by family members prior to formal schooling, family support for formal education, and the process of educating women in Islam. This investigation is intended to demonstrate that these teaching and learning concepts are applicable regardless of age, gender, or family roles.

Al-Ghazali's writings emphasize how a strong Master-Pupil relationship fosters the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. My research considered whether Al-Ghazali's model can be applied almost verbatim to the contemporary Muslim Parent-Child relationship.

While his model of the Master-Pupil relationship is widely accepted among Muslims worldwide, there are some areas in his philosophy concerning family interpersonal interactions and responsibilities that need to be re-examined in light of contemporary educational theories, especially those regarding Muslim women. For example, some of his suggestions pertaining to the education of females misinterpret the principles of Islam and need to be updated to be applicable to a contemporary Parent-Child model.

This study also examines Al-Ghazali's key points that correspond with the *Qur'an* and the *ahadith*, and those that do not, to develop an updated model for the Parent-Child relationship, particularly as this relationship supports transmission of information among family members. This new Parent-Child relationship, based on his Master-Pupil model, makes full use of Al-Ghazali's positive points while revising those aspects that rely on invalid traditions that he used to advocate limiting women's access to education. These non-scriptural traditions were originally implemented in his era when it was customary for

¹ To clarify the meanings of these terms, the contents of the *Holy Qur'an* are those words transmitted to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah via the angel, Gabriel. The *hadith* (pl. *ahadith*) are those utterances,

females to be totally dependent on males, particularly in terms of access to education and social involvement. It also appears that Al-Ghazali incorporated traditions from other cultures, which did not always conform to genuine Islamic principles. While Al-Ghazali is still highly respected, as a human, he was not infallible.

This redefinition of the concept of women's role in taking responsibility for educating themselves and their children will necessarily include suggestions for more effective educational policies and theories that may not agree with Al-Ghazali's medieval perspectives. In order to develop educational theories and policies that meet contemporary societal needs, however, there is no alternative but to consider Al-Ghazali's teachings and compare them to genuine Islamic principles to ensure that future educational theories and policies adhere to Islamic principles.

Research Questions

Many of Al-Ghazali's teachings offer guidelines for a healthy Master-Pupil relationship. He discusses the rights, responsibilities, and intended outcomes from both parties' perspectives. This investigation uses the Master-Pupil model to develop similar relationships within the family unit to facilitate the formal and informal education of both children and women.

This paper will address the following research questions:

reports, and narratives conveyed by Prophet Muhammad, which include his attributes and actions. A *hadith* is also a practical example of the implementation of the *Qur'an* (see Hasan, 1995; Netton, 1992).

1. What are the basic features of Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil model, in terms of the social and curricular components of this relationship?
2. What curricula does Al-Ghazali recommend for both informal (family) and formal (institutional) education?
3. How can those aspects of Al-Ghazali's model for the Master-Pupil relationship, which comply with Islamic principles, be applied to the family unit to guide parents and children in learning from each other?
4. What topics or areas require special attention when translating Al-Ghazali's theories into a family model?
5. How can we apply these models and curricula to meet contemporary needs in the family and institutional educational environments?

With the answers to these questions, I can offer this body of information to policymakers and educational theorists so that they can begin the difficult task of redefining and clarifying educational goals and establishing new policies that reflect the Master-Pupil relationship as a model for the Parent-Child relationship. This study scrutinizes the first relationship, extracts the positive elements that can be applied to the second relationship, and creates a new educational environment in which theorists and policymakers can operate with confidence.

Significance of the Study

I address two significant concepts in this research. The first deals with my proposal that Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil model can be used as a model for the Parent-Child

relationship in Muslim families. This concept will be examined in terms of both Al-Ghazali's and other Muslim thinkers' contributions to the philosophy of education. The second concept, which is linked to the first because of the mother's role in the Parent-Child relationship, deals with rectifying Al-Ghazali's and others' misinterpretation of women's right to a comprehensive education equivalent to that afforded to men.

Although nearly nine centuries have passed since Al-Ghazali's death, his teachings are still incorporated into standard course material in many Islamic universities and colleges of education. He is acknowledged as one of the foremost contributors to education, but the information taught is essentially the same as that offered in Al-Ghazali's day. Several Muslim scholars (Ashraf, 1985; Khan, 1976; and others) have also noted that while some of Al-Ghazali's teachings are essentially valid and can be applied directly to education in the Islamic world today—or in any other country, for that matter—the entire body of his philosophy is not wholly accurate or complete (Benomran, 1983), suggesting that there must be additional examination of his teachings before they are applied to contemporary education.

Although many researchers have studied Al-Ghazali's perceptions of various aspects of education and religion (Abul Quasem, 1978; Al-Barjis, 1983; Asari, 1993; Gianotti, 1998; Gil'adi, 1983; Khawajah, 1986; Nofal, 1994; Reagan, 1995; Sherif, 1975; Tritton, 1957), there is a lack of scholarly research examining the concept of education within the family unit from Al-Ghazali's perspective. In addition, there is an increasing interest in Muslim family life among non-Muslim researchers, a development facilitated by migration and the expansion of global communication. Some of these studies (Al-Barjis, 1983; Dakhil Allah, 1996) have investigated parents' educational concerns, while others (Asari, 1993; Bazzun,

1997) have considered issues regarding the education of children. While this study focuses on Al-Ghazali's perception of education within the family, this is not meant to imply that other cultures and societies throughout time have not offered valuable information concerning family management and activities. Especially today, when we have access to global resources on virtually every conceivable topic, there is certainly nothing to be lost by considering some of these other inputs.

Many researchers (e.g., Esposito, 1982; Gil'adi, 1992) have also proposed that the body of Islamic literature is an abundant resource for information for meeting the needs of contemporary life. Yet, it has been "almost totally ignored by orientalists and that nothing parallel to *Family History* and *History of Childhood*, developed by historians of the West...existed within the framework of Islamic studies" (Gil'adi, 1992, p. ix). Because there are fewer resources in Islamic literature like these Western treatises and because language issues may inhibit European scholars' access to Islamic resources, orientalists may be unable to access this rich body of Islamic material. According to Al Zeera (2001a, p. 95), "apart from some creative and serious work produced by Muslim scholars and thinkers in the West, the Islamic academic world at Western universities is far behind what one would expect." She notes that there have been thousands of Muslim students have enrolled in North American and European universities, but the majority of these students choose to research topics of "no relevance to Islamic issues and therefore do not contribute to the development and growth of Islamic knowledge" (Al Zeera, 2001a, p. 95). I offer this thesis so that others have access to this kind of information.

With regard to Islamic women, if one were to review what is presented in the media concerning their lives, it would not be unreasonable to assume that all Muslim women are

oppressed. There are reports that some women in various primarily-Islamic societies are being denied certain rights that women in other societies and cultures—both Muslim and non-Muslim—enjoy, such as the right to vote, seek education, and travel. There are far fewer reports in the media describing the accomplishments of successful Islamic women who are scholars, researchers, or businesspeople, who are making valuable contributions to many facets of modern society. However, lack of publicity does not mean that these women do not exist and operate on a par with men.

In fact, a growing number of Muslim women scholars and activists (e.g., Al-Hibri, 2000; Bewley, 1999; Kahf, 2000; Wadud, 2000) are challenging the notion that Islam is synonymous with the oppression of women. These women, many of whom consider themselves to be feminists, are questioning the male and often misogynist interpretations of the sacred tenets of Islam. These scholars are using, figuratively speaking, a woman's, or feminist's, lens in examining Islam's canon, returning to the original Islamic interpretations rather than those misinterpretations that have prevailed for the last several centuries (Simmons, 2000). The intent of this study is to contribute to this process, that is, to examine Al-Ghazali's writings and compare them to both the original and current gender issues from a woman's perspective. Once we have corrected Al-Ghazali's inconsistencies about women and education in terms of the foundations of Islam, the Parent-Child model can be expanded to ensure that mothers have an equal share in making decisions about their children's education.

Currently, some women in Muslim countries do not participate actively in their children's education because they perceive that education for women is less important. This may be manifested in two areas. First, both parents may offer less support to their female

child because they feel that her education is less important; second, the parents may still be under the impression that it is the father's role to educate the family. Even in those families where both parents concur that all children need a comprehensive education, the unfortunate legacy of failure to educate the mothers prevents these mothers from actively participating in their children's education, because they lack the tools and knowledge already written in the sacred texts to support their children. By validating the need for both parents' input—particularly the mothers'—in their children's education, this research will provide an opportunity for both parents to support Islamic families with young children. It will help these parents take full advantage of opportunities for education within the family environment, drawn from those works of Al-Ghazali and other Islamic thinkers that support women.

In summary, this study explores several concepts (educational relationships, curricula, women's education, and the pursuit of knowledge) in order to understand how the Parent-Child model and the expansion of education for women in Islamic countries are related. I found a lack of modern educational research from the perspective of Al-Ghazali's concept of education within the family unit. My findings indicate that even though there is ample evidence that the Master-Pupil relationship can serve as a model for the Parent-Child relationship, modern researchers are ignoring this link and failing to take advantage of possible further development of this concept.

By including Al-Ghazali and other Islamic educational theorists' philosophies of education in the classroom, Westerners will better understand Muslim philosophy and be able to incorporate these resources into Western education. This will also help Muslim students and others interested in Islam to become more knowledgeable about Al-Ghazali's

influence on education. Al-Ghazali was the author of many publications, covering an enormous range of topics. Through a careful gleaning of Al-Ghazali's writings, I have been able to collect his ideas on the Master-Pupil and Parent-Child relationships throughout his works and compare them to genuine Islamic principles. It is noteworthy that many of his writings addressed a wide variety of family matters; they did not simply focus on the relationship between parents and children in an educational setting. This study gathers the scattered information into a single resource, and then applies it so that the Parent-Child relationship can more easily be identified as a replica of the Master-Pupil model, with some adaptations and modifications to accommodate those ideas of Al-Ghazali's which inadvertently misinterpret Islamic principles.

By updating Al-Ghazali's teachings in terms of the needs of contemporary education and society, both Muslims and Westerners can benefit from his large body of work. In addition, as the West becomes more familiar with Islamic contributions to society in terms of education, business, and research—particularly those made by women—a greater understanding of Muslim society will emerge. This understanding must include the re-education of Muslim and non-Muslim societies to the realities of Islamic life for women in order to gain a complete understanding of Muslim society.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized to reflect the historical background of Al-Ghazali's era. By examining the historical context of this prolific philosopher, we can better understand his ideas on education, which he claimed were drawn from the Prophet Mohammed and from

earlier scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim. In the era in which he lived, however, there were other, negative elements already absorbed into the prevalent culture in some Islamic nations that had strayed from some of the original Islamic principles. In order to use Al-Ghazali's resources and also to comply with authentic Islamic teachings, I will identify which concepts are consistent with the sacred Islamic texts and which are inconsistent with these texts. With each successive chapter, I will gradually bring Al-Ghazali into the 21st century, demonstrating both what was authentic and where he went astray, demonstrating the need to restore Al-Ghazali's interpretations to the original Islamic principles, in order for women to take their rightful places within the Parent-Child relationship and society in general.

Chapter 2 will explain the methods I used to explore and analyze Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Because Al-Ghazali relied on sacred Islamic texts, I have chosen the hermeneutic method of interpretation and reexamination of Al-Ghazali's ideas. The second method is ethnographic content analysis, which puts Al-Ghazali in the context of his time and culture. In this way, his educational methods and ideas, both consistencies and inconsistencies, will be better understood. Chapter 3 contains a review of the relevant literature, starting with the birth of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad as a leader and educator. Al-Ghazali used the Prophet Muhammad's deeds as a model for his own life and work, generally interpreting the Prophet's teachings to the advantage of the society as a whole, but not always to the benefit of the women. This chapter also includes an examination and goals of Islamic education from an historical perspective. This historical perspective explores the *Sufi* influence in Islamic education, because Al-Ghazali was a *Sufi*

Muslim. This chapter also contains Al-Ghazali's life and era, which includes the opinions of other philosophers who have written about Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil relationship.

Chapter 4 explains Al-Ghazali's theory of knowledge and learning, which logically leads to Chapters 5 through 7, in which I evaluate and analyze the Master-Pupil model in terms of curricula, children's education, and women's education within the family. Chapter 5 discusses the potential impact of those of Al-Ghazali's recommendations for both informal and formal curricula. In Chapter 6, I superimpose the Master-Pupil model onto the Parent-Child model, emphasizing the lack of attention paid historically to the role of women and mothers in their children's education, and in Muslim society in general. Chapter 7 deals with Al-Ghazali's views on women's education and the need to go beyond his philosophy based on the time he lived. In Chapter 8, I examine and revise Al-Ghazali's model in light of original Islamic texts, and their potential impact on educational policy in Islamic countries today. This chapter also contains the summary and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter I will explain how the materials were gathered, examined, and analyzed in terms of the relevance to each of the research questions. I conducted a search for Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the theoretical and practical aspects of education within the family unit, since this information is pivotal to this research. This included a consideration of Al-Ghazali's previously overlooked perspective on family education issues, in order to show how the Parent-Child relationship can be modeled on the Master-Pupil relationship, and to determine the relevance of these issues to contemporary social education. This study uses an ethnographic content analysis, guided by a hermeneutic approach to facilitate the research. I used these qualitative research methods because they are particularly effective for examining and explaining how things are (or were).

As an Islamic researcher, I also have certain spiritual obligations to fulfill as part of my work. For example, wherever possible, I must cite information from the *Holy Qur'an* and the Prophetic sayings (*ahadith*) to explain how or why something is the way it is. It is a fundamental concept in Islam to use the sacred texts to support any findings; Muslims maintain that, "knowledge separated from its proper action is useless" (Von Denffer, 1996). Including references to the *Holy Qur'an* and the *ahadith* is not difficult in my research because Al-Ghazali himself referred to and was strongly influenced by his spiritual

orientation. Accordingly, it would be impossible to discuss Al-Ghazali's teachings without making such references. In Islam, all education has a theological component.

There are certain interpretations of some of these religious documents that differ slightly from other *Qur'anic* interpretations, such as those offered by certain *Sufi* scholars. Al-Ghazali was a *Sufi* and this orientation certainly affected his perceptions to a certain degree, although he was not an extreme *Sufi*; many other persons in history have held more mystical beliefs than he did. *Sufi tafsir* (exegesis/interpretation of the *Holy Qur'an*) is notable for its attempt to go beyond the apparent meaning of the *Qur'anic* text "in order to derive deeper, hidden meanings through intuitive perception" (Mir, 1995, p. 175). There is uniform agreement among all Muslims that the *Holy Qur'an* is whole and complete as written; however, I will adhere strictly to the essential texts without considering interpretations that may have been embellished. For the purposes of this study, all interpretations will adhere to those traditional orthodox understandings of the sacred texts that are uniformly accepted by all Muslims.

Qualitative Media Analysis

My study includes two primary sources of data: scholarly books and Internet documentation. These sources yielded three classes of information: primary, secondary, and auxiliary. These classifications correspond to those proposed by Altheide (1996). The first group includes writings recorded by Al-Ghazali himself (including translations made many years after his death), which are the primary documents to be analyzed. The main resource is Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*, which is

comprised of several volumes written in the 12th century. Some of Al-Ghazali's other works are explored, also, such as *Deliverance from Error* and *O Disciple*. Some of the materials were written in English or translated into English by other authors. Some of the resources were only available in Arabic; I translated these documents myself. In all cases, regardless of the language used in the source document, the interpretations were equivalent.

Another primary resource for this research was Al-Zabidi's (n.d.) *Commentary on Al-Ghazali's Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. This is a prestigious interpretation of Al-Ghazali's *Ihya'*, written by Al-Zabidi in the 18th century (b. 1732, d. 1790 CE). This comprehensive, 14-volume study has attracted little attention from Western researchers, possibly because it is only available in Arabic and is not in general circulation in the United States. Al-Zabidi's work is well respected among Arabic-speaking researchers, largely due to the comprehensive nature of his research. Al-Zabidi possessed an extensive library of different versions of Al-Ghazali's writings; he was and still is considered an expert on Al-Ghazali.

The secondary documents include records by and about the primary documents used in the study (e.g., both contemporary and historical reviews of Al-Ghazali's works). These secondary documents are contemporary works written by both Muslims and non-Muslims interested in Islamic philosophy and who focus on the works of Al-Ghazali. These researchers assert that there is an opportunity to integrate many of Al-Ghazali's ideas into modern education because they are still applicable today.

The auxiliary documents include resources that support the primary data, but are not the main focus of the research. For the purposes of this study, these auxiliary documents will include background information on the cultural, spiritual, and historical environment among Muslims to explore and understand the content in the context in which it was

produced. Altheide (1996) also cites Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994), who mention a natural concern with the approach being used in this study.

As with most research approaches, any attempt to look backward from a text toward the author's motivation is rich with problems, especially if the author lacks an awareness of and familiarity with the historical, cultural, and organizational context (p. 8).

I have addressed these concerns through the use of the historical information resources in the auxiliary documents and by virtue of the fact that, like Al-Ghazali, I am a Muslim and I understand the cultural and spiritual orientation he used in his approach to his works. Because we cannot personally ask Al-Ghazali to explain what he meant in his writings, I crosschecked the supporting information in order to validate my conclusions.

I applied two approaches to digest and to interpret the material. One approach is hermeneutics, which is the interpretation of texts (i.e., Muslim sacred texts and Al-Ghazali's publications). The term comes from the Greek word which means "to interpret," and commemorates Hermes, the messenger of the gods in Greek mythology (also known in Roman mythology as Mercury), who interpreted the will of Zeus for mankind. The Greeks developed a technique for interpreting texts, called hermeneutics, which they used to interpret their own legends of the gods. This "enabled them to find contemporary equivalents for words and practices whose meaning had become obscure" (Kneller, 1984, p. 65). Some theologians have used this technique to interpret scriptures and sacred texts, and judges use it when applying legal precedent to new cases.

The definition was expanded in the 19th century when some philosophers (e.g., Dilthey and others) argued that interpretation as a concept, although perhaps not the use of the hermeneutic technique, is applicable to a much broader range of texts, “from teaching manuals to literary classics” (Kneller, 1984, p. 66). Thus, “in contemporary philosophy and the social sciences, hermeneutics has come to refer to the study of the process by which individuals arrive at the meaning of any text,” and that the term text could refer “not only to documents, but also to social customs, cultural myths, and anything else containing a message that can be read” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 630). Michrina and Richards (1996) offer a description of the three-step cycle in the hermeneutic method:

The investigator first gathers data in a stepwise manner from sources such as written texts, dialogues, and behaviors. Then he or she attributed some meaning to the data. This is called interpretation. In the third step, the hermeneut constructs an understanding of the whole group from interpreted pieces of data. With each turn of the cycle, the hermeneut adds more and more detail to his or her understanding...the overall description shapes the interpretation of the next piece of information, and...the interpretation adds detail to the description (p. 7).

Wadud (2000, p. 4) advocates a contemporary readdressing of the Islamic paradigm for women using primary sources. By returning to these essential interpretations, “... the hermeneutics of those sources—how they are understood, interpreted, and then applied—[will] reflect new levels of understanding and human participation.” Al Zeera (2001a,

2001b) notes that hermeneutics addresses social issues as well as collective consciousness. Her perception is that collective social issues are perhaps even more important than personal issues, because these issues impact the lives of groups of people, not just individuals. The Islamic sacred texts address social issues, emphasizing the concept of a cohesive Islamic community and nation, which support the use of hermeneutics to consider these texts for this purpose (Al Zeera, 2001b, p. 112).

I applied hermeneutics by selecting a concept about which Al-Ghazali wrote on educational relationships, curricula, and women's education, and then compared this concept to the sacred texts (*Holy Qur'an* and *ahadith*) upon which Al-Ghazali bases his assertions to identify points that agree or disagree with these sacred texts. In my final step, I considered other scholars' interpretations of Al-Ghazali's writings to determine whether my perceptions correspond to theirs.

I supplemented this hermeneutic approach with an ethnographic content analysis, which is a review of pertinent biographical, historical, and cultural information, in order to fully understand not only Al-Ghazali's works, but also the other researchers' perceptions in the context in which they were produced. Hermeneutics works especially well in concert with ethnographic content analysis. This second approach afforded me an understanding of the material in terms of the culture, society, and values of the people affected by this information. Thus, my study includes background on people and their roles and functions in society, both in Al-Ghazali's era and today.

Ethnography can be as defined as a description of people and their culture (Denzin & Lincoln, and Schwartz & Jacobs, in Altheide, 1996). Altheide also explains that ethnography can be considered as a "methodological orientation independent of a specific

subject matter.” He asserts that the research process takes place in a historical-cultural context, that research is essentially a social activity, and that the methods develop in and are influenced by a social context. Further, he states that this approach is valid when there is a theoretical perception or reason to believe that the method is appropriate for studying this particular type of data. Ethnography can also be used to study products of social interaction, that is, relationships, in terms of looking at one feature (e.g., the Parent-Child relationship) in the context of what is understood about other features (e.g., the Master-Pupil relationship).

This consideration of the observations in context allows for constant comparison among the data (Glaser & Strauss, in Altheide, 1996). The subject matter—in this case Al-Ghazali’s teachings on the Master-Pupil relationship and the application of these teachings to family education and women’s education—guided my orientation and inquiry process. To analyze the Master-Pupil relationship I used these two approaches—hermeneutics and ethnography content analysis—to suggest policies to foster education and interaction within the family unit and to enhance the Parent-Child relationship. Because this approach and these methods have been implemented not only in a systematic and sincere fashion but also with a passion for the subject, as the researcher, I cannot distance myself from the topic I am studying. As a Muslim, and as a woman, there is a great deal of myself invested in this research. This supports Al Zeera’s (2001a, p. xxvii) assertion that an “intimate relationship between the researcher and phenomena under study transforms all parties to higher and deeper levels. More importantly, during the transformation, researchers become aware of controversial and contradictory issues, gradually recognizing the wholeness and oneness of

the macrocosm and the microcosm.” My goal is to help other Muslims in their Parent-Child and peer relationships.

Data Collection

Several stages are involved in a qualitative study. Creswell (1998) describes seven steps in the data collection process, which are presented here in a format that corresponds to this study. To confirm the validity of Creswell’s procedures, the steps were compared to those suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1989, pp. 98–100). While Marshall and Rossman use slightly different terminologies and explanations, their proposed data collection process is essentially the same as Creswell’s.

The first step is to identify the subject, which in this case is Al-Ghazali. Not only was he a prolific writer, but there have also been many interpretations of his works. The primary documents selected for this study focus on those writings that apply to the educational process, as well as on the sacred texts to which Al-Ghazali refers, arguing for the family unit as the focus of this research, since the family is the first institution for learning.

Next is the need to verify the reliability of the resource material. I have identified resources written by and about Al-Ghazali, as well as historical resources describing the culture and customs in his era. I tested each sample subject for relevance using several criteria. First, is the book/article written by or about Al-Ghazali? This study includes only those books and articles describing Al-Ghazali’s life or concerning Al-Ghazali’s teachings in terms of the material being discussed in this study, such as education, family dynamics,

etc. Other subjects are outside the realm of this study. Alternatively, does the resource discuss life in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, the period in which Al-Ghazali lived? These resources include media describing the social, cultural, and/or educational environment of that time period. The next level of resources will include documentation concerning Islamic life, culture, or history in other time periods, for comparison purposes.

Once the resources were selected, verified, and validated as authentic, I collected the data by reviewing the resources and selecting relevant statements, categorizing the information according to topic and its relevance to the study. Once I completed recording the data, I evaluated and synthesized the material and organized the data for presentation. I selected this format to present my findings in order to show their relevance to educational policymakers and administrators in their efforts to enhance and improve education and its delivery to children and adults, particularly in primarily Islamic countries.

Limitations

Exclusive use of document review does have some inherent weaknesses as a data collection method. One potential limitation is that the data may be open to multiple interpretations due to cultural differences (see Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 135). In this case, this is minimized because my cultural background is similar to Al-Ghazali's, which affords me a more reliable interpretation of Al-Ghazali's teachings. To address differences in interpretations among those authors commenting on his works, this examination compares Al-Ghazali's actual writings to the *Holy Qur'an* and to the *ahadith* to which he refers as part of the data collection process, so that there is a single axis around which the discussion

revolves. Also understood is that certain issues raised in Islamic literature are ambiguous, addressing “gray areas” in tradition that are open to interpretation, such as the study of music. In order to understand these areas, I searched for modern trends in either consensus or disagreement as part of this examination. For the purposes of this study, I have considered Al-Ghazali’s works in terms of their influence on the average person, with the exception of his collection of letters written to various kings.

Many of Al-Ghazali’s teachings are written in very formal, scholarly language and address very complex concepts in Islamic theory and law. Al-Ghazali also considered both the conventional and *Sufi tafasir* (interpretations, pl. form) when developing his own understanding of these concepts. The language and interpretation issues can make some of these teachings very difficult for non-expert students to comprehend. There is also an alternative Muslim orientation (Shi’ite) that embraces different interpretations of some Islamic principles. Because the Sunni group comprises the overwhelming majority (Weiss, 2000) of the worldwide Muslim population—and Al-Ghazali himself was a Sunni Muslim—this research will speak from the Sunni perspective.

I also acknowledge that accurate data interpretation assumes the honesty and integrity of the sources of materials reviewed—both Al-Ghazali’s and those scholars interpreting his works. I approached this study from the perspective that all Al-Ghazali’s writings portray his opinions accurately, and that all the scholars who have studied Al-Ghazali’s works recorded their genuine and authentic observations.

Among the secular and modern traditional critics of Al-Ghazali’s teachings, there has been no mention of the concept that many of the *ahadith* Al-Ghazali relied upon were weak—that is, they had very little foundation in Islamic law. Al-Zabidi (n.d.) and others

have reported that Al-Ghazali relied heavily on Abu Talib al-Makki's (d. 386) *Qut al-qulub fi mu`amalat al-mahbub wa wasf tariq al-murid ila maqam al-tawhid* (The nourishment of hearts in dealing with the Beloved and the description of the seeker's way to the station of declaring oneness), in developing his *Ihya'*, and that many of the stories Al-Makki used (and attributed incorrectly to *ahadith*) in fact contradicted Islamic law, especially as it related to women. This suggests that some of Al-Ghazali's conclusions and assertions that might be interpreted as misogynist may have inadvertently been based on false writings. Al-Makki's book includes many contradictory reports and unsubstantiated stories, which Al-Ghazali then used and repeated verbatim. The *Ihya'* refers to some 4,000 Prophetic sayings, with 900 of them being understood today to be unreliable (i.e., 21.5% of the Prophetic sayings he cites cannot be completely validated). This indicates that a detailed examination is in order, taken on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that only authentic and valid Islamic principles are included in any program designed to facilitate true Islamic education.

Summary

This chapter described the processes of hermeneutics and ethnographic content analysis used to gather and interpret the data in this study. The investigation of documentation from an historical perspective involves working with extant material (Aldridge, 1998). For this study, the existing data consisted primarily of Al-Ghazali's works and other researchers' interpretations of his works. I will add to this my understanding of Al-Ghazali's life history, and my interpretation of his works, as well as the *Holy Qur'an* and Prophetic sayings upon which he relied for his inspiration. Using the conceptual template of

the social and spiritual climate of the late 11th and early 12th centuries, when Al-Ghazali lived and worked, I can then discuss and explain his ideas from this historical perspective in order to formulate conclusions based on the information.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

A careful examination of the various contributions to the body of knowledge concerning Al-Ghazali's teachings regarding education reveals a paucity of recent research in this area in the English language. A comprehensive search of virtually all of the dissertations and theses written in the English language in either the U.S. or in Canada over the last 75 years revealed nothing on this subject (Sadeq & Islam, 1998). Further in-depth searches of all English-language publications—both professional and academic—identify virtually nothing accessible in any published medium. This is supported by Avner Gil'adi's (1988, p. 3) observation that “not a single important monograph on the educational philosophy of any Muslim thinker has been published in the West,” which would include other prominent Islamic thinkers besides Al-Ghazali.

In contrast, there is a great deal of published research in Arabic language media concerning Al-Ghazali's work and life in the 11th and 12th centuries. Some of the researchers focused on theology and philosophy, others on education, and still others on politics (Qarib Allah, 1978). Even within this Arabic context, however, very little research has been done concerning education within the family unit. Since some of the research has been documented in languages other than Arabic and English, I included a search for these publications in this study.

The review of the literature, which includes both English and non-English resources, examines Al-Ghazali's classification of the practical sciences and his prioritization of subject matter in terms of the Master-Pupil relationship. I will use this information to propose curricula to support the concept of lifelong learning within the family context. The most logical place to start is where it all began: the birth of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad as an educator.

The Prophet Muhammad as an Educator

The Prophet Muhammad established the Master-Pupil relationship in Islam with the information and methods he used to teach his companions. In order to understand Al-Ghazali's philosophy of the Master-Pupil relationship in Islamic education, I began by considering the inception of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, himself. This section discusses the Prophet's educational methods, ideas, and curricula. I will comment on the continuing evolution of the Master-Pupil relationship in Islamic education since the Prophet's day, noting the influence of *Sufism* on education in Islam, as well as Al-Ghazali's life and the era in which he lived in terms of their influence on his theories of knowledge.

The Prophet Muhammad was born in the late 6th century CE (c. 570) in Mecca, which is now part of Saudi Arabia. His father died before he was born, and his uncle, Abu Talib, who lived in Mecca, raised him. His family's religious practices included idol worship, a practice uncomfortable to the Prophet even before his prophetic calling. As an adult he worked as a shepherd and a trader. When he was 40 years old, the angel Gabriel appeared to him to deliver a message from God, an event that was to recur throughout the

rest of the Prophet's life. Thus began the process by which God directed the Prophet to establish Islam.

Once he became a prophet, much of what the Prophet Muhammad said and did was preserved in both oral and written form in the *ahadith* (Azami, 1992a, 1992b; see also Malek, 1997). Historians have noted that the Prophet took every opportunity to use whatever situation he found himself in to teach a lesson, and his entire life was devoted to the propagation of the Islamic faith and its practices through word and deed. Even in his interactions with non-believers, his approach was always that of an educator: "a benevolent teacher, very tolerant, and sympathetic" (Hamidullah, 1939, p. 58; see also Bilgrami & Ashraf, 1985; Semaan, 1966). He died in Medina at the age of 63, having established a lifestyle that continues today.

There are several *ahadith* regarding the learning process. The Prophet said that, "seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim" (see Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 1, p. 8). Al-Ghazali (1997a) referred to engaging in the learning process as the most sincere form of worship. Knowledge and its pursuit were of the utmost importance to the Prophet. With the very first revelation from Allah through the angel Gabriel, the messages stressed the importance of learning, particularly reading and writing.

The Prophet emphasized that the context of worship includes more than just praying or attending the mosque regularly. One *hadith* in particular reports that caring for one's parents' needs is an act of worship. Likewise, interacting properly (i.e., in harmony with God's requirements) with one's environment—whether socially, ecologically, financially, or otherwise—is also a form of worship. Another *hadith* states, "Verily, knowledge comes by

learning...he who seeks good will get it. He who saves himself from sin will be secure from it” (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, *Ihya'*, Vol. 3, p. 333).

The *Holy Qur'an* reports that Allah directed Muslims to follow the example set by the Prophet, citing the principles set forth in the *Qur'an* and the *ahadith* as the ultimate guidelines for the personal conduct of all believers. In addition to the instructions in the *Holy Qur'an*, over 100,000 *ahadith* are attributed to the Prophet. All of the Prophet's teachings offer guidance in the fundamentals of Islamic education for every Muslim. It would be impossible to compile an extensive review of all of the Prophet's teachings into a single document, since his teachings address every aspect of Islamic life, which is certainly beyond the scope of this research. A comprehensive review of Islamic literature reveals that many scholars (e.g., Al-Ghazali, 1997a; Al-Asqalani, 2000; Suwayyid, 1988) have investigated various aspects of the Prophet's teachings. These early Islamic scholars were able to survey the entire scope of the Prophet's teachings. As time passed, the volume of information grew exponentially. Different scholars then began to focus on specific content areas to show how these teachings could be applied to particular areas and phases in one's life.

Al-Ghazali asserted that the Prophet's teachings addressed the entire life cycle (i.e., from birth to the afterlife). He specifically mentioned the importance of Prophet Muhammad's character and integrity in *Ihya'*, including how the Prophet interacted with his family and other people on a daily basis, supporting his reports with over 4,000 Prophetic sayings (*ahadith*). Allah said, “Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the meeting with) Allah and the Last Day,

and remembers Allah much” (33:21). Al-Ghazali did not just tell people to be like the Prophet; he personally emulated the Prophet in many ways.

Al-Ghazali (1997a) clearly stated that Prophet Muhammad is the leader and the counselor for every teacher and parent. His discussions on the Master-Pupil relationship referred to the Prophet’s teachings. The orientation of all Islamic teachers, then, must be to follow the suggestions and methods of the Prophet. The Prophet conveyed the key principles of Islam to his companions as guidelines for life, which are part of the goals of an Islamic education. Clearly, then, Al-Ghazali’s scholarship is part of the mainstream of Islamic thought.

Education in an Islamic Context

In Arabic, the word *tarbiyah* refers to education, but encompasses more than just sitting in a classroom and learning from books. The meaning of education in the Islamic context includes every aspect of absorbing information, including learning by doing and also by observing others. Ibn Manzur (in Roald, 1994), a 14th-century lexicographer, offers several terms as synonyms for *tarbiyah*, including increase, formation, nourishment, care, guarding, and grow/let grow. Roald explains that *tarbiyah* in the Islamist sense “relates to a lifelong process.” This corresponds to Illich (1998), and other postmodernists’ theories about “de-schooling,” or acknowledging that education takes place all the time, and not just in the classroom.

This insight is evident in the Arabic words *tarbiyah*, *ta’lim*, and *ta’dib*, all of which refer to different aspects of the process of education. They are interrelated in their concern

for humans, society, and the environment, which, in turn, are all related to God and represent the scope of education in Islam, both formal and informal (Erfan & Valie, 1995). In two popular Arabic dictionaries, *Lisan al-Arab* (2000) and *Al-qamus al-muhit* (2000), these three terms basically mean increasing, growing, reforming, cultivating, or purifying one's knowledge so that one is a well-balanced person, inculcated with *t'addab* (morality) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1994). Thus, these concepts can be applied to intellectual knowledge, personal conduct, and spiritual growth.

The word *ta'dib*, which Al-Attas (1979, p. 1) refers to as “encompassing the spiritual and material life of a [person] that instills the quality of goodness that is sought after,” is also part of preparing a child for adulthood—a process referred to more recently in Western cultures as education (Illich, 1998). The Prophet Muhammad said, “O Lord God! Thou hast made good my creation; therefore make good my character” (Al-Attas, p. 1; see also Winter, 1995). According to this *hadith* and others, the term “education” refers not only to intellectual growth but is broadened to include moral development. The Prophet Muhammad summarized his educational vision and mission when he said, “I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals” (Al-Bukhari, 1999, No. 274, p. 126).

In terms of practicing good character not only with other humans, but also with nature, Al-Ghazali (in Winter, 1995, p. 17) discussed how “a trait of character, then, is a firmly established condition (*haya'*) of the soul, from which actions proceed easily without any need for thinking or forethought.” The *Holy Qur'an* connects teaching with purifying one's soul. Allah says:

He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger (Muhammad) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them (from the filth of disbelief and polytheism), and teaching them the Book (this *Qur'an*, Islamic laws and Islamic jurisprudence) and *Al-Hikmah (As-Sunnah*: legal ways, orders, acts of worship of Prophet Muhammad), And verily, they had been before in manifest error (62:2).

Al-Ghazali, too, believed that developing good character traits was a form of worshipping God. One opportunity parents have to influence their children in this regard is to help them develop the positive attitudes that instill these character traits. Thus, when parents nurture their children in positive ways, these beneficial characteristics become personal habits. Likewise, when a Master nurtures his students in positive ways, these characteristics can also become good study habits. Al-Ghazali (1951) further recognized that character isn't fully realized until the student puts it into practice. In his words,

O disciple, be neither lacking in deeds, nor wanting in *states*,² but be sure that knowledge alone does not strengthen the hand. Here is an illustration:

² In the introduction to his translation of Al-Ghazali's book, *O Disciple*, Scherer (1951, p. xxiii) explained that Al-Ghazali's understanding was that the human journeys through life through both stages and states. The stages are "steps in the ascetic and ethical discipline of the soul, which are practiced by the traveler, but are in such a relationship that each stage must be fully mastered before" proceeding to the next stage. Stages are constant in nature; that is, one is always in one or another stage of the journey. He differentiates this concept from the states, which are "spiritual feelings and dispositions over which man has no control." States are transient, and passing through or completing one makes the traveler eager to embark on the next state.

Suppose a man in the wilderness, a brave warrior armed with ten Indian swords and other weapons, is attacked by a terrifying lion—what do you think? Will the weapons ward off the danger if he does not use them? Obviously not. Just so, if a man reads a hundred thousand scientific problems and learns them or teaches them, his knowledge is of no use unless he acts in accordance with it (p. 4).

More recently, various postmodern philosophers such as Berry (1992) and Dennison (1992) suggest that attitudes are incipient acts. They assert that unless and until we change the attitudes that form our behavior, we will have little success in preventing or halting the acts to which we object. This corroborates Al-Ghazali's ideas concerning influencing behavior through positive attitudes and character, despite the centuries and cultures that separate these scholars.

Historically, philosophers and thinkers in many different civilizations have attempted to transform the way we see, think, act, and interact; they have often considered themselves to be mankind's ultimate educators (Rorty, 1998). Taha Hussein (in Galal, 1994) has long been revered by some Egyptian scholars as a great educational philosopher. In *The Future of Education in Egypt*, he devoted a whole section of his book to explaining the role of the teacher. Galal offers Hussein's example of the traditional Arab-Islamic educator whose job was to prepare and develop the rulers' sons to "assume the tasks of government, administration, and leadership, instilling in them the uprightness befitting an exemplar, who must direct and manage the affairs of the people" (p. 702). Hussein stresses that the teacher

does not “merely fill the pupil’s head with knowledge,” but also needs to “train and discipline [the pupil’s] mind...to prepare him for practical life and...to raise his intellectual level” (p. 702). (See also Al-Ghazali, 1997a; Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Illich, 1998; Prakash, 1993; Gajardo, 1993.)

Berry (in Smith, 2000) explains the intent of education from the post-modern viewpoint. Smith (2000, p. 13) interviewed this prolific post-modernist writer and asked him about education:

My approach to education would be like my approach to everything else. I’d change the standard. I would make the standard that of community health rather than career of the student. You see, if you make the standard the health of the community, that would change everything. Once you begin to ask what would be best thing for our community, what’s the best thing that we can do here for our community, you can rule out any kind of knowledge.

Berry (in Smith, p. 14) concludes by saying “we are teaching as if the purpose of knowledge is to help people have careers or to make them better employees, and that’s a great and tragic mistake.” Al-Ghazali (in Faris, 1991, p. 202) encouraged his students to seek knowledge in order to contribute to the entire community, not just for personal gain.

It is mentioned in the Books of Israel [*al-Israeliyat*] that a certain wise man had composed three hundred and sixty works on wisdom and thus

earned the sobriquet *al-Hakim* (the wise). Thereupon God revealed to the prophet of Israel at that time saying, ‘speak unto such and such a person and tell him.’ Thus said the Lord: ‘You have filled the earth with twaddle but you have not mentioned me in a single word; therefore, I accept nothing of it.’ On being so informed, the wise man repented and, abjuring his twaddle, mixed with the common folk and roamed the streets befriending all the children of Israel, and humbled himself. Then God revealed to the prophet saying, ‘Tell him, now you have gained my [favor].’

In this light, researchers might reasonably inquire whether today’s universities are more oriented towards preparing students for successful careers, or towards fulfilling both the students’ career goals and the communities’ wealth? Gianotti (2000, p. 3) confirms that Al-Ghazali’s philosophies acknowledge that the ultimate goal of learning and knowledge should be to consider the welfare of the community, which was the original intent of today’s academic institutions, which he agrees were “built to educate our emerging professionals and leaders,” but which have “degenerated into something of an ego factory, encouraging scholars to be more concerned with their publication records, grant applications, and public notoriety than mentoring their students and serving the wider non-academic community.”

The Aims of Islamic Education

The ultimate intention and goal for Muslims is to live their lives in accordance with God's requirements so that they can see God in the next life. This requires learning what God's requirements are in order to know in which direction to go. Several of the *ahadith* illustrate these aims, which are generally reached by acquiring knowledge (education) and implementing what one has learned.

The Prophet said, "Fear Allah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good deed and it will wipe it out. And behave towards people with a good behavior" (see Al-Nawawi, 1982, No. 18, p. 66; see also Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 2, pp. 155, 172, Vol. 4, p. 276). This *hadith* addresses several of the Prophet Muhammad's aims. The first statement is an acknowledgment between the human and Allah that one should maintain the purity of one's soul for Allah at all times because Allah is always watching what we do. The second statement recommends that one atone for one's misdeeds and make every effort to correct one's mistakes.

The last aim of this *hadith* has to do with the social environment at the time this *hadith* was recorded. The Prophet wanted people to know that they do not exist on this planet alone; rather, we live in a society. Therefore, it is imperative that we interact with each other politely, with consideration for the needs and feelings of others. A key point here is that this does not apply only to human relationships, but to one's relationships with all of God's creations. Being good to all beings and dealing with them justly is one of the ultimate aims of all religions. Allah said, "Indeed, we have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs

and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice” (57:25).

One day, the Prophet saw a young man who was very ill and asked him how he was feeling. The young man replied that he feared Allah and that he hoped that Allah would forgive his sins. The Prophet replied that Allah would give him security (Ahmad, 1983). Fear and hope are two sides of the same coin. Allah said:

Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only [persons] of understanding who will remember (get a lesson from Allah’s Signs and Verses)’ (39:9).

Clearly, the Prophet wanted to inculcate the meaning and purpose of fear and hope in his companions. Islamic education is driven by both of these motivations: fear of doing wrong, as well as the desire to do what is right. For Muslims, fear and hope are like two wings by which human beings can fly to every place and can cross onto the way to the next life and reach the truth (Al-Ghazali, 1997a). Thus, the Prophet offered detailed directions for Muslims to understand how to attain the goal—what to do, when and how to do it, and why. This included both men and women.

The Social Climate of Early Islam

The first generation of Islam (622 C.E.) was its golden age with respect to many aspects of life. In the context of women's rights, Islamic females had full rights equal to men (Amal, 2000; Roded, 1999). They participated in business and politics, and were generally highly respected as equal members of society. The rationale was that early Islam was believed to have been built by every member of society, both men and women, rich and poor, young and old, white and black, from all sections of society.

Also, in early Islam, transmission of knowledge was not confined to the male members of the household. Women were encouraged to seek knowledge and to study with others outside their immediate family. Gradually this changed so that only men—preferably only male family members—taught women in the home. However, let us not forget that, “In the earliest centuries of Islam, women's position was not bad at all. Only over the course of centuries was she increasingly confined to the house and forced to veil herself” (Schimme, 1992, p. 65; see also Roded, 1994, p. 76). By the ninth century, women's roles became even more proscribed, limiting their educational opportunities further. Historically, women's role in society was determined as much by social and economic factors as by religious prescriptions (Haddad & Espositio, 1998, p. xiii).

Poverty, local customs, illiteracy, and various attitudes in different Muslim cultures often determined the role of women in day-to-day life, which may have differed radically from what Prophet Muhammad and his wives envisioned and practiced during the golden age of Islam. For example, during this early era it is reported that Muslim women prayed in the mosque (Reid, 1995); over time, women's access to the mosque became severely

restricted. This restriction is counter to the structure of Muslim practice. Regarding the five pillars of Islam – witnessing, ritual prayer, fasting during Ramadan, almsgiving, and pilgrimage to Mecca – are the responsibilities of both men and women. Islam, at its core, is egalitarian, preaching the human dignity of both men and women. The Prophet, in one *hadith*, is quoted as saying that “They (men and women) are equal as the teeth on a comb” (Waddy, 1980, p. 5). He practiced what he preached, socializing with men and women in the community, treating them equally.

The social aspects of any culture reflect its politics and economics. In the beginning of Islam, society was very simple, easy to manage, and confined to a relatively small area. By the 13th century C.E., Islam expanded beyond the Arab Peninsula. This expansion led many cultures to influence and be influenced by Islam. With the collapse of the Abbasids Dynasty (750 -1258 C.E.) as a result of Mongol invasion – who brought with them a patriarchal, nomadic culture – the power of the dynasty declined. The last Caliph in Baghdad was murdered by the Mongols (Netton, 1997, p. 1). This collapse had a negative effect on the social life of the Muslims, as well as on their educational system. It is also possible that the rise of a war-like state rendered women less important. Schools were destroyed and people became fearful for their daughters. One of the characteristics during the Ottoman period (1281-1924 C.E.) was seclusion of women, most likely necessitated to maintain their safety and modesty. Unfortunately, some Muslim thinkers interpreted this need for modesty and privacy into an essentially prison-like existence. Seclusion may have been a way to combat insecurity resulting from a society where law and order did not prevail, such as it was during the Mongolian invasion (Waddy, 1980, p. 123). After years in which seclusion was the norm, although some curious people were able to make a dramatic

shift, many people adjusted more slowly and gradually to the less dangerous social environment.

Bewley (1999, p. 2) lists six other factors in explaining why women became inactive community members in the last three centuries of Islam's long history. (In the first three centuries of Islam, women were not affected by these factors.) These factors are a reassertion of pre-Islamic patriarchy, adoption of conquered peoples with pre-Islamic practices (e.g., the harem), the infiltration of West perceptions of women's inferiority, and colonial policies designed to keep Muslims, especially women, in a lower status. A legacy of barbaric behavior established by the colonists became the norm; Muslims allowed themselves to be defined by the colonial concepts of barbaric/civilized and eventually defended and transformed it into a reality.

Many scholars note that as in other major religions of the world, in pre-modern Islam the reassertion of tribal customs and historical (re)interpretations as well as daily practices have become the "norm." *Quranic* laws have been undermined to reaffirm the dominance of males, thereby helping to perpetuate the increasing inequality between males and females. By the twentieth century, "the tension between ideal and real would become compounded by conflicts between tradition and modernity" (Haddad & Esposito, 1998, p. xiii). Hofmann (1998) echoes this in his section on "Cherzeh la Muslimah!" which means that behind every successful Muslim man is a woman; that is, her rights to education are valuable assets to promoting society in general. Hofmann agrees with Haddad and Esposito, noting that there is a "sizeable gap between the Islam ideal and Muslim practice concerning the rights of women as provided in the *Qur'an*" (Hofmann, 1998, p. 99).

Lang (1994) reminds us that women in other cultures, including Islam, have historically contributed more to literature and the legal sciences than to the natural sciences. Thus, this may explain why more men are in the natural sciences—in other words, this may not be a deliberate exclusion of women, since women's interests focus more in literature and the legal sciences. This does not mean women should not be educated in the natural sciences, but rather that their interests focus on other fields of study that make it appear they are being excluded. According to Hofmann (1998, p. 99), women's competitive chances in the Muslim world are complicated. While they may be intent on a career (either in a male dominated field such as the natural sciences or in literature and the legal sciences), as Muslims they fully endorse the Islamic concept of complementarity/polarity between male and female, which may color perceptions of equality when compared with women of the Western world.

Many emancipated women in the West have struggled with choosing between career and family life, perhaps regretting that they may have rejected or compromised family and/or motherhood values for a career. Muslim women, on the other hand, see family, motherhood, and education/career as a form of worship, and do not seem to share identical feminist attitudes about having to choose or sacrifice one for the other. As much as Western females try to strike a balance between the often-conflicting demands of family and career on a daily basis, which becomes a political struggle, for Muslim women this is a religious struggle. The Prophet Muhammad said every Muslim is a shepherd and each of us is responsible for our own family; thus both father and mother are responsible for their individual families. For a Muslim woman, then, the conflict between family and career is a religious struggle because according to her faith, she must be responsible as a wife and

mother while also fulfilling her rights as a woman to be educated under *Qur'anic* law, all as forms of worship.

Unless Muslim women prefer to continue their lives as they were in the time before Islam (*Jahaliyah*, or what Muslims refer to as the pre-Islam Time of Ignorance), they must reclaim the rights conferred on them by the Prophet and the *Qur'an*. Pre-Islam, women lived repressed lives with virtually no civil rights. Islam equalized women's status, allowing them to be educated, have careers, and still maintain their status as wives and mothers, all under the Islamic dual concepts of family rights and obligations as well as educational rights equal to men under Islamic law (Abu Shuqqah, 1995; M. Al-Ghazali, 1990³).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the gender debate faced "ground-breaking milestones" with many scholars noting that certain verses and *hadith* were being misinterpreted by later conservative thinkers. These interpretations served to exclude women from areas of authority. These modern scholars are not without their critics in the Muslim world. Thus, intense debates on this topic come from many Gulf-state scholars who want to hold onto the conservative traditions (Ghadbian, 1995, p. 28). This debate continues, and while there may be great disagreement from both sides, at least there is dialog. Thus, there is hope that the social customs, as opposed to religious texts that have suppressed women, will be altered. As the later texts, which have strayed from the original meaning of Islamic law are reexamined and corrected, Muslim women can take back their rightful place in modern Islamic society as educated females, mothers, wives, and activists. The explanation for this

³ This Al-Ghazali is not the same person as described in this thesis. They do share the same family name. In order to differentiate the references, this citation is attributed to Mr. M. Al-Ghazali.)

debate will be expanded in Chapter 7, when I talk about Al-Ghazali's views on women's education.

Access to Educational Opportunities for Women

The Prophet taught that, "Women and men are equal halves" (Ahmad & Abu-Dawud, in Al-Albani, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 399). His direction was that social and moral responsibilities are borne by all, regardless of gender. Karen Armstrong (2000, p. 16) asserts that the "emancipation of women was a project dear to the Prophet's heart. The [*Qur'an*] gave women rights of inheritance and divorce centuries before Western women were accorded such status." For example, one of the verses from the *Qur'an* quoted quite often is:

Lo! Men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah much and women who remember-Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward (33:35).

The reason this verse has been quoted so often is that it is meant to indicate that in the eyes of Allah, men and women are created as equals, with the same religious duties. Since the Islamic philosophy holds education as a form of worship, as Al-Ghazali emphasized in his writings, then logically, women would also have equal access to education, the same as men.

Why then do Al-Ghazali and other Islamic thinkers of the medieval era limit women's education? Why is there such a contradiction? Turabi, a modern Islamic theorist and political analyst, provides the logical answer. He argues that:

Medieval scholars...made important contributions to understanding the *Shariah* (Islamic law), but their contributions were limited by the condition of their era and their historical context. These early scholars developed a scholastic discipline whose considerations became separated from the conditions of application of Islamic principles in real life (Turabi in Esposito and Voll, 2001, p. 130).

Turabi and other modern Islamic scholars recommend that Muslims need to renew the *fiqh* (interpretation of Islamic law) in order to meet the demands of contemporary life. This does not mean that the faith changes, because the *Qur'an* and other sacred texts are inviolate. Rather, the cultural norms of the day must constantly be challenged to make sure they do not stray from the original principles of Islam, as did women's rights to education become limited over a period of several hundred years. Concerning early Islam, for example, Hafsa and other widows of the Prophet Muhammad, were directly involved in

transmitting *Qur'an* to the companions of the Prophet after his death. Hafsa, one of widows, was so knowledgeable about the *Qur'an* that she corrected one of the scribes. Hafsa is also indicated in the literature as the first person to handle the completed text. She may have also assisted the caliph Uthman, the person who gathered the pages of the verses of the *Qur'an*, and declared it to be the official version of this holy book of the Muslim faith. (Roded, 1999).

Armstrong (1992) reports the Prophet's engagement in the day-to-day management of his household and the advocacy of women's rights. This indicates that the Prophet's intent was to inspire all Muslims to respect women as he did. The Prophet's wife, 'A'ishah, reported that the Prophet "would be involved in the service of his family, and when the time for prayers was due, he would wash up and go out for prayers" (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, p. 73; see also Elkadi, 1982, p. 56). 'A'ishah narrated that the Messenger "has never beaten a wife nor a servant, and he has never hit anything with his hand except when fighting in the cause of God" (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, p. 79; see also Elkadi, 1982, p. 56).

Throughout history, however, some scholars (Al-Qurtubi, 1966) have embraced competing reports, mostly weaker, less specific *ahadith*, alleging that women were not entitled to the same educational and social opportunities as men. The foundations of the faith, however, emphasize that it is incorrect to restrict a woman's education or social life, and the Prophet did not differentiate between the genders regarding what each was supposed to or entitled to learn. Some of the Prophet's lectures were addressed specifically to women. Despite the fact that the Prophet was confident enough to act on his own, he did not disregard the advice of others, females included. There are several occasions, especially during some of the battles for religious freedom, where he sought input from his most

trusted companions. It is worth noting that not only did the Prophet not discriminate between genders in the learning environment, but he also did not place his trust solely in men. One example of this is when he wanted to encourage his companions to do something, but encountered resistance. He asked one of his wives for advice on how to get them to cooperate and she suggested that he set the example by doing it himself, and then the companions would follow suit. He took her advice—in this instance, cutting his hair—and his companions then cut their hair (Al-Mawdudi, 2001). This demonstrates that he did consult with women, that he did take their advice, and that their observations are worthwhile because his wife correctly recognized what would happen as a result. This is certainly not the only recorded incidence of intelligent Muslim women offering advice to Muslim men, and until about 300 years ago this kind of situation was not unusual.

Ahmed (1992) suggests that the Prophet's commitment to seeking women's opinions demonstrated his affirmation of their perspective, even concerning matters of spiritual and social importance. This inclusiveness continued to be a feature of the Muslim community in the years immediately following the Prophet's death. One demonstration of this is the acceptance of women's contributions to the collection and narration of the *ahadith* (Ahmed, p. 72). Ibn 'Umar (in Al-Bukhari, 1999, No. 212) reported that the Prophet said, "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for your flocks. A trustee is a shepherd, and he is responsible. A man is a shepherd for his family, and he is responsible. A woman is a shepherd over the home, and she is responsible. Verily, all of you are shepherds." From the beginning of Islam (622 CE), men and women were instructed in both the spiritual and intellectual aspects of Muslim life as part of the learning process. As life becomes more complex, people are required to learn and do more in order to function effectively in the

world. Consequently, limiting anyone's knowledge or access to information seriously hinders the person's ability to manage in life.

Spiritual and Intellectual Curricula

As part of gaining spiritual and intellectual knowledge of the *Qur'an*, the Prophet also provided instruction in the language skills necessary to read the *Holy Qur'an*, as well as in the recreational sciences needed to develop a healthy personality (Hamidullah, 1939; see also Bilgrami & Ashraf, 1985). Muslims are encouraged to remember their spiritual and intellectual knowledge and integrate these skills throughout their lives. The Prophet instructed that both males and females learn to read and write, advocating universal literacy. For example, he recognized that one of his wives, Hafsa, wanted to learn to read and write, and knew that another woman in his family, Shifa' bint Abd Allah Al-Qurashi, knew how to read and write, so he arranged for Shifa' to teach Hafsa. He also asked one of his companions, Abdu Allah Ibn Sa'id Ibn Al-'as, to travel from Mecca to Medina to teach the people there to read and write (Bilgrami & Ashraf, 1985). The Prophet said,

How can some people not educate, teach, advise and admonish their [neighbors], and how can some people not learn, not be enlightened or advised by their [neighbors]? By Allah, people should teach, enlighten, advise, enjoin and admonish their [neighbors], and others should learn, be enlightened and be advised by their [neighbors], otherwise I will speed up

punishment to them (Al-Tabarani, in Al-Kabir, cited in Al-Qaradawi, 2000).

These accounts clearly demonstrate that the Prophet's instructions were that knowledge is for everyone, and that all who have knowledge are encouraged to share it with others. The Prophet did not distinguish between men and women when he advised all believers to seek knowledge.

Prophetic Teaching Methods

The Prophet spoke in a very easy and understandable manner. Because of this, his companions were able to memorize many of his teachings. His wife, 'A'ishah, said that he "used to speak so clearly that if somebody wanted to count the number of his words, he could do so" (in Al-Bukhari, 2001). This was repeated by many other scholars: "Allah's Messenger never talked so quickly ... as you do" (Al-Bukhari, 1999, p. 701); he spoke distinctly so that all those who listened to him, understood him (Al-Nawawi, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 435).

The Prophet used a variety of methods to instruct his companions, such as telling stories and making gestures to illustrate his point. Another approach was to draw simple illustrations to convey some of his abstract ideas. The implication here is to tailor the lesson to the learner, with the goal being that the learner gains from the interchange. The Prophet stressed the honor in this process when he said, "I and the person who looks after an orphan

and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this,” putting his index and middle fingers together (Al-Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 8, Book 73, No. 34).

Besides the content of the lessons, the Prophet endeavored to optimize the atmosphere for learning, such as considering location and timing. One of his companions reported that, “the Prophet used to take care of us in preaching by selecting a suitable time, so that we might not get bored. He abstained from pestering us with sermons and knowledge all the time” (Al-Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 1, Book 3, No. 68). Another factor was the nature of the audience. It is clearly evident that the Prophet’s teachings were “clear enough to have meaning for the ignorant as well as for the learned and sophisticated” (Muessig & Allen, 1962, p. 136).

The Prophet was also known for tailoring specific lessons to a particular pupil, just as a parent may modify instructions to a specific child. For example, one day the Prophet heard someone mocking the man making the call to prayer (known as the *‘Adhan*). The Prophet disciplined the offender in front of his friends. The punishment was for the mocker to repeat the *‘Adhan*, himself. At first, the man was very uncomfortable and nervous because he did not know the words. But, after being personally taught by the Prophet how to make the call to prayer, he realized that the Prophet had given him a gift. The man later acknowledged that being able to make the *‘Adhan* became one of his favorite activities (Ibn Jurayj, 1992). Allah said, “And by the mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask (Allah’s) Forgiveness for them; and consult them in the affairs” (3:159). The implication here is that the success of any lesson depends on its being appropriate to the learner.

The Prophet's guidelines for determining an appropriate punishment or penalty for undesirable behavior were that the consequences should be related to the offense. The Prophet's companions commented that this approach to discipline helped them remember what they were taught. The implication here is that undesirable behavior need not be merely suppressed (e.g., just telling the person to stop the inappropriate action), and that the consequences could be used to reinforce a lesson in proper conduct. The Prophet also used logical reasoning and taught his companions by personal example. His guidelines for human interaction—whether teacher and pupil or parent and child—are as valid today as the day he spoke them. The following section will focus on some of his recommendations concerning social relationships and personal conduct.

The Prophet directed people to be nice to one other. He said, "He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully" (Al-Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 8, Book 73, No. 42). The Prophet also said, "Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them, and make them calm (with glad tidings) and do not repulse (them)" (Al-Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 8, Book 73, No. 146), advising his companions that their intent should be to support and encourage each other, not to make each other angry. These concepts reinforce the belief that one can expect to receive the same treatment one has bestowed on others.

Another *hadith* states, "Teach, facilitate, and do not make things difficult. If one of you loses his temper, remain silent" (Al-Bukhari, 1999, No. 2445). In other words, it may be wise to step back and calm down before one responds in anger. The Prophet also instructed his companions to be wise in selecting their associates. He said, "The person follows the religion [or habits] of his friends; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend" (see Abu-Dawud, 1996, No. 4833).

One of the Prophet's companions reported that he visited the Prophet one day and entered his room without permission. The Prophet said, "Go back and say, 'Peace be on you. May I enter?'" (Al-Nawawi, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 535). Muslims are required to respect the rights and privacy of others. Indeed, good manners (*adab*) are seen as an essential dimension of one's religious education.

Summary of the Prophet's Approach to Education

All of the topics discussed in this section are related to the basic tenets laid down by the Prophet Muhammad. While they may have undergone some changes over the centuries, Muslims are still taught to live in accordance with the *Qur'an* and *ahadith* requirements to love God and follow his laws so that they may be with God in the next life.

One book of the Prophet's *ahadith* (see Al-Bukhari, 2001) contains over 90 chapters, addressing a wide range of topics, including pursuit of knowledge, health maintenance, praying, environmental responsibility, social conduct, support for one's family, politics and government, and finance. These *ahadith* and others serve as guidelines for conducting one's life as a member of a cohesive society. The following *hadith* explains these principles.

The first concept concerns the five pillars of Islam: 1) to testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger; 2) to perform the prayers; 3) to pay *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving); 4) to fast (*sawm*) during the month of *Ramadan*; and 5) to perform a *hajj* (a pilgrimage to Mecca) (see Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, Vol. 1, p. 12; Al-Bukhari, 2001, Vol. 1, Book 2, No. 7). Muslims are required to participate in all five areas.

Change and personal growth come from both without and within. Education is envisioned as a moral process as well as an intellectual one for both males and females. Muslims are required to persist in modifying unacceptable behaviors, and to follow up bad deeds with good deeds in order to atone for transgressions. Allah said, “Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)” (13:11).

A comprehensive Islamic education pertains to one’s inner life as well as to one’s relationships with other people, the environment, animals, and the whole of creation. Thus, the entire world becomes the classroom—the theater in which one’s journey to moral perfection and intellectual excellence is considered the rehearsal for the afterlife.

Sufism’s Influence on Islamic Education

Al-Ghazali was an outstanding follower of the Prophet Muhammad’s teachings. As a *Sufi*, his teachings agreed with the *Qur’an*, and he integrated his personal *Sufi* beliefs with the Islamic principles. He was not as extreme as some *Sufis* were. Instead he brought the basic concepts of the Islamic teachings into *Sufism*. Historically, the origin of the term *Sufi* is uncertain. Some scholars claim that it comes from either a Greek word or an Arabic word, stemming from a Latinized derivation from the Arabic root *s-(w)-f*, the meaning of which was already disputed in early *Sufi* literature (Knysh, 2000). Al-Qushayri (1992) notes that there is no etymology or analogy with another word in the Arabic language to be drawn from the name *Sufi*. The most plausible interpretation is that it is much like a surname, “*tasawwuf*” referring to the wearing of wool. Al-Qushayri concluded that the concept of

Sufism is “so well known that it is not necessary to find an analogy or derivation for their designation” (p. 302). In any case, it has been called *Sufism* in English and other Western languages since the early 19th century (Knysh, 2000).

The normative literature of *Sufism* identifies the first *Sufis* as the Prophet and some of his companions who were engaged in self-imposed asceticism. In early *Sufi* tradition, several people are mentioned in the Prophet’s immediate retinue as *Sufis*, although the term does not appear to have gained widespread usage until the beginning of the 9th century CE, when it came to be applied to the Muslim ascetics and recluses in Syria, Iraq, and some parts of Egypt. Other literature refers to these individuals as *nussak* (devout ones), *zuhhad* (renouncers of worldliness), and *‘ubbad* (worshippers) (Knysh, 2000).

Al-Suhrawardi (1991) notes that true *Sufi* is “he who strived in the purifying of his heart, and alloweth no pollution to abide in him” (p. 41). The first documented *Sufi* scholar was Al-Hasan Al-Basri (b. 642-d. 728 CE), and the founder of the first school of *Sufi* thought was Al-Muhasibi (d. 857 CE) (Ibn Khaldun, 1967. See also Al-Kaylani, 1985; Knysh, 2000).

Sufis have been involved in Islamic society since its inception, and *Sufism* is manifested at many different levels. It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of man and God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world. Some branches of these mystical beliefs follow the Islamic spiritual literature (e.g., the *Qur’an* and/or the Prophetic sayings) more closely than others. Ibn Taymiyyah (1999), Ibn Khaldun (1967), and others assert that the early *Sufis* were sincerely and honestly devoted to their spiritual pursuits, but that some contemporary *Sufis* have deviated from Islamic law.

In *O Disciple*, Al-Ghazali (1951, p. 18) mentioned two characteristics that people practicing *Sufism* aspire to: “uprightness with God the exalted and quietude with mankind; and whoever is upright with God, and improves his conduct among the people, treating them with forbearance.” Al-Ghazali self-identified as a Sunni *Sufi* Muslim, worshipping Allah and believing in the Prophet Muhammad and the Day of Judgment. He was dedicated to purifying his soul and practicing what he believed, in order to prepare himself for the next life (Al-Barjis, 1996). Al-Ghazali’s *Sufi* orientation is evidenced in his writings, and he explained many of his ideas using *Sufi* examples. For example, Al-Ghazali advised both Master and Pupil to work and act only for the sake of Allah.

Al-Madkhalee (1995) expresses concern that, in his experience, some *Sufi* students (*muridin*) have been known at various times in history to become so devoted to their teachers (*shaykhs*) that they perceive their relationship to the *shaykh* as being more beneficial than their relationship with Allah. Tabari (1988) reports an extreme situation in which one *shaykh* allowed his students to interact with him in a fashion that resembled idolization—above and beyond the students (*muridin*) being merely respectful of the teacher, and now approaching worship, mentioning that some *shaykhs* foster this perception. Tabari notes that some *Sufis* feel that they need the *shaykh* in order to be linked with Allah, perceiving their teachers to be “superhuman or divine” (p. 14), and that failure to honor the *shaykh* in this way will cause the student to fail (Al-Dhahabi, 1994).

Al-Qaradawi (2000) reports that, as in any group, there are some extreme *Sufis* who assert that they have heard directly from God or who have attributed superhuman qualities to their teachers (*shaykhs*). These extremists can confuse less experienced students (*muridin*). For instance, it is one thing to dream that one has conversed with a former teacher, even if

the teacher has died. It is quite another to report that the conversation was actually with the dead teacher speaking with you from the next world. Al-Qaradawi notes that there are *Sufis* who are true and genuine in their intentions and interpretations, and that these people are admirable for their devotion to Islam.

Tabari (1988, p. B) offers an alternative perspective. He expresses concern that there are “hidden dangers [in] *Sufism*” and that inexperienced Muslims could be “duped into believing that salvation is attained only by way of ascetic, mystical doctrines, and that the relationship between man and Allah is maintained through a few self-appointed priests.” Tabari’s perception confirms Al-Qaradawi’s observations. The debate about whether the average believer needs a human intermediary to communicate with the divine being is not new, nor is it restricted to any particular faith. In Islam, however, the principle is that each believer prays directly to God.

Sufi Institutions

In the 12th century CE, the mosque continued to be an institution of learning in conjunction with a *madrasah* or similar institution. These institutions were known as a *khanqah*⁴, *zawiyah*⁵, or *ribat*⁶, depending on which country they were in (Iran/Persia, Egypt, or Morocco, respectively). The differences among these facilities were less clear in terms of function, although Al-Subki (1983) specifies that the *khanqah* was established in town and the *zawiyah* was located in the wilderness (Makdisi, 1981; see also Hermansen, 1995; Netton, 1997).

They might include an area reserved for prayer, a shrine, a religious school, and residential quarters for students, guests, and pilgrims or travelers. It was not unusual for the facility to also house a *Sufi* settlement or monastery. Towards the end of his life, Al-Ghazali built a *khanqah* at Tus, where he and his disciples lived together. Al-Ghazali recognized several advantages to the *ribat*, in that here the student could learn without the distractions of everyday life (Al-Ghazali, 1989).

⁴ In a *khanqah*, you might find two types of students: those who travel to study there and those who live there in the monastery. Later, they served as centers for devotions such as listening to poetry and music, and performance of certain ceremonies.

⁵ *Zawiya* is literally a corner where the *tasawwuf* (Sufi students) are taught. It has also been defined as a small *khanqah* (Netton, 1992, p. 264). In some Arabic countries, the term *zawiya* is also used to refer to any small, private oratory not paid for with community funds.

⁶ *Ribat* literally means ribbon or band, although today this word in Arabic has assumed other seemingly unrelated meanings including “frontier post.” While most of the *ribats* were in Morocco, there were a few in Egypt, and the students who lived there were not necessarily *Sufi* (Netton, 1992, pp. 213-214).

The *ribat* offered an environment in which both teachers and learners could focus exclusively on full-time education. Al-Ghazali also emphasized this as an opportunity to bring together people of like interests (i.e., Islamic scholarship). At that time, there were also institutions exclusively for women. Tritton (1956, p. 142) cites instances of *ribat* founded by women.

These opportunities existed to provide housing, study, and socialization for women who otherwise had no families, such as widows and older spinsters. It was not unusual in the early Middle Ages for women to be educated, and Tritton (1956), Roded (1994), and Bewley (1999) offer many examples of women who were both learned in their own right and even taught others. He also notes with some irony that the prestige associated with being an educated woman “had no effect on the practice of succeeding centuries” (p. 140).

Two kinds of people lived in a *khanqah*: the travelers and the dwellers (Al-Suhrawardi, 1991). Each of these institutions had their own *shaykh* (master), and each *shaykh* had their own method of instruction or formula for prayers. Al-Subki (1983) reports that the *Shaykh al-khanqah* was sometimes called Chief Abbot (*Shaykh ash-shuyukh*) or sometimes Chief Abbot of the *Sufi* Gnostics (*Shaykh shuyukh al-'arifin*). The duties of the *shaykh* included training the *Sufi* novices (*muridin*)—protecting them from harm; caring for the soul, not the bodies, of his charges; and teaching them the ritual prayers and recitation of the *Qur'an* (Makdisi, 1981).

The *qari' al-kursi*⁷ (chairman) was one of the various kinds of preachers in medieval Islam who narrated the lives of the saints and recited *Qur'anic* verses and the Prophetic sayings.

Unlike some who recited these things from memory and were inclined to preach in public, the *qari' al-kursi* was always seated; he preached in a *jami'*, *masjid*, *madrasah*, or *khanqah*; and read from a book. He was bound by such rules as presenting what the average person would understand and teaching things without harmful consequences.

The sort of books that could be recited for them were Al-Ghazali's *Ihya*, Nawawi's *Riyad as-salihin*, *al-adkar*, Ibn Al-Jawzi's books, and others (Makdisi, 1981, p. 218; see also Al-Subki, 1983). For the most part, they followed the philosophies of the authors from whom they read, and were essentially warned "against delving into matters theological" (Makdisi, 1981, p. 218).

There is some controversy about whether establishing free-standing *khanqahs* for *Sufi* education—and sometimes worship—was acceptable in Islam. As reported by Ibn Al-Jawzi (n.d), a prominent Islamic scholar born in the early 12th century, using these non-mosque facilities for *Sufi* education alone was controversial because it tended to segregate the worship aspect from the educational aspect, with which he disagreed. He openly criticized using these free-standing *khanqahs* for worship, stating that this was the primary purpose of the mosque, and that worship conducted in a *khanqah* was taking people away from the mosque.

⁷ Malek (1997) notes that Al-Sabbagh (1988) believed that the West adopted the term "chairman" as term taken from the early Arabs.

If additional worship space was needed, build a new or larger mosque, not a separate *khanqah*.

Ibn Al-Jawzi also took issue with the concept of certain of the faithful differentiating themselves from the rest of the congregation (e.g., *Sufi* practitioners in monasteries), especially using this as justification for attendance at these free-standing *khanqahs*. One of the principles of Islam is that all Muslims are equal, are subject to the same requirements and values, and should worship together without discriminating amongst themselves. In his book on *Sufism* and the relationship between *shaykh* and *murid*, Al-Suhrawardi (1991) reports that there was a special garment worn by some *Sufi shaykhs* called a *khirqah* (dervish mantle). He goes into detail about appropriate colors, who is entitled to wear these garments, and why. Unfortunately, there is no supporting evidence in any Islamic law requiring people to wear any particular article to distinguish themselves from other Muslims. They should dress and act alike; no special clothes or accessories are needed by Muslims to set themselves aside with respect to rank.

Some *shaykhs* were also noted as telling their *muridin* that they (the *shaykhs*) were infallible and that they deserved their students' absolute devotion. There is nothing in Islamic law on which to base this claim. In fact, it is acknowledged that even the most learned scholars are human and therefore flawed—less flawed than others, perhaps, but imperfect nonetheless. Al-Ghazali said in one of his manuscripts that this is a dangerous tendency—to present one's self as being somehow inherently better than another—and says that these teachers are misguided. He cites an explanation that Jesus gave to his students of these kinds of teachers being like a large stone in a river in a valley. All the stone (teacher)

does is hold up the progress (learning) of the flowing water (students). It doesn't take anything from the water, but impedes the water's usefulness farther downstream.

As a side issue, the guidelines for acts of worship in Islam are clear and have been in practice since the inception of the faith in the early 7th century CE. Some of these independent *Sufi khanqahs* integrated other, non-authorized activities, such as dancing, into the worship service, which is not a sanctioned activity in Islamic worship. This would, therefore, seem to point to restricting group worship to the original format in the mosque only, which was what Ibn Al-Jawzi was advocating.

Ibn Al-Jawzi was particularly concerned about the *Sufi* practice of encouraging youth to enter these *khanqahs* and devote their lives exclusively to solitary spiritual pursuits. It is a principle of Islam that a balanced life includes human interaction such as marriage, having children, teaching others, group worship, and community involvement. While the faithful are encouraged to avoid excessive materialism and worldly involvement, it is incorrect to advocate that these youngsters eschew virtually all human interaction in favor of a mystical solitary lifestyle. In addition, the community's welfare in those days depended on the contributions of its members. If nobody worked as a farmer, for instance, there would be no food to eat. By involving these youth in the *khanqah* to the exclusion of all other activities, they would reach adulthood without learning any trade or means of self-support, and not giving back any of the community resources they had enjoyed earlier in life. This also perpetuated their dependency on the *khanqah* for survival, since they were not equipped to be self-sufficient.

There are also instances cited in the literature (Al-Madkhalee 1995; Al-Dhahabi, 1994; and others) of some of the *shaykhs* in these *Sufi khanqahs* teaching the *muridin*

(students who live in these *khanqahs*) to just pray incessantly, repeating certain prayers over and over. Very little emphasis was placed on expanding knowledge by investigating God's word. In true Islamic worship, however, the faithful are encouraged to come to know God through in-depth study of Islamic law through the *Holy Qur'an* and the *ahadith*. Thus, these religious leaders were actually misleading their disciples and giving them inaccurate guidance instead of doing what the Prophet said, which was just to follow the *Qur'an* and my example. Consequently, any *shaykh* who gave instructions which conflict with the Prophet's instructions was clearly giving false advice.

There is also a *hadith* that essentially states that the more effort one expends getting to the mosque to worship, the better the reward from God. Incorporating worship into the program at the *khanqah*, where the students may also be living and studying (and spending the majority of their time), minimized the effort needed to get to worship services, thus eliminating the opportunity for spiritual benefits obtained through that effort.

Sufism and Islam Today

Al-Ghazali (1997a) suggested that there were three parts to religion: Belief, Works or Conduct, and Experience of Spirituality. The first two comprise what is commonly thought of as formal religion. Al-Ghazali asserted that while each is necessary, both together are not even enough to offer any reliable guarantee of salvation, which he interpreted to mean absolute escape from the fires of Hell (in Gardener, 1916). In order to be cleansed of sin so that one can have this hope of salvation, Gardener reports that Muslims can turn to *Sufism*, which offers the experience of spirituality that Al-Ghazali referred to.

Before Al-Ghazali's day, and even long after, there has been a tendency to distinguish between Islam and *Sufism*. There is a non-Islamic branch of *Sufism*, and Gardener attributes this to the tendency on the part of Muslim *Sufis* to break away from formal Islam once they've reached a certain stage in their *Sufi* life. "In all times and in all religions there has been a similar tendency among those who have followed the path of the mystic" (Gardener, 1916, p. 132). Thus, Gardener suggests that it is to Al-Ghazali's credit that he recognized that there could be a Muslim *Sufism* and a non-Muslim *Sufism*, and suggests that Al-Ghazali may have been a key actor in bringing this to general attention. It is worth noting, too, that Al-Ghazali's position on this was that there could be no *Sufism* apart from revealed religion. Al-Qaradawi (2000, p. 1), a contemporary Islamic scholar from Egypt, validates the belief that some mystical aspects are needed by Muslims:

We are in need of a kind of divine, positive, and moderate mysticism, which is referred to by other scholars as truth with the Righteous and morality with the Creator...This is the essence of the right faith...True mysticism is, before all, faith and morality.

He further explains those concepts he supports:

This is the mysticism that we need: mysticism concerning the *Qur'an* and the Prophet's tradition-based education and behavior; a mysticism which increases faith, makes for gentler hearts, moves feelings, strengthens will, refines the self, and straightens behavior in light of the *Qur'an*, the

Prophet's tradition, and the guidance of the righteous ancestors. That is what [Muslims] try to preserve and what we advocate (p. 1).

To clarify his position, Al-Qaradawi describes the negative approaches to mysticism⁸ that he feels are detrimental. He offers as an example an instance in which a *Sufi shaykh* was advancing his own agenda over the traditional concepts of doing good works and avoiding evil. Al-Qaradawi and other scholars call this approach “unacceptable” (Al-Qaradawi, 2000, p. 2). He expresses concern in his reports of instances where *shaykhs* have misled their *muridin* to believe that the *shaykh* is invaluable and the *murid* is worthless, and that this misinterpretation leads to “the annihilation of the personality of the disciple before his teacher” (p. 2). Al-Qaradawi also discusses instances of “differentiation between law and reality,” such that one would ordinarily condemn this *shaykh's* behavior according to Islamic law, but that the student might excuse or not even recognize the consequences of these inaccurate instructions because he has been so misled by his teacher (p. 2).

Al-Qaradawi and other Muslim scholars (e.g., Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Alwani; and others) advocate the following belief:

. . . the true renovation of religion resides in the call back to Islam as it was revealed in the *Holy Qur'an* and interpreted in the noble tradition, and as it was understood by the companions and their followers in good deeds. That is, before it was mixed with external beliefs and weaknesses and with the philosophies of the East and the West (Al-Qaradawi, p. 2).

He cites this *Qur'anic* verse to support his position: “And verily, this is my straight path, so follow it and not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His path. This He has ordained for you that you may become *Al-Muttaqûn* (the pious)” (6:153). In compliance with God’s instructions, Al-Qaradawi advocates Islam’s adherence to its pure form “without any partnership, in its clean form without any external additions, complete without any division, balanced without any exaggeration or oversight, a straight path without deviance” (p. 2).

Summary of *Sufism*’s Influence on Islamic Education

The *Qur’an* and *ahadith* can be used as instruction manuals for human operation. Many parts are very specific; others leave room for interpretation. Correct interpretation of these guidelines, however, is essential to knowing how to conduct one’s life. Humans must be held accountable for their actions and how they interact with the environment. Each person must behave appropriately and treat fellow humans with respect, and these rules are the same for both men and women. Women are entitled to the same education and opportunities as men, and likewise, are equally responsible for conveying these principles to their children. In order to know what to do, one must take every opportunity to learn. It is easier to follow the rules when you know what they are, and the same rules apply today as applied then.

⁸ Sufism is the mysticism of Islam. It is Islam’s inner dimension, described as the “Science of the Heart” (Netton, 1992, p. 246).

Some Muslims, like Al-Ghazali, self-identify as *Sufis*, a term used by some to refer to a more mystical, ascetic approach to Islam. As in all faiths, there are certain practitioners who assume a more spiritual approach than others—some even reject some or all materialism and worldliness in the process. As long as one adheres to the essential practices and guidelines in Islam, one is free to feel as spiritual as one likes. As Al-Qaradawi states, however, once one acts or says things that contradict Islamic principles, particularly if these incorrect behaviors mislead others, one has begun to contradict God's instructions in the *Qur'an*, which are to add nothing to it and take nothing away from it.

Al-Ghazali's Life and Legacies

Al-Ghazali was born into the *Sufi* tradition, and is a prime example of a non-extreme *Sufi* who not only followed the Islamic teachings, but also worked to make them an integral part of *Sufism* (Dakhil Allah, 1996), while at the same time incorporating *Sufism* into his entire philosophy. Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali was born in 1058, in Tus, Persia, near the modern Meshad in eastern Iran. His family was Persian, of modest means, had a reputation for learning, and displayed an open tendency towards *Sufism*. Al-Ghazali's father died while he was very young; a friend of his father's who was also a mystic (*Sufi*) raised Al Ghazali and his brother.

Al-Ghazali began his education in Tus, and moved to Jurjan⁹ at the age of 15. At 23 he moved to Nishapur¹⁰, where he began his studies with his mentor, Al-Juwayni. Al-Juwayni served as the *Imam al-Haramayn* (Imam of the two sacred cities of Mecca and Medina) due to his extensive knowledge of and contributions to Islamic jurisprudence. Al-Juwayni was an expert in the *Shafi'i* school of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence)¹¹. He taught jurisprudence to Al-Ghazali, who subsequently taught and wrote a text on the subject. Al-Ghazali's great admiration for his mentor was evident in the way he referred to Al-Juwayni when teaching others.

The respect was mutual because Al-Juwayni is also noted as describing his student as being like the sea, in terms of the wealth of information Al-Ghazali possessed.

Al-Ghazali recorded every detail of his teacher's lectures in his *ta'liqah* (book of lecture notes).¹² Al-Ghazali subsequently memorized much of the *ta'liqah* and published them as a book entitled, *Al-Mankhul min ta'liqat al-'usul* (*Purified Selections from*

⁹ "A region in Iran on the southeastern coast of the Caspian Sea. The region was conquered by Muslims during the reign of Sulaiman bin `Abdul-Malik in the early 8th century A.D" (Islamic dictionary, 2001).

¹⁰ "Also spelled Nīshapur Town, northeastern Iran. Neyshābur is situated 46 miles (74 km) west of Meshed. Neyshābur derived its name from its alleged founder, the Sāsānian king Shapur I (d. 272). It was once one of the four great cities of the region of Khorāsān and was important in the 5th century as the residence of the Sāsānian king Yazdegerd II (reigned 438–457). By the time the Arabs came to Khorāsān in the mid-7th century, however, it had become insignificant. Under the Tāhirid dynasty (821–873), the city flourished again, and it rose to importance under the Samānid dynasty (ended 999). Toghrīl Beg, the first Seljuq ruler, made Neyshābur his residence in 1037, but it declined in the 12th century and in the 13th, twice suffered earthquakes as well as the Mongol invasion" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2001).

¹¹ The Shafi'i School of Law was named after Al-Shafi'i, who focused on the function of traditions (Netton, 1992, p. 229).

¹² Classical Islamic literature indicates that there were many Arabic terms used in administrative jargon to refer to different levels of achievement, rank, and knowledge of students, teachers, and policymakers, some of which are no longer in common use: *mufiti* (one who delivers legal judgments), *mu'id* (a repetitor), *mufid* (one who imparts useful knowledge), etc. (see Makdisi, 1981).

Comments on the Roots), noting that he had compiled these notes to make it easy for the reader to understand.¹³

Al-Ghazali (1996) explains his thirst for knowledge in his works. In *Al-munqidh min al-Dhalal (Deliverance from Error)* (translated by Watt, 1996, p. 21), he says that “to thirst after a comprehension of things as they really are was my habit and custom from a very early age.” Al-Ghazali also studied law and theology with several teachers from different countries. He studied Islamic law in Tus under Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Al-Radhakani.

In Jorjan, Al-Ghazali studied Islamic law using the *ta’liqah* of another professor, Abu Nasr Al-’Isma’ili. He spent five years in Jorjan studying *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *al-Kalam* (dogmatic theology) with his mentor, Imam Al-Haramayn Al-Juwayni, both assisting his professor and teaching at the same time (Abd Al-Ghafir, 1980; Al-Dhahabi, 1994; Al-Subki, 1976; see also Durant, 1950).

Al-Ghazali’s formal apprenticeship ended at the age of 28 after the death of Al-Juwayni. He was subsequently invited to go to the court of Nizam Al-Mulk, the powerful *vizier* (leader) of the *Seljuq*¹⁴ sultan. The *vizier* was so impressed by Al-Ghazali’s scholarship that in 1091 he appointed Al-Ghazali chief professor in the Nizamiyyah College in Baghdad, where he worked for four years. Hyman (1983, p. 265) mentions that Al-Ghazali was “a popular lecturer who attracted over three hundred students.”

¹³ Like many of his colleagues, Al-Ghazali memorized a great deal of information. This was not uncommon in an era when most education was delivered orally and memorized by students. Paper was scarce and literacy was by no means universal, although Bloom and Blair (2000) note that literacy was more prevalent in the medieval Islamic lands than other areas of the world. When Al-Ghazali was reportedly robbed of his books, he offered the robber anything else just to leave the books. The robber reportedly asked how Al-Ghazali could claim to know these books when by taking them, he could deprive him of their contents. After that, Al-Ghazali reportedly spent the next three years memorizing his notes (Bloom & Blair).

¹⁴ The *Saljuq* (also *Seljuk*) Turks emigrated from the Steppe country north of the Caspian Sea to Persia in the early 5th century. The *Saljuq* dynasty was established in Persia in 429 (mid-11th century CE), and

Al-Ghazali's Perception of Classical Philosophy

While he was a professor at the Nizamiyyah College, Al-Ghazali thoroughly studied philosophy, particularly the writings of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi, the greatest of Muslim philosophers, whose thoughts were profoundly influenced by Neo-Platonic interpretations of Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus. Although he later came to reject much of the Neo-Platonic philosophy, his initial investigation appears to have been a sincere search for truth.

After I was done with theology, I started on philosophy. I therefore set out in all earnestness to acquire knowledge of philosophy from books, by private study, without the help of an instructor. God brought me in less than two years to a complete understanding of the science of philosophers (Al-Ghazali, in Watt, 1996, pp. 29-30).

As Al-Ghazali studied philosophy, he documented his understanding of these thoughts in a book entitled *Maqasid al-Falasifah (The Intentions of the Philosophers)* (1913). After some time, Al-Ghazali determined that the conclusions reached by these philosophers, as he interpreted them, did not coincide with Islamic principles. This was especially true in the cases of the philosophical doctrines of an eternal world and an afterlife devoid of materiality or embodiment. In both cases, he found that the philosophers'

gradually extended to rule over Persia, Iraq, and parts of Syria and Kirman until the late 6th century (12th

thoughts were diametrically opposed to mainstream Islamic dogma (Al-Ghazali, 1997b). Thereafter, he refuted philosophy, detailing his arguments in *Tahafut al-Falasifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)* (Al-Ghazali, 1997b).

Al-Ghazali (in Watt, 1996) differentiated among the philosophers according to three orientations. The first group he called the Materialists. This group included some of the most ancient philosophers who denied the existence of an omnipresent/omnipotent Creator, asserting instead that the world exists by itself without divine intervention. He calls these the “irreligious.”

The second group he called the Naturalists. He acknowledged that this group included those who had studied nature—plants, animals, and people—and agreed that these creations did, indeed, come forth from a “wise Creator cognizant of the aims and purposes of all things.” Al-Ghazali identified these philosophers, too, as irreligious, “because basic faith is belief in God and the Last Day,” which these philosophers did not accept. Thus, what differentiated these philosophers from the third group was that they denied the concepts of consequences for actions and the afterlife, Heaven, Hell, the Assembly and the Recall, and the Resurrection and the Reckoning.

The third group was referred to by Al-Ghazali as Theists. Al-Ghazali includes the classical philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, in this group. While the Theist philosophers were primarily of Greek origin, Al-Ghazali also includes two Muslim philosophers, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi, as part of this group because of their support for Aristotle’s teachings. Al-Ghazali acknowledged that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle did contribute a great deal to the organization and systematization of the logic of

philosophy, even though he did not agree with all of it. He also reported that there was a great deal of disagreement within the ranks of philosophers. While they essentially agreed with the Naturalists that there must have been a Creator/Source for Nature, their overall views essentially refuted much of what the two earlier groups said. Thus, while Al-Ghazali agreed that some of these non-Islamic philosophers may have had some content of value to contribute, he rejected their context as a whole because of the conflicts with Islam.

Spiritual and Personal Transformation

In 1095, Al-Ghazali underwent a period of emotional distress caused by a spiritual crisis, rendering him physically unable to teach. As successful and popular as he was as a teacher, Al-Ghazali had become increasingly aware that he was teaching others because it brought him fame and prestige, rather than because he felt compelled to share his knowledge with others. He felt himself questioning his convictions and motivations. He became aware that he felt torn between the comfort and security associated with teaching and his desire to reject worldliness to pursue strictly spiritual concerns (Al-Ghazali, 1980). It was only after he became physically ill from the strain imposed by this emotional conflict—a condition acknowledged even by his physicians—that he felt he had the answer to his prayers.

Then, when I perceived my powerlessness, and when my capacity to make a choice had completely collapsed, I had recourse to God Most High as does a hard-pressed man who has no way out of his difficulty...He made it

easy for my heart to turn away from fame and fortune, family, children, and associates (Al-Ghazali, 1980, p. 80).

Al-Ghazali became obsessed with his search for knowledge. He was driven by his need to differentiate what was true Islam from what was merely tradition (Al-Ghazali, 1980). After some months, he announced that he was leaving Baghdad under the pretense of making a pilgrimage to Mecca, when he actually intended to travel to Damascus. He felt he had to hide his true motives because he perceived that “none of [his associates] could allow that my giving up my career had a religious motive. For they thought that my post was the highest dignity in our religion” (p. 80). He stopped teaching and began traveling in search of knowledge. He spent the majority of his time traveling, primarily in Damascus and Jerusalem, occupying himself with reading and meditating. Although he was well known throughout the Islamic world as both a teacher and a philosopher, he did not identify himself to those he met in order to remain anonymous (Al-Ghazali, 1980).

As he grew in wisdom and was better able to integrate his search into a more conventional life, he began to recognize four distinct approaches to seeking truth. In *Deliverance from Error*, Al-Ghazali (1980, p. 58) wrote, “When God Most High, of His kindness and abundant generosity, had cured me of this sickness, I was of the view that the categories of those seeking the truth were limited to four groups.” He referred to these groups as:

1. *Mutakallimin*, who allege that they are...of independent judgment and reason;

2. *Batinites*, who claim to be the unique possessors of *al-t' alim*, and the privileged recipients of knowledge acquired from the Infallible Imam;
3. Philosophers, who maintain that they are men of logic and apodictic demonstration; and
4. *Sufis*, who claim to be the familiars of the Divine Presence and men of mystic vision and illumination.

Although he recognized all of these groups, he favored the views of the *Sufi* mystics. He preferred their approach and way of life, and followed that path for the rest of his life.

When I had finished with these sciences, I next turned with set purpose to the method of mysticism (or *Sufism*). I knew that the complete mystic “way” includes both intellectual belief and practical activity; the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him (Al-Ghazali, in Watt, 1996, p. 54).

After spending two years traveling to Damascus, Jerusalem, and Mecca, he began work on his most important book, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*. The sheer enormity of this effort makes it his magnum *opus*, and its contents establish it as his defining masterpiece. This work contains the greatest concentrations of Al-Ghazali's thoughts about education, and it deals with every aspect of the inner and outer life of Muslims (MacDonald, 1953, 1965).

After two years, Al-Ghazali returned to Baghdad in 1097. He resumed teaching while continuing to work on *Ihya'*. In 1104, Al-Ghazali returned to his position at the Nizamiyyah College at Nishapur at the request of the *Seljuq* minister, Fakhr al-Mulk, and taught for another five years. In 1109, Al-Ghazali returned to his family in Tus, thereafter devoting his life to asceticism, alternately spending his time teaching in a *Sufi khanqah* (a facility located adjacent to a mosque where students lived and attended lectures given by various *shaykhs*) and living in a *Sufi* hermitage. During this time, Al-Ghazali also wrote *Minhaj al-abidin (The Path of the Worshippers)* (Al-Dhahabi, 1994).

Lifelong Pursuit of Knowledge

Even after he resumed teaching, he still recognized there was much left to learn. As one example, Al-Ghazali admitted that he was not as knowledgeable about the *ahadith* as he would have liked, and he spent his free time studying them. Muhammad (2000, p. 20) notes that at his death, Al-Ghazali was found with Al-Bukhari's book of *ahadith* open on his chest. Thus, he was learning to the very end of his life.

Al-Ghazali died in Tus in 1111, at the age of 55, after an independent and controversial yet highly influential life. He left a legacy of major works, along with numerous stories of his legendary humility, piety, and asceticism. In his book *The Story of Civilization*, Durant (1950) argues that, "all orthodoxy took comfort from [Al-Ghazali]. Even Christian theologians were glad to find, in his translated works, such a defense of religion, and such an exposition of piety, as no one had written since Augustine" (p. 332).

Al-Ghazali's Legacy

To facilitate and support the review of this literature, the *Holy Qur'an* and *ahadith* (Prophetic sayings) to which Al-Ghazali referred and relevant comments made by other scholars who have analyzed his works have also been explored. According to Mir (1995), "Al-Ghazali was concerned not only with reviving the Islamic disciplines, but also with reforming society in a practical way" (p. 62). He also revived scientific thought concerning Islam in his documentation of his perceptions about Islamic life, family relationships, and education. Al-Ghazali felt that everything he taught and wrote about grew out of Islam.

Al-Ghazali wrote about all aspects of Islamic life, including education, social customs, religious practices, and interpersonal relationships. Everything that Al-Ghazali thought and wrote was rooted in and influenced by his experiences. His multi-volume tome, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*, covered the entire human life cycle and what is involved in it. Gianotti (2000) asserts that:

...the entire *Ihya'* is designed to be a detailed and accessible handbook for human perfection, beginning with the outer, action-oriented perfection of the person's worship and social dealings and culminating in the inner, disposition-oriented perfection of the mind or heart. This entire journey, Al-Ghazali explains, entails the outer and the inner aspects of the science of Right Practice (p. 5).

Many Islamic scholars agree that Al-Ghazali documented his works within an Islamic social-spiritual context (Al-Barjis, 1983; Al-Sawi, 1999; Al-Zabidi, n.d.; Dakhil Allah, 1996; Shafshaq, 1980; Tibawi, 1972). Thus, his specific philosophies may not seem as applicable within a Western educational environment, although his concept of children's early education beginning within the family does have universal application.

Al-Ghazali researched many diverse fields such as Islamic jurisprudence, educational theory, logic, and philosophy, and left a legacy of more than 400 books (Ul-Karim, 1978). He discussed formal and informal education from the spiritual, moral, and intellectual perspectives. In the *Ihya'* (1997a), alone, Al-Ghazali discussed the Islamic perspective on topics such as birth, naming, women's and children's education, marital relationships, wives' rights and obligations, parent-child relationships, children's rights and duties, and child development.

Al-Ghazali's views on education were drawn from many elements of Islamic law and precepts that address moral training of the novice within the family context. Al-Ghazali himself proposed implementing his model for the Master-Pupil relationship in the family environment to support parents' education of their children prior to their beginning formal education and to support their children's continuing education throughout their lives. Al-Ghazali placed a lot of emphasis on family life and education. He recommended that parents begin teaching their children how to live good lives from birth, emphasizing the importance of personally modeling the behaviors desired. According to Al-Ghazali (1997a), God entrusts children into the hands of their parents: "The heart of a child is bright like a jewel and soft like a candle and free from all impressions" (*Ihya'*, Vol. 3, p. 75). This means that the new addition to the family is like a sponge, ready to absorb information as soon as it

is alive, and that parents must take responsibility for controlling which external influences make impressions on the child's life.

Al-Ghazali asserted that the family plays a critical role in a child's education and, as a unit, bears the ultimate responsibility for children and for their education. The family unit is accountable for extending its language, customs, and religious traditions to its members. The family adults (parents, grandparents, aunts, etc.) bear the primary responsibility for educating the family's children, and are entrusted to teach them about integrity. Al-Ghazali (1997a) believed that "neglected children will grow up with bad character" (*Ihya'*, Vol. 3, p. 87). Thus, if the parents neglect the children's upbringing, they bear the burden of the sin of neglect (*Ihya'*, Vol. 3, p. 77).

Al-Ghazali's perspectives on education of the family can be studied in terms of theory and practice. He explained his theory of learning according to the *Holy Qur'an*: "Save yourselves and your families from the Fire" (66:6), meaning that each family member is uniquely and individually responsible for teaching and modeling those behaviors that will contribute to proper conduct of the other family members and, thus, afford them opportunities for everlasting life (the hereafter), thereby avoiding 'the Fire' (the alternative). Al-Ghazali (1997a, 1951) asserted that it enhanced the teacher's credibility to live the life you promote.

In Islam, children are born without original sin. The Prophet Muhammad stated that all children are born with *fitrah*, a true faith in Islam (i.e., the desire to worship none but Allah), but his parents convert him to Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism (Winter, 1995; see also Al-Bukhari, 2001). Al-Ghazali emphasized the need for parents to nurture this seed of faith so that it grows and matures throughout childhood; the parents cannot wait

until the child goes off to school (about age six), but must instill values and teach manners and social responsibilities from birth.

Before automatically invalidating any of Al-Ghazali's teachings that might seem irrelevant, they need to be considered in the context of the Middle Ages. At that time, women were learning the *Qur'an* and the Prophetic sayings at home, so many of Al-Ghazali's ideas about education might have been reasonable. In addition, when education for boys was first offered in the mosques, they, too, were given only a religious education. Al-Ghazali categorized certain subjects as not being important unless there was a specific need to know them. Thus, there were aspects of education that Al-Ghazali restricted for both girls and boys within the parameters of what he felt was important to learn.

Summary of Al-Ghazali's Life and Legacies

An extensive review of the body of research and commentary on Al-Ghazali's works reveals that he is still a respected philosopher and religious thinker (Al-Barjis, 1983; Al-Sawi, 1999; Al-Zabidi, n.d.; Shafshaq, 1980; Dakhil Allah, 1996; Durant, 1950; Tibawi, 1972; and others). His writings clearly emphasize preparation for the next life, spiritual development, forming healthy physical habits, and purifying the soul. His foremost pedagogical intent was to achieve nearness to Allah by attaining good morals.

This examination of the literature also includes a review of the significant events in Al-Ghazali's life, particularly as they concerned his education, his educational philosophy, and how he developed some of the ideas he taught. Because he was well respected in the Muslim community as both a theologian and a teacher, and was able to teach sincerely from

his own experiences, he enjoyed wide acceptance in his endeavors. Within his own lifetime, however, he endured a great deal of opposition because of his *Sufi* orientation.

He spent a significant period of time studying the Greek and Muslim philosophers to see what they had to offer about the classifications of knowledge. Although he shared some of their terminology and discussed some of the same concepts, he ultimately reached the conclusion that much of the Greek philosophy contradicted his own Islamic background and orientation, and he refuted the value of these philosophies, even to the point of asking that he not be called a “philosopher” because of the negative connotation he associated with the term.

Al-Ghazali did not reach his decision to pursue a *Sufi* lifestyle suddenly. He first investigated virtually every expression of faith known at the time, and chose his path armed with this knowledge. He had determined that *Sufism* included a very strict interpretation of the *shari’ah* (Islamic law), which he identified with closely. In his book, *Deliverance from Error*, Al-Ghazali wrote candidly about his life experiences and emotional and theological journeys, to the point of admitting personal qualities he perceived to be shortcomings. He described his intense personal search for the truth and source of happiness, which he eventually determined to be the commitment to pursuing the path to see God in the Hereafter.

Al-Ghazali (1997a) perceived that pursuing knowledge is the highest form of worship. He used many *Qur’anic* verses and *ahadith* in his writings to support his assertions concerning the merit of knowledge as part of his foundation for the Master-Pupil relationship. Al-Ghazali’s theory of knowledge offers information to help both Master and Pupil understand how acquire knowledge—both in theory and in practice.

After his death, both his extensive body of writings and the impact he had made on his students continued in his stead. His lasting legacy in the field of education is his contributions to the process of education, his inspiration of others to pursue knowledge, and his formal model for the Master-Pupil relationship. He also valued and wrote about the interpersonal aspects of the family unit and its members.

CHAPTER 4

AL-GHAZALI'S THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In this chapter I will describe some of Al-Ghazali's goals and principles regarding knowledge (*'ilm*), and interpersonal relationships. This section will also focus on Al-Ghazali's theory of knowledge. The discussion will lead us to define knowledge, the merit of knowledge, the ways of acquiring knowledge, the nature of knowledge, sources of knowledge, hindrances to the learning process, and individual differences among learners. Al-Ghazali's theories of knowledge will lead to a better understanding of the Master-Pupil relationship and how it can then be superimposed into the family environment.

The Definition of Knowledge (*'ilm*)

Knowledge (*'ilm*) has always been a fundamental concept for Muslim scholars throughout the centuries. For much of this time in Islamic educational history, the word knowledge (*'ilm*) referred only to the learning of *ahadith* and related subjects (Azami, 1992). This was largely because the only formal requirements for learning early in Islamic history were that all Muslims memorize at least a part of the *Qur'an* and the *ahadith*. There were no organized universities in those days. As education has expanded and grown to include more subjects, the term has come to encompass a more comprehensive meaning.

Al-Ghazali cited various definitions and aspects of knowledge in his works. He attributed part of the concept of knowledge to gnosis (*ma'rifah*). He also defined it as identifying an object based on a person's experience of that object (*'ala ma huwa bayyin*) (*Al-Mustasfah*, 2000, Vol.1, p. 24), and as a quality or a characteristic (*wasf*) (*Al-Mustasfah*, Vol. 1, p. 26). Rosenthal (1970, p. 65) reports that Al-Ghazali asserted that "there is no meaning to knowledge except that of its being an image (*mithal*) that arrives in the soul, which conforms to that which is an image in sense perception, namely, the object known" (see also Asari, 1993, p. 40).

Like the Prophet Muhammad, Al-Ghazali perceived that the pursuit of knowledge should be one's highest priority. He believed that a Muslim's search for knowledge should dominate all aspects of his intellectual, spiritual, and social life. Because knowledge was so important to Al-Ghazali, he intitled the opening chapter of his multi-volume *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)* "The Book of Knowledge." Al-Ghazali (1994) noted that he opened his book with a chapter about knowledge (*bab al'ilm*) because the harvest of good knowledge is to fear God and become pious.

Al-Ghazali (in Gianotti, 2000) wrote:

I begin the whole thing with the *Book of Knowledge* because it is of the utmost importance. First of all, [I do this] in order that I make known the knowledge that is devoted to the service of God according to the words of His Prophet (may God bless him and grant him salvation), the [kinds of knowledge that are] required to be sought. [To this effect], the Prophet

(may God bless him and grant him salvation) said, ‘the pursuit of knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim.’

[Secondly, I begin with this book] in order that I may distinguish the beneficial knowledge from the harmful, since the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him salvation) said, “I seek refuge in God from knowledge that has no benefit.” [All this is] in order that I correct the present generation in their inclination away from the way of what is right, in their willingness to be duped by glimmering phantoms, and in their [total] contentment with sciences [that treat] the outer husk [rather than] the essential core (p. 2).

In the *Book of Knowledge*, Al-Ghazali cited more than ten verses of the *Qur’an* and many prophetic sayings (*ahadith*) about the virtues of knowledge. This is not unusual because Al-Ghazali relied heavily on the *Qur’an* for the bases of his own knowledge, and the *Qur’an* mentions the word for knowledge (*‘ilm*) about 750 times (Rosenthal, 1970, p. 20). According to the *Qur’an*, Allah said, “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah” (35:28). In other words, he supported his philosophy of knowledge with the *hadith* and the *Qur’an*.

The Merits of Knowledge (*‘ilm*)

Al-Ghazali recognized that knowledge has two expressions: theory (knowing, or *‘ilm*) and practice (doing, or *‘amal*); for him these two dimensions were inseparable (Al-Ghazali, 1951, 1997b). Islam maintains that true knowledge is the marriage of active virtue

and knowledge, which requires both knowledge and practice (Gianotti, 2000). There is a traditional saying in Islamic literature that essentially states that faith increases when you practice good deeds, but decreases by doing bad deeds. The key is to know the difference between the two. Thus, it is imperative to have knowledge in order to differentiate between what is good and what is not. Within this context, human beings are capable of free choice between right and wrong, growth and stagnation.

From a practical perspective, Al-Ghazali believed that children acquire personality characteristics and behavior through living in society and interacting with the environment. Al-Ghazali (1978) claimed that, “nobody can be learned unless he puts his learning into practice” (*Ihya'*, Vol. 2, p. 71). Again, both the *ahadith* and the *Qur'an* emphasize “knowing” and “doing”, that is, both theory and practice. In advising his disciples, Al-Ghazali (1951, p. 11) wrote, “Know that obedience and worship are conformity to Sacred Law in commands and prohibitions, in both word and deed....”

Like Al-Shatibi (2000), Al-Ghazali believed that “doing” (*'amal*) included not only those manifestations of the five senses, but the practices of the heart as well. He referred to the *hadith*, saying, “Islam is built upon five pillars. Taken together, all of these pillars (duties) lie either in conviction or in action” (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 1, p. 23). Thus, Al-Ghazali's understanding of knowledge cannot be honed into a single definition because its interpretations are complex and subtle. In the *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali (1997a, p. 23) explained his concept of knowledge, which is an essential component of his educational theories. He identified three categories of active learning which are universal among all theistic faiths: belief in God, action according to God's commands, and abstention from what He forbade. Al-Ghazali (1980) asserted that the “noblest kind of knowledge is the knowledge of God and

His attributes and His acts” (p.319). Al-Ghazali, in his theory of knowledge, described the role of the intellect as being noble in nature because it is included in the *ahadith*, it is established by its very use, and it is what makes us human (Asari, 1993, p. 41). All learning is worship, with the knowledge of God as the starting point of knowledge for every Muslim.

The Role of the Intellect

Al-Ghazali (1997a) viewed the intellect as the most precious thing that has been created in this world.

The Noble Nature of the Intellect: it will be superfluous to show the noble nature of the intellect (*al-'aql*), especially because through it the noble nature of knowledge has been revealed. Intellect is the source and fountainhead of knowledge as well its foundation. Knowledge springs from it as the fruit from the tree and the light from the sun and vision from the eye. How then could that which is the means of happiness in this world and the next not be noble or how could it ever be doubted? (See Al-Ghazali, in Faris, 1991, p. 221).

In order to discuss the role of intellect, it is important to know how Al-Ghazali defined intellect in his works. In Chapter 7 of *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali offered four attributes of intellect (*'aql*).

1. The first definition was that quality (*wasf*) which distinguishes humans from animals. Al-Ghazali cites Al-Muhasibi, who defines intellect as an inborn (*gharizah*) faculty that is like a light shed into the heart, which allows the learner to understand.
2. The second definition is those necessary truths, which make their appearance at adolescence, when one's intellect is fully developed. Al-Ghazali refers to this as the awareness of the impossible, such as the knowledge that two is more than one, and that one person cannot be in two places at the same time.
3. Al-Ghazali offered a third definition for intellect, that knowledge is attained through religious and worldly experiences and the interaction of human beings with their environment.
4. Finally, he asserts that knowledge can be used to denote that point in one's life when inborn power had developed to the extent that one can determine the consequences for one's actions. This intellect can be used to conquer and subdue bad desires. The person who has developed this capacity is also referred to as an '*aqil* (experienced person) (Al-Ghazali, 1997b; see also Asari, 1993; Bazzun, 1997).

Al-Ghazali clarified his explanations to note that the first definition is the foundation for the other three, that the second definition is the closest branch (or application), the third is the result of combining the first and second, and the fourth is the supreme aim and the ultimate result. Al-Ghazali concluded that the first two kinds of intellect are inherent properties (*bittab'*) (i.e., that humans were created with it), and the second two are learned

(*bil'iktisab*) (Al-Ghazali, 1997a; see also Ali, 1960; Asari, 1993). Al-Mawirdi (1979) confirms these explanations that humans are born with some qualities and others are learned through experience. Through the Master-Pupil relationship, the teacher can help pupils learn through experience both in the classroom setting and outside the school, according to their individual abilities and differences.

Al-Ghazali also used the term *al-mudrik lil-'ulum* (the perceiver of knowledge) to refer to intellect. He acknowledged that the perceiver has two aspects: 1) the outward aspect which is represented by the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting; and 2) five inward qualities: common sense (*his al-mushtarak*), imagination (*takhayyul*), thinking (*tafakkur*), recollection (*tadhakkur*), and retention (*hifz*). Al-Ghazali called these characteristics the soldiers of the heart (*junud al-qalb*) (Al-Ghazali, 1997a; see also Asari, 1993). *Ihya'* is not the only book in which he discusses the concepts of the soldiers of the heart, although he sometimes refers to them in a slightly different order and using different terms.

The reason for these differences “is probably due to the different natures of the books which represent different stages of Al-Ghazali’s intellectual development” (Asari, 1993, p. 46). As he learned more and grew spiritually, Al-Ghazali had different experiences during his life. He studied Greek and Muslim philosophers when he was teaching in Baghdad. He most likely adopted his *Sufi* lifestyle during his stay in Damascus and Jerusalem, during which time he became convinced that *Sufism* was the best way for him. His teachings at any given point in his life were, thus, a product of everything he had studied up to that point. Even though he disagreed in principle with philosophers such as Ibn Sina

and Al-Farabi, he also used some of the same terminology that they did (Watt, 1952; see also Asari, 1993).

As important as the intellect is, it cannot be separated from the spirit (Al Zeera, 2001b; Nasr, 1991). Together they form the wholeness of Islam. Supreme knowledge is identified with the highest realization, and certain aspects of knowledge are realized by the soul (Al Zeera, 2001b, p. 9). In discussing the wholeness of Islam, both the intellect and spirit must be included. Although there are some differences between *al-nafs* (soul) and *al-ruh* (spirit), they are related to the intellect (*'aql*) at certain levels as part of the wholeness in Islamic education.

Al-Ghazali (1998) also associates the term intellect (*al-'aql*) with the same three terms of the heart (*al-qalb*), the spirit (*al-ruh*), and the soul (*al-nafs*) (p. 5). It is important to note that the term “heart” (*al-'aql*) in Al-Ghazali’s writings refers to the intellect, that is, the human ability to consider and understand what is learned (Asari, 1993). It is important to clarify Al-Ghazali’s terminology concerning *al-'aql*, because he used different terms to refer to the same concept in different books. I will explain other words that Al-Ghazali used as synonyms for the term *al-'aql*. The heart (*qalb*) has two meanings:

1. One is the cone-shaped piece of flesh inside the left side of the chest, which circulates the blood and is the source of animal spirits. It is found in all animals. This is the physical heart.
2. The spiritual heart, that is the very essence of human being that is responsible to perceive the spiritual knowledge and therefore is the same as *al-'aql*, the intellect.

The second term, spirit (*ruh*), also has two meanings:

1. An intangible experience felt in the material heart, which quickens every part of the body. It is like a lamp that sheds its light beyond itself on all sides.
2. A subtle thing that knows and perceives (the same as *qalb*) Again, the word knowledge is key and *al-'aql* is implied (Asari, 1993, p. 44).

The third concept is the soul (*al-nafs*), which also has two interpretations:

1. The collected energy initiated by one's appetites and passions.
2. The different aspects of the ego, which are recognized by different names in accordance with the qualities acquired when passions change its condition. By subjugating passions, one acquires mastery over them and feels undisturbed. This is called the tranquil self (*nafs mutma'innah*). When it upbraids humans for their actions, it is called conscience (*nafs lawwamah*). When it freely indulges in the gratification of passions, it is called the inordinate self (*nafs 'ammarah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, pp.113-114; see also Al-Ghazali, in McCarthy, 1980; Ali, 1960; Asari, 1993; Bazzun, 1997).

The intellect or *al-'aql* is part of this ego self and must be exercised in order to subjugate passions.

Once Al-Ghazali defined the parts of the body that take the knowledge in his theory and practice it, he then explained the way of knowing, that is, the way to gain this knowledge, including obstacles to the learning process, which he felt was crucial to this process.

The Way of Knowing

The search for truth through knowledge was Al-Ghazali's highest priority. Abrahamov (1993) and others have offered different explanations for Al-Ghazali's perception of the supreme way to know the truth. Some scholars (e.g., Upper, 1952; Wensinck, 1941) note that Al-Ghazali preferred the *Sufi* experience (meditation) as the best way to understand the truth, while others such as Abrahamov (1993) and Basyl (n.d.) maintain that although Al-Ghazali gave the impression that he preferred the *Sufi* approach, he actually regarded intellectual endeavors as the most effective way. Still others (Watt, 1949) have offered a combination of the *Sufi* and intellectual approaches.

Al-Ghazali's philosophy of the learning process included using the outward aspects—the five senses—working in concert in order to recognize and know something (Al-Ghazali, 1996, p. 421). His illustration was that when seeing an object, one gets an image of that particular object in the imaginative part of the brain. This image is retained in the mind. Using the power of thought, the observer can consider that which is retained. Thinking or reasoning requires multiple images. This is where the collective faculty of the mind functions as a provider of more images, by recalling past images stored in the memory. The sensory image is then harmonized through the use of common sense. By this point, one would have perceived that object and established the level of understanding of it in the mind (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, pp. 116-117; see also Nakosteen, 1964).

Al-Ghazali (1994) believed that the heart plays a vital role in the retention of knowledge, and that it is the foundation of the body. He illustrates the heart/intellect combination and its different faculties, comparing it to a kingdom: The imaginative powers

serve as a postal system for gathering and imparting knowledge. The retentive capacity is a king's treasure and is responsible for storage, with speech functioning as the mind's interpreter. The five senses serve the king as spies, and each is responsible for different, specific information. This interesting analogy shows how the heart/intellect interacts with the rest of the body and its different faculties (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, 1994; see also Nakosteen, 1964). This illustration corresponds with the Islamic understanding that the body contains a morsel of flesh; if it is whole, all the body is whole—if it diseased, all of it is diseased. This concept refers to the heart.

The Learning Process

In the learning process, Al-Ghazali used both theory and practice, stating that “knowledge without work is insanity, and work without knowledge is vanity” (*O Disciple*, 1951, p. 8). He mentioned a general process of knowing, using the analogy that knowledge is the tree and the deeds are the fruit. He described the first step as silence, then hearing, then learning it by heart, then “knowing and doing”, and finally, teaching it to others. He noted that:

. . . whoever learns, acts and teaches shall be mighty in the kingdom of heaven, for he is as the sun, whose resplendence illuminates other bodies, or as musk, whose fragrance perfumes other objects; in undertaking to teach, he accomplishes a great and momentous task, and must therefore be mindful of his rules of conduct and functions (Nofal, 1994, p. 48).

Al-Ghazali used three elements to explain this process: the perceiver,¹⁵ reality (that which is known), and the occurrence of reality's images in the mind (the learning process). He also believed that the potential for knowledge exists in people's souls before they are created, like the seed in the earth and the gem in the depths of the sea. Thus, the role of the parents and teachers is to help children realize that potential. Each science requires its own approach and its specific method of study. One of his recommendations is that students:

...should not address themselves at the same time to all branches of knowledge, but they must follow a certain order and begin with the most important...for sciences are of necessity so arranged that one branch prepares for another (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 1, p. 23; see also Al-Rabe, 1984).

Al-Ghazali used two examples to explain his process of knowing. First, he said that knowing is like the relationship of a mirror to the object it reflects. The image of the object reflected in the mirror is like the image of a known object in one's mind. Second, as when one holds a sword, the hand represents the perceiver, the sword is the known, and the holding is the knowing (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, p. 125). Thus, images of reality are reflected by one's intellect and images are reflected by one's understanding of reality. The process of reflection (mirroring) is actually the process of learning or having knowledge.

Benomran (1983) suggests that Al-Ghazali's theories of knowledge may have been state of the art then, but that a great many new theories exist today that eclipse his theories.

¹⁵ The word Al-Ghazali used was *qalb* (heart), which he used to mean the perceiver of knowledge (*al-*

He offers as an example that Al-Ghazali did not provide “explanations of how a teacher can bring a student to know. He did not talk about the tutorial relationship between a teacher and a student. He only explained the moral duties of teacher and student toward each other” (Benomran, p. 2). This leaves an opportunity to merge the old and the new in today’s educational environment to develop an integrated context of what works and what doesn’t, which proposes alternatives if the original plan isn’t working (for whatever reason), and which leaves room for adjustment to meet the needs of the students in that setting.

Obstacles to the Learning Process

Al-Ghazali’s (1994, 1997a, 2000) works explain that the heart is also a mirror that reflects all people’s knowledge. Although the human heart is capable of knowing the realities, Al-Ghazali believed that the heart might be devoid of knowledge and make the intellect unable to reflect an accurate image due to various obstacles:

1. The mirror may be unfinished due to youth, or the natural immaturity of one’s intellect (e.g., the hearts of young children).
2. The reflection may not be visible because of the residue of sins attributable to greed, passion, and immoral desires accumulated on its surface (in the intellect) after doing bad deeds. These deeds contaminate the purity of the heart and the intellect, making it impossible for the truth to be reflected by the mirror. Al-Ghazali recommends that if one has committed a sin and wants to compensate

mudrik lil-’ulum), which is synonymous with al-’aql (mind).

for it, one should do the opposite, which is a good deed (i.e., clear off the residue), in order to see the reflection again.

3. Worldly distractions may impede one's ability to see the reflection (turn one away from God).
4. The mirror might be 'tarnished' by confusing tradition (dogma) for principles. (Example, theories about women's education became merely a reflection of other cultures and traditions.)
5. Not knowing how to use a mirror properly (ignorance of the direction to be followed in order to get to the truth).

Many of Al-Ghazali's (2000; 1997a) works offered examples of how the mind can be conditioned to accept and respond to inputs, such as when a person has been bitten by a snake, he then fears any rope that might look like a snake. Another example is that if people imagine food or see it, they might find their mouths watering. Thus, he explains how one's imagination, perceptions, and habits can affect the human mind and create their own obstacles to learning.

Summary of Al-Ghazali's Theories of Knowledge

Al-Ghazali maintained that education is one of the most important opportunities for humans, and that every situation should be considered a chance to seek or transmit knowledge. There are descriptions of Al-Ghazali's theories about knowledge, the merit of knowledge, the ways of acquiring knowledge, the nature of knowledge, sources of knowledge, hindrances to the learning process, and individual differences among learners.

He asserted that the “taking in” of knowledge involves not just the concept of mental cognition (intellect or *al-'aql*), but also includes the soul, spirit, and heart, which are part of *al-'aql*. He described these terms and his understanding of these concepts in several of his books.

It is interesting to note that he sometimes used different Arabic words and terms to depict these concepts from different perspectives, but it is clear from studying these texts that he was referring to the same aspects of human knowledge. Al-Ghazali spent a good deal of time investigating knowledge and how humans acquire it. He discussed the value of being knowledgeable, the role intellect plays in the acquisition of knowledge, and how people come to know. In the *Ihya'*, he related the intellect to a mirror that reflects things observed into the intellect to be known. He offered some conditions that could act as impediments to the knowing process, relating them to similar characteristics in mirrors, such as how not knowing how to use a mirror properly or the mirror's being tarnished result in failure of the observation to be absorbed accurately into the intellect. He also emphasized that learning something without putting it into practice invalidated what had been learned. He referred here not only to expressing one's self through the five physical senses, but also through one's heart. In the *Ihya'*, he used the analogy of the body being like a kingdom, where the heart and mind were the king and the other part of the body were the king's servants.

Both Aristotle, who lived before Al-Ghazali, and Descartes, who lived after Al-Ghazali, embraced the idea of accepting something as true only after considering it. One should not automatically assume knowledge blindly. Al-Ghazali (1989) recommended examining the truth, and noted that whoever does not doubt does not look, whoever does not

look does not see, and whoever does not see remains blind and perplexed (see also Young, Latham, & Serjeant, 1990). This is not to say that everything is automatically unreliable, but he wanted students to take the time to investigate and not just assume that something is as it appeared. Al-Ghazali asserted that those who do not know the truth will stay in darkness and error.

Taking Al-Ghazali's theories of knowledge step further to the Master-Pupil relationship, one might conclude that Al-Ghazali in his theories of knowledge wanted to tell the Master that teachers needed to be aware of all of these processes of knowing (role of intellect, way of knowing, process of learning, and obstacle to learning) in their educational relationships with the pupils. According to the purpose of this study, this concept can be superimposed to the Parent-Child relationship, that is, parents' awareness is important when teaching their children.

In order to understand Al-Ghazali's philosophy, I responded to the research questions in separate chapters to show what other researchers say about this relationship from Al-Ghazali's point of view. These questions explore the curricula and methods, Master-Pupil model, children's education, and women's education. The answers to these questions will demonstrate why Al-Ghazali's works are key to understanding the importance of education within the family unit and the parent-child relationship. Included in the discussion will be the consistencies and inconsistencies in his philosophy, as well as some of the gaps in his approach to education. In these chapters I will also explain Al-Ghazali's ideas within the context of other researchers' comments, some of who agree with Al-Ghazali, and some who disagree. An analysis and evaluation of the curricula, model, and

women's education must be discussed in order to understand my theory of superimposing the Master-Pupil model onto the Parent-Child relationship.

CHAPTER 5

AL-GHAZALI'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULA

Introduction

The climate of the community around the school affects the curricula offered by the school. The values, politics, and economics of the community have an influence on what is taught in the schools, and vice versa (Schubert, 1986). In Islam, the community and the school are more integrated because the Islamic way of life is reflected both in the schools and in the community. In Islamic society, the curricula go beyond academics to include the development of a “good Muslim” who follows the laws of the *Qur'an* and the prophetic sayings. There is no separation between church and state; therefore, whatever behavior is learned at home crosses over into the school, and what is learned in school influences home life.

Al-Ghazali (1997a) discussed his recommendations for formal and informal curricula from birth through college. He wrote about the influence of the family and the skills and knowledge acquired in the home, and advised that the family's goals and the school's goals are inextricably linked because the Islamic faith is part of the school curricula, which are extensions of the beliefs taught in the home. Thus, curricula are a tool that Al-Ghazali implemented not only to describe the Master-Pupil relationship, but also to help parents use the curricula to interact with one another along specified guidelines. As the researcher, I am using the curricula, both informal and formal, to describe the relationship between parent and child and expand his concept even further.

Al-Ghazali (2001) emphasized five critical components that education needs to protect: the religion, soul, intellect, family integrity, and resources. He asserted that any matter that supported these components would benefit society, while anything that compromised the integrity of these components would harm society. He recognized that these concepts were found in every religion and thus determined that they are humanistic foundations for all societies. Al-Ghazali's proposed curricula were geared toward developing the individual to assume a responsible position in society, and ultimately preparing one for the afterlife. Thus, by educating ourselves and our children in these five important areas (i.e., religion, soul, intellect, family integrity, and resources), we can ensure a strong society of humanistic, educated citizens.

Muslims facilitate this cycle of supporting their children. By educating them at home they learn to function in society, hopefully living full lives, passing onto the next life, ready to reap what they have sowed in this life. Some parents attempt to control the cycle by restricting the child's experiences (e.g., channeling a child into the education and career paths a parent chooses), thereby creating young adults with low self-esteem if they do not succeed in the path their parents have chosen for them. While Al-Ghazali (1997a) encouraged education as a worthwhile goal, he also realized that for society to operate in balance, its members needed to be doing what they are good at and enjoy doing. Thus, Al-Ghazali stated that it is better to give the child the opportunity to decide some things for themselves, such as their intellectual interests.

Concerning curricula methodology, Al-Ghazali (1997a) offered a number of ways teachers can transmit information to students (e.g., lecturing, telling related stories, setting a personal example), and differentiated between what was critical to know for survival in this

life and progress to the next life, and what was important to know so that one's life on earth runs smoothly (Dakhil Allah, 1996, p. 217). Although Al-Ghazali was clear about the context of what needed to be taught, the teacher was allowed to determine the content of the lecture, and choose which stories to tell to make one's point. Al-Ghazali also applied these same principles to guide parents and other family adults in educating children.

Early Childhood Curricula

In one of the chapters in the *Ihya'*, "Disciplining the Soul," Al-Ghazali outlined his philosophy for a curriculum for daily life. This comprehensive curriculum addressed the child's needs in terms of spiritual and intellectual development, health, recreation, and interpersonal skills. Al-Ghazali directed parents to teach their children the *Holy Qur'an* and the guidelines offered there, as well as the Prophetic traditions concerning the beginning of Islam and also about key figures in Islamic history. From the inception of Islam, before the written text was completed, Muslims were encouraged to memorize the *Qur'an* as a principle means of preserving it and of transmitting the information contained there. This practice of memorization continues even today.

Al-Ghazali (1951, 1997a) encouraged parents to instill the *Qur'an* from the beginning, even before the child had a comprehensive grasp of the language, to ensure that the principles and guidelines were firmly implanted in the child's mind. Ibn Al-'Arabi (in Ibn Khaldun, 1967), who was apparently a student of Al-Ghazali's, suggested alternatively that children first be taught the language and helped to memorize the *Qur'an* later, in order that the child not just know the words, but also understand the concepts. Ibn Khaldun noted

that starting with language and calculation clashes with habits too deeply because “custom has greater power over conditions than anything else. Accepted custom gives preference to teaching of the *Qur’an*.” Ibn Khaldun concluded that if one waits “until the child becomes a youth, they might miss the chance to learn the *Qur’an*” (p. 428). Today, in most of the Islamic communities, reading is taught alongside of memorization of the *Qur’an*.

According to Al-Ghazali, education also included exercise. In the *Ihya’*, Al-Ghazali (1997a) reported that some physical activity is necessary for children and suggests activities such as daily walks and exercises. Al-Ghazali was inspired in this area by Ibn Miskawayh, whose ideas are also reflected elsewhere in *Ihya’*. Both Gil’adi (1992) and Winter (1995) discuss Al-Ghazali’s proposals, and assert that Al-Ghazali’s objective was to prevent sloth and obesity. Al-Ghazali advocated a balance in activities, such that the child is not so worn out by playing as to be exhausted, nor so deprived of opportunities to move that he is overburdened by incessant “lessons that will cause his heart to die and harm his intelligence, and make life so hateful to him that he will cast around for some means of escape” (Al-Ghazali in Winter, 1995, p. 80). This demonstrates that Al-Ghazali recognized not only instruction in the critical subjects, but also the value of diversion from study. “Preventing a child from playing...only deadens his heart, numbs his intelligence, and spoils his life” (Young, Latham, & Serjeant, p. 441).

The instruction Al-Ghazali advocated in the daily life curriculum (Al-Ghazali, 1997a) recommended teaching a love of spirituality, the basics of worship, and appropriate social conduct. Parents should discourage practices such as gluttony by teaching children not to overeat. Children can be taught to appreciate what they have on their plate by

sometimes eating nothing but bread, in order that they not perceive themselves entitled to fancier foods.

Al-Ghazali also suggested interactive curricula such as games, and describes toys popular in his era, such as toy animals and *sawlajan* (similar to baseball). He also proposed using games as teaching opportunities, especially with the very young. Gil'adi (1992) notes that the only restrictions were on games of chance. Another suggestion was to own and care for a small pet. Al-Ghazali (1997a) acknowledged that young children learn even beyond the spiritual and intellectual aspects of informal education offered in their own homes. He suggested that parents are also responsible for finding appropriate social contacts, and directing their children to associate with good company. His perception was that interaction with respectable friends is part of the foundation of children's education.

Elementary Curricula Through Higher Education

In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali (1997a) established a program of compulsory education for younger children, both in the home and in the *maktab* or *madrasah* (school)¹⁶. In "The Book of Knowledge," Al-Ghazali included a detailed discussion of the curricula for older students and for teaching in schools of higher learning, using methods with identifiable *Sufi* components (Gil'adi, 1983). In terms of the course content, Al-Ghazali distinguished between two main categories of subjects: the religious sciences (the individual's obligations) and the intellectual (practical) sciences (the community's obligations). He divided the

community obligations into religious and non-religious subjects. The religious subjects include both the theoretical (*kalam*) and the practical (religious devotion, jurisprudence, politics, and ethics). He also advocated learning language and grammar in order to understand the religious sciences. Al-Rabe (1984, p. 127) notes that, “it is important to keep in mind here that Al-Ghazali did not consider language and grammar part of the religious sciences, but as a means to study them.” When he wrote *Ihya’*, Al-Ghazali added another part to the religious sciences: the study of the *Qur’anic* readings and *hadith* sciences.

He added the study of logic to his curricula as a tool of thought, asserting that, “nothing in logic is relevant to religion by way of denial of affirmation” (in Watt, 1996, p. 35). Al-Ghazali used logic to illustrate some of his examples of jurisprudence, and he tried to teach religion by means of logical analysis (see Al-Rabe, 1984). Although some Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyyah criticized Al-Ghazali for including logic in his curriculum—Ibn Taymiyyah considered it “to be in contradiction with religious beliefs and leading to heresy” (Al-Rabe, 1984, p. 146)—others such as As-Subki (in Rosenthal, 1975) agreed to the inclusion of logic. Al-Ghazali acknowledged that logic, in and of itself, was not the problem, and that some level of logic was necessary in order to convince someone that you know what you are talking about and make sense, but that there is the likelihood that it can also be misused to “prove” false doctrines and lead to disbelief (in Watt, p. 36). As-Subki (in Rosenthal, p. 82) defined the value of logic, noting that logic was like a “sword, which can be used either for holy war or for highway robbery.” As-Subki emphasized that it is more important for the student to master the *Qur’an*, the Prophetic

¹⁶ Al-Zabidi’s (n.d.) commentary on *Ihya’* noted that Al-Ghazali specified that a *maktab* is for studying the *Qur’an* only, while *madrasah* is the school for studying the *Qur’an* with other subjects (Vol. 7, p.

sayings (*ahadith*), and jurisprudence, and to be firmly grounded in the dogmas before taking on the study or use of logic.

Al-Ghazali's Curricula Classification

In order to understand Al-Ghazali's formal curricula, a discussion of his classification method is needed. Al-Ghazali classified the different branches of knowledge according to those concepts that are necessary to spend time on (i.e., that knowledge of these topics contributes to living a devout life), and those that are not necessary. Thus, it would seem that Al-Ghazali would not advocate teaching children abstract subjects if they had no relevance to a child's moral development. Al-Ghazali's curricula further classified the usefulness of knowledge into the practical or rational sciences (*'ilm al-mu'amalah*) and the spiritual sciences (*'ilm al-mukashafah*), which are part of *Sufism*. Al-Ghazali also accepted that not all people master the spiritual sciences; only highly spiritual people generally attain them.¹⁷ This section will focus on the learning of the practical sciences, because those are the subjects taught in schools and colleges. Al-Ghazali divided the practical sciences into

27).

¹⁷ Al-Ghazali (in Gianotti, 2000, p. 4) asserted that, "by the sciences of the unveiling I mean whatever is sought exclusively [for the purpose of] laying bare the object of knowledge." For Al-Ghazali (1997), knowledge of the unveiling sciences was the ultimate goal. He proposed that not everyone is worthy of the vision of unveiling science – but only those humans who are pure and blessed, or those he calls *Sufi*.

As an indication of the difficulty expressing these sciences, Gianotti (2000, p. 5) reports Al-Ghazali's acknowledgment that the prophets did not speak about the unveiling science "except by way of symbol and gesture, by way of example and brief summarization" because the specifics of this knowledge would be more than the average person would understand.

From a hermeneutic perspective, it is important to note that Islam asserts that true belief is proper worship; Allah casts it in the hearts of whomever He chooses among His servants. Disclosure of knowledge, notions, inspirations, and dreams are not authentic references in Islamic law. Thus, they should not be given any consideration except when they do not conflict with the *Qur'an* and Prophetic sayings and established principles of Islam (Al-Banna, 2000).

community obligations and individual obligations. The community obligations were divided into religious and non-religious study. He believed that knowledge of the different sciences, classified as both practical and religious, is a necessary step to the knowledge of God himself (Al-Zeera, 2001a, p. 80).

Researchers comment on Al-Ghazali's classification and describe it from different points of view. Benomran's (1983) study identifies Al-Ghazali's classification of sciences: "In the quantitative domain of knowing, Al-Ghazali classified sciences into the religious and the non-religious sciences" (p. 34). The religious sciences were those derived from the prophets and revealed books. He characterized the non-religious sciences as those learned by reason, and divided them into necessary sciences and acquired sciences. The necessary sciences are essential in coming to know God and further one's well-being (e.g., medicine, ethics, and metallurgy). The non-necessary sciences are neither essential in coming to know God nor do they further one's well being (e.g., history, poetry, mathematics, philosophy, and music). In several respects, Benomran's study contributed to a better understanding of many of the scientific branches that were popular in medieval Muslim society. His study noted that, according to Al-Ghazali, parents need to pay more attention to the sciences, which concentrate on ultimate goals and impress good qualities on souls (Benomran, 1983). Shafshaq (1980) also discusses Al-Ghazali's classification of knowledge, arguing that Al-Ghazali's theory in his classification is incomplete because it did not focus on the handicraft subjects.

In *The Educational Thoughts of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*, Asari (1993) speaks about three of Al-Ghazali's important concepts: the acquisition of knowledge, the teacher-student relationship, and the learning process. Generally, Asari proposed that Al-

Ghazali's classification of the sciences favors the moral and spiritual sciences over the rest of the sciences. Asari (1993) asserts

...in his classification, [Al-Ghazali] places spiritual sciences over the rest of the sciences. The practical aspect of his thought concerning education centers on the duties of student and teacher, which must be fulfilled to ensure the success of the learning process (p. 1).

From a theoretical point of view, Asari's (1993) observations serve the present study by elaborating on the concepts of theory and practice from Al-Ghazali's point of view. While this framework can be applied in studying family education, Asari's investigation agrees with other researchers in this area (e.g., Benomran, 1983) that Al-Ghazali proposes that the intrinsic pedagogical purpose of education is to instill good morals.

The Practical Sciences

Al-Ghazali categorized this branch into two subcategories: individual obligations (*fard 'ayn*), which are comprised of those concepts which one personally needs to do or know to conduct one's life (e.g., prayer) and community obligations (*fard kifaya*), which include those concepts concerning one's involvement in the community as a whole, such as mathematics and medicine. If a communal obligation is not met, then the entire community is held accountable; each and every member of the community is not personally obligated to perform the action. For example, if the country is educating too many lawyers and not

enough physicians, Al-Ghazali would encourage the community to examine this discrepancy and encourage more young people to study medicine.

Al-Ghazali sorted the communal obligations into one of two categories: religious sciences, which are those that are essential in coming to know God and which enhance one's well-being; and non-religious (intellectual) sciences. Al-Ghazali further divided the religious sciences into four sub-categories according to their importance in practicing religious teaching: the foundation, the branches, the preliminaries, and the supplementaries. Al-Ghazali assigned the non-religious sciences to three sub-categories.

Praiseworthy Sciences (*'ulum mahmudah*) Any sciences essential to the community's welfare (e.g., medicine, mathematics, logic, arithmetic, agriculture, etc.).

Permissible Sciences (*'ulum mubahah*), which are those neutral activities one is allowed to know and do (e.g., poetry, history, and biography). They do not confer the benefits of the praiseworthy sciences, but do not harm people, as do the objectionable sciences. For instance, Al-Ghazali accepted that poetry and certain other artistic expressions were appropriate as long as the subject material covered was valid (i.e., addressed religious or spiritual themes, not passion). He did not agree with visual art and images, however, because of the potential for idolization.

Objectionable Sciences (*'ulum madhmumah*) include any subject which not only has no benefit to the individual or community (e.g., magic, legerdemain, and divination), but may also confer harm upon its practitioners.

Thus, Al-Ghazali established priorities and the sequence for subject matter according to their value to the student and society. The highest priority was to learn the necessary (religious) sciences, which means attaining a comprehensive knowledge of the *Qur'an*, the *ahadith*, and Islamic law (*fiqh*). These topics he considered to be most important, and to be the cornerstone of any further education. Thus, from Al-Ghazali's point of view, the student would start with the *Qur'an* and then proceed to the non-religious (intellectual) sciences. From the very beginning of a child's formal education, the child should learn both the religious (*Qur'an* and *ahadith*) and non-religious (academic) subjects, as well as the value of maintaining a balance among all the subjects.

Figure 5-1. Al-Ghazali's Classification of the Practical Sciences.

Al-Ghazali's Teaching Methods

One of Al-Ghazali's teaching methods was to tell stories about the pious as a model for children's behavior in their early, informal education. He depicted both the children's and parents' responsibilities concerning punishment and reward, explained the value of acting as good role models, and encouraged parents to take into account their children's individual differences when interacting with them (Al-Barjis, 1983). Al-Ghazali designed a formal and informal curricula for children's primary scholastic and moral education concerning the beginning of Islam and its key historical figures, and training and fostering of proper conduct and manners, such as instruction on eating habits (Winter, 1995). The content of the actual stories was used to explain concepts, and the exact lesson to be illustrated on a given day was chosen by the teacher or parent.

Researchers' comments on Al-Ghazali's curricula and methods ideas are varied. Asari (1993) agrees that Al-Ghazali felt that parents should be careful about managing their young children's time during their pre-school and elementary education years because "studying without breaks will destroy [their] young, growing intelligence" (p. 86). Gil'adi (1983) asserts that, "the philosophers classify sciences on the basis of their epistemological nature and according to the different grades of their objects, while Al-Ghazali applied external criterion of their usefulness in attaining religious ends outside themselves" (p. 13). Thus, Gil'adi confirms Abul Quasem's (1978) observation that most of Al-Ghazali's direction in the area of education focused on character formation (i.e., personal conduct and values), rather than intellectual development (i.e., learning to read and do mathematics).

Benomran (1983) and Asari (1993) also agree that Al-Ghazali's curriculum focused more on moral and spiritual duties than on other issues.

In the second part of his book, *Children of Islam* (1992), Gil'adi describes children's education from Al-Ghazali's outlook. Gil'adi's main themes are that Al-Ghazali defined the responsibility for and purpose of education, which is to ensure the future of the believer in the next world. Gil'adi notes that Al-Ghazali recommended that children begin their formal education at about the age of six or seven (the age of discernment), at which time parents need to increase their supervision, but that it is appropriate to begin informal learning at a younger age because children's hearts are less careworn.

In terms of moral curriculum, Gil'adi (1992) and Umaruddin (1970) report that Al-Ghazali's focus was on developing a balanced person by impressing good qualities on the child's soul. Al-Ghazali asserted that human nature could be molded by moral instruction, which is what led him to consider the ways to raise and educate children. He believed that natural inclinations and instincts should not be suppressed entirely, but rather focused on their appropriate expression. That is, desire was created for some benefit (he cites an example of desire for food motivating nourishment), but children should be steered away from things that might cause depravity. In order to learn moderation (i.e., dealing appropriately with the forces of desire), Al-Ghazali suggested addressing one of the earliest manifestations of desire, the passion to eat, by teaching good eating habits based on restraint and moderation. Al-Ghazali quotes from the *Qur'an* to emphasize moderation: "Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant" (6: 141). The child absorbs these lessons gradually.

Al-Ghazali also suggested breaking up larger lessons into smaller segments, using the example of teaching young children to fast gradually for Ramadan, a few days at a time,

to prepare them progressively for the time when they will have to fast for the entire month (Al-Ghazali, in Winter, 1995, p. 80). Al-Ghazali took this method of gradual learning from the Prophet Muhammad and the *Qur'an*. This is exemplified in the *Qur'an* with the following example. Before and early on in Islam, people drank wine and became drunk. When the first verse was revealed to Prophet Muhammad about wine, the recommendation was not to give up drinking wine altogether, but to start slowly. The verse states: “O you who believe! Approach not the prayer when you are in a drunken state until you know (the meaning) of what you utter” (4:43). The second notation about drinking comes later and states: “O! You who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), and gambling, *Al-Ansab*, and *Al-Azlam* (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of *Shaitan's* (Satan) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abominations) in order that you might be successful” (5:90). Gradually, the *Qur'an* recommended reducing and then giving up all alcoholic drinks. Al-Ghazali used this same technique.

Winter (1995) mentions that Al-Ghazali taught parents to encourage their children to distinguish between right and wrong and, once this point is reached, to use this discretion to “aid in [the child's] education” (p. 76). The child will become shy about attempting things, and it is useful to take advantage of this characteristic to further the child's education. Young, Latham, and Serjeant (1990) mention praising a child for good conduct to encourage the child to continue the behavior. But if the child does something wrong, Al-Ghazali recommended that the parent ignore it the first time—particularly if the child recognizes the error—and admonish the child privately without excessive scolding; otherwise the parents' words will “lose their effect on [the child's] heart” (Young, Latham, & Serjeant, p. 440).

Avner Gil'adi's (1983) doctoral dissertation, *The educational thought of Al-Ghazali*, studied and documented Al-Ghazali's life and works from different perspectives. In this and other works, Gil'adi (1983, 1992, 1999) focused on several concepts, including Al-Ghazali's perception that knowledge of a topic is only useful if one acts upon what he knows (i.e., it is not enough just to be familiar with any subject, one must also implement and act upon the knowledge for it to be valid). Gil'adi also commented on Al-Ghazali's familiarity with the Aristotelian system, which distinguishes between practical sciences and theoretical sciences, and the similarities and differences between Aristotle's characterizations and Al-Ghazali's interpretations. There is an obvious difference between the Aristotelian system and Al-Ghazali's system, especially concerning the criteria governing classification of knowledge.

Regarding comments on methodology, Winter (1997) states that Al-Ghazali stressed that the same teaching methods will not work in all circumstances. He compares the idea to the doctor who has one cure. For some patients, the cure will work, but for others, it might kill them. Likewise, one technique used to successfully by a teacher or parent to impart knowledge to one child or student might not work with another child. "Were a physician to treat all of his patients with a single medicine he would kill most of them; and so it is with the *shaykh*, who, were he to charge all his aspirants with one kind of exercise, would destroy and kill their hearts" (Al-Ghazali, in Winter, p. 41).

In another study, Benomran (1983) asserts that while Al-Ghazali has some good ideas, before re-implementing Al-Ghazali's suggestions as part of incorporating Islamic spiritual thought into contemporary education methods he proposes that Al-Ghazali's directives be augmented with instructions on how the teacher or parent should convey the knowledge and the processes by which students absorb data. Al-Ghazali encouraged simple

delivery of information to the student without discussion or interaction. In this researcher's observations as both a parent and an educator, students learn more when there is interaction and discussion. Further, there isn't one particular way to present data, because each student (child) learns and takes in information differently.

Bazzun (1983) and Al-Barjis (1996) also describe Al-Ghazali's epistemology and methods of teaching. Like other researchers, their studies focus on comparing Al-Ghazali's philosophies to how religious education was perceived in that time period. Bazzun reports that the preferred teaching practices in Al-Ghazali's era (late 11th to early 12th centuries) were still in use some 600 years later. An example of this is that Al-Ghazali's methods conform to some degree with Herbart's (1776-1841) method of instruction documented almost 700 years later, which offers lectures as a method of communicating knowledge to students. In Al-Ghazali's day, the usual method of instruction relied on the student repeating what the teacher reported verbatim, without any discussion or critical thought. Many Muslim countries, in fact, still use this method of rote memorization.

Ibn Al-'Arabi, one of Al-Ghazali's students, criticized teaching methods that transmit knowledge without providing students with the tools needed to comprehend the text (in Gil'adi, 1992, p. 56). Ibn Al-'Arabi suggests that simply giving the information to the student without teaching the student how to find it, develop it further, or evaluate it doesn't mean that the student comprehends the meaning of the information. Bennett and Demarrais (1990) add that, as a result, "children fail to become seekers of information...they learn that knowledge comes from an external source such as the teacher or the textbook" (p. 191). Eitzen and Zinn (1993) suggest that students are much more likely to understand the

material and cooperate with the learning process if they understand why it is so and how it relates to the big picture (see also Posner, 1992).

Some of the researchers' criticism seems to point to inconsistencies and gaps in Al-Ghazali's teaching ideas and methods. Yet, for the most part, they have been used for centuries. Teaching methods have always been criticized. Even today there are critics of modern education. The criticism of researchers concerning Al-Ghazali's work in education means that his works still have value, even if only for comparison to today's methods. The fact that these researchers even consider criticizing Al-Ghazali, rather than dismissing his philosophy altogether, is to his credit. He has not been ignored despite the fact that he lived hundreds of year ago.

Al-Ghazali's Curricula and Modern Perspectives

Al-Ghazali's directions to organize one's education around character formation reflected Islamic cultural norms of his time (Abul Quasem, 1978; Benomran, 1983; Gil'adi, 1993). These scholars concur that most of Al-Ghazali's guidance focused on teaching appropriate personal conduct and strong values, and that he was concerned more with one's moral and spiritual obligations than with academic achievement. Many researchers (Benomran, 1983; Shafshaq, 1980; and others) have suggested that Al-Ghazali actually discouraged students from learning about intellectual sciences. Armstrong (2000, p. 364) argues that:

...the attack against the [philosophers] mounted by [Al-Ghazali] had been immoderate. It had caused division between piety and rationalism, which had affected the intellectual standing of the [scholars]. This was apparent in the outdated curriculum of Al-Azhar. Muslims should, therefore return to the more receptive and rational spirit of the [*Qur'an*].

Al-Qaradawi (2001) explains that in today's context, while spiritual development and adherence to *shari'ah* (Islamic law) are still important, the quality and character of contemporary life indicate that the lower priority Al-Ghazali placed on comprehensive study of non-religious topics is no longer adequate because lifestyles have changed. It used to be sufficient that someone in the community was well versed in medicine and math; today, we need many "someones" who know this in depth.

Al-Ghazali was also aware that the majority of scholars were studying Islamic law, while other areas of learning were neglected. In other words, as his awareness grew, he began to formulate educational policy. The prestige of a career in jurisprudence was like a magnet to young students, drawing them into a worthwhile profession. But this ignored the impracticality of the idea. Al-Ghazali was gratified that many students chose to study only law, but recognized that it would create a society out of balance. He noted that the "town is crowded with jurists employed in giving legal opinions and defending cases," and that "many a town has no physician" (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, p. 23; see also Faris, 1991, p. 51). He proposed that educational institutions needed to produce outcomes to support society's workforce requirements. Further, he advised parents to encourage their children to study what they like, and to teach them that even though math and science are not as prestigious as

religious studies, all professions are needed, not only law. Even though it need not be mandatory to study all of the academic subjects in depth, all students can benefit from a general introduction to these subjects.

While Al-Ghazali's observations were recognized, expanding the curricula took time. For many years, the curricula at the Nizamiyyah College offered Islamic law courses almost exclusively. Hoodbhoy (1995, p. 14) notes that this remained the standard "until [it was] somewhat modified by Shah Whali Allah (1703-1762) to include arithmetic and logic." Even in modern Kuwait today, Al-Sibyh (2001), a policymaker in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education, and Al-Ibrahim (1996) a former minister of education in Kuwait, mention that one still finds a disproportionate number of people studying Islamic law, and that not enough students are pursuing careers in medicine, engineering, or other fields critically needed in the country. Doctors, engineers, and other professionals are well respected in Kuwait today, so there is no social reason for this phenomenon. In the junior and senior high schools, many teachers have to be hired from other countries, particularly in math and science, because there are not enough Kuwaitis trained in these fields. This indicates that the higher education system in Kuwait provides educational opportunities based on supply rather than demand, and consequently is not educating students according to the current and future needs of the Kuwaiti workforce. Perhaps as more people seek education beyond high school—and awareness of the need to balance societal needs is keener—this situation will change.

Shafshaq (1980) alleges that Al-Ghazali was interested only in the spiritual and moral aspects of life, and did not address mundane practical issues. The fact that Al-Ghazali did not address a certain subject does not prove that he disagreed with it or that it was

unimportant, thus refuting Shafshaq's claim that Al-Ghazali only directed that Muslims study the religious sciences. Al-Ghazali merely had different priorities for the subjects he considered more important than others (Al-Barjis, 1996).

Although Al-Ghazali did not designate specific handicrafts and other practical issues in his classification of curricula, he taught that manual labor and handicrafts were among the best forms of worshipping God, if one did them with pure intention and according to Islamic law (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 2, pp. 30, 124-125). To support this assertion, Al-Ghazali (1997a) reported how the companions of Prophet Muhammad earned their livelihood in land and sea trades, and commented that these companions were good role models (Vol. 2, p. 125). Al-Ghazali (1997a) also supported the creation of various handicrafts, and explained that these crafts contributed to the sustenance and aesthetics of society.

To confirm that there were, indeed, people involved in non-religious careers, Hill (1994) describes various examples of 'fine engineering'¹⁸ evident in the early centuries of Islam. Al-Ghazali may not have mentioned the use or construction of these devices, or have provided details about them, but that does not mean they did not exist. For example, Al-Ghazali did not avoid discussing engineering or discourage the study of engineering. He merely focused on what was important to him. Other people have written about topics Al-Ghazali did not address, and were not concerned about matters that Al-Ghazali considered relevant. As one example, Umar al-Khayyam (b. 417/1048, d. 508/1131) was a scholar of mathematics, astronomy, language, *fiqh*, and history. Because of his brilliance as an

¹⁸ Hill (1994, p. 25) describes fine engineering as "those types of machines or instruments that were designed to give pleasure to courtly circles, or for timekeeping, or for the use of scientists (mainly astronomers)." They distinguish this from utilitarian technology, "which is concerned with machines, such as mills, water-raising devices, and textile machinery." But these descriptions, which date back to the first few

astronomer, he was appointed to be the director of the observatory in Baghdad. This indicated that respected medieval scholars must have been studying the practical sciences.

Al-Ghazali did assign a lower priority to knowledge of the arts (e.g., music, art, drama), and did not include these subjects in his proposals for formal education (see Nofal, 1994), although he did specify in other discussions that any participation in these permissible sciences would depend on the content being lawful. These subjects are considered to be among those left to the believer's discretion, and there is no supporting documentation in the sacred texts about what is lawful and what is forbidden in these particular topics. It is essentially up to the believer to determine exactly what is or is not acceptable.

Rather than accidentally doing something unlawful, many Islamic scholars have proposed not participating in the arts at all, and many Muslims have adopted these guidelines. Some contemporary Muslim parents advise their children to avoid subjects such as music. Al-Ghazali did acknowledge subjects such as music lessons and singing, and referred to opportunities for listening to approved music and for singing (e.g., during a pilgrimage, in warfare, to supplement religious shortcomings, festivals and marriage celebrations, etc.). He felt such songs revived one's spirits, lightened the heart, and inspired one to carry on the work of this world and next (Al-Faruqi, 1982; see also Smith, 1989). But Al-Ghazali also warned Muslims not to waste time listening to music or singing if there were other things to be done. His position seems to be that music, like medicine, is good but only in prescribed doses.

centuries of Islam, indicate that mechanical devices did exist, and someone had to have been making and operating them.

Siba'i (1984) notes instances in Islamic history in which music was provided for entertainment (i.e., not ceremonial) purposes because it was felt that music had a therapeutic effect. One instance he cited from the 13th century (CE) described how one hospital provided a place for "fascinating music and interesting stories" where insomniacs could go to pass time (p. 196). Siba'i explained that the understanding at the time was that "melodiousness" was psychologically helpful to patients being treated for diseases, even those with only physical ailments (p. 211). Libraries in the Middle Ages also had separate areas designated for listening to music where "students could refresh themselves with music after long, tiring hours of study" (p. 218). This implies that music as a form of relaxation and psychological renewal was, indeed, accepted at one time.

Al-Qaradawi (1960, p. 300) notes that Islam "permits singing under the condition that it not be in any way obscene or harmful to Islamic morals," and notes that it creates an atmosphere of joy and happiness. Music offers many advantages for family and community celebrations, as well as many benefits associated with music as a component of education. In order to make music accessible to those who seek it, without compromising the integrity of those who choose to avoid it, perhaps music education could be offered as an elective subject: available to all who want it, with equitable alternatives for those who don't. This is also an opportunity to involve the parents in the child's education by allowing them to suggest the alternative activities.

Al-Ghazali's principal objection to art was its potential as a form of idolatry. He objected to drawings and other depictions of humans and animals, which he associated with the veneration of idols or icons, and excluded art from his classifications of knowledge. He emphatically recommended that existing pictures be removed or defaced, and he directed

that Muslims not engage in professions such as engraver, goldsmith, or decorator (see Nofal, 1994). Today, it would be almost impossible to avoid some form of drawing or reproduction. Photographs are required for passports, and drawings are used in everything from construction renderings to criminal apprehension. This would suggest that complete avoidance of the arts would be unrealistic. Perhaps the more contemporary approach is to ensure that the drawing has a legitimate purpose, making art training more acceptable to conservative Muslims. Again, this is another opportunity for elective instruction, with other alternative creative outlets for those who opt not to participate.

Summary of Al-Ghazali's Curricula

Al-Ghazali provided a comprehensive description of educational processes and relationships, and set the priorities for the subject matter in order to guide education according to Islamic principles. He considered the various subjects pertaining to the needs of both the students and the community, and integrated knowledge with practice in every type of curricula. Al-Ghazali's guidelines suggest that there is a natural progression from topic to topic through the various developmental and intellectual phases. He believed that children begin learning at home with their parents and other family elders. Even after children begin their formal education, parents are encouraged to continue participating actively in their education (e.g., reading with the child, helping with homework, chaperoning field trips, etc.)

Because Al-Ghazali tended to report the responsibilities of the "parent" and the "father" using these terms interchangeably, it would seem that he meant that the father was

the primary teacher within the family, seemingly excluding the wife, which became a hidden agenda for male superiority. Given the alternative use of these pronouns, it appears that Al-Ghazali though mostly in terms of the fathers' role, but was probably not as patriarchal as some critiques (e.g., Gil'adi and others) have proposed. Interestingly, in contemporary Muslim society, as in Western society, it is usually the mother who is more involved with the school. This suggests that his imprecision has allowed Al-Ghazali's tendency to downplay women's roles to be exaggerated over time. Thus, his model should be re-examined in order to create an environment in which both mother and father are able to share in their child's education equally.

Al-Ghazali established his extensive foundation for Islamic curricula in both home and school to direct the education of both heart and mind. The religious subjects he advocated are still an important and valuable way of life in many Islamic countries, although contemporary society requires a deeper examination of the intellectual subjects than was needed in his era. Al-Ghazali's classification of knowledge supports the concept that education is obligatory, citing the Prophetic saying that, "seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim" (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 1, p. 25). Al-Ghazali also emphasized that education needs to take the students' individual differences and capacities into consideration. There is some differentiation between formal education, which is that knowledge acquired in educational institutions, and informal education, which encompasses all of the learning opportunities outside the classroom. Many of the distinctions proposed by Al-Ghazali are fundamentally applicable, although educational theories and policies have shifted through the centuries and knowledge has expanded dramatically. For example, Al-Ghazali (1997a) noted that it was not necessary to go into the intellectual (praiseworthy)

sciences too deeply. It would be reasonable to interpret that concept as his recommendation that it is not necessary to study any non-spiritual topic too extensively. If you consider that idea today, however, it would be more reasonable to accept that it is not necessary to become an expert in every topic – particularly when one recognizes the breadth of the knowledge to be learned – but it is necessary to be an expert in something. Even Al-Ghazali recognized that it is commendable to be an expert in spiritual matters, but the world also needs other professionals.

Over time, society has come to agree that certain subjects are primarily taught at school and others at home or in extracurricular lessons. This doesn't mean that math, for example, is only taught at school; many parents also find ways to teach math skills at home. In some cultures, spiritual subjects are taught in the schools – which is not done in many Western countries. But the consensus remains that the essential intellectual topics (e.g., math, science, history, etc.) are taught at school, and other more socially-oriented skills should be learned in the home.

Both classical and modern scholars in Muslim countries refer to Al-Ghazali's teachings concerning education, particularly as they address the transfer of his educational theories and human behavior to modern Islamic curricula (Khan, 1976; Shalabi, 1978). As one can see, some researchers agree with Al-Ghazali's curriculum concepts and teaching methods, while others, including Muslims, do not agree with him. Because no single educational theory is used worldwide, there will always be corroboration and contradiction of educational ideas.

In order to ensure that Al-Ghazali's foundation meets Kuwait's contemporary needs, it is important to re-examine his writings in terms of what Kuwaiti society needs today.

Although Western education has much to offer this examination, Kuwait and other Islamic countries need to evaluate these contributions to ensure that the course material and presentation do not conflict with Islamic culture and tradition.

CHAPTER 6

AL-GHAZALI'S EDUCATIONAL MODEL OF RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

Al-Ghazali had a great deal to say about the rights and responsibilities of both teachers and learners. He emphasized characteristics that each should possess, he praised both those who teach and those who learn for participating in this act of worship, and he even encouraged scholars to complete their spiritual and intellectual education fully before embarking on a profession. Al-Ghazali prioritized various academic and spiritual subjects, even recommending that certain subjects be avoided completely since they were a waste of the learner's efforts or could even be harmful.

In Al-Ghazali's teachings, he placed a strong emphasis upon the ideal of seeking knowledge and devoting oneself to the process. In *Ihya'* (1997a) he said: "knowledge will not give you of itself unless you give it yourself utterly" (Vol. 1, p. 62). This suggests that a good education is obtained by a motivated pursuit of knowledge; nothing is gained by a half-hearted, casual acquaintance with the material. This is supported by one of the most important *ahadith*, which emphasizes that whatever one does should be done with sincerity. Here sincerity is defined as living within the guidelines laid down by the Sacred Texts, doing all good deeds first for the sake of Allah, and then for those you love. Al-Ghazali asserted that to experience salvation and nearness to God, one must do all things with sincerity (see Al-Manawi, 2001).

Another medieval Islamic thinker, Al-Nawawi (see Rabah & Al-Daqaq, 1991), also wrote that the most important characteristic of the Master-Pupil relationship was working with sincerity, and that this quality should define the relationship. He acknowledged that it was, in fact, very difficult to be sincere, and cited instances of both teachers and learners who were insincere, to the detriment of both. Al-Nawawi offered guidelines for measuring the sincerity in one's teaching, such as not being jealous if one's student consults with another teacher, and willingness to share whatever knowledge one has.

As a teacher, Al-Ghazali modeled this sincerity to the end of his life. A student came to visit with him as he lay dying and asked if Al-Ghazali had any final wisdom to share with him. Al-Ghazali's advice was to "be sincere," that is, to do everything properly for the sake of doing a good job, not for some other ulterior motive. Zolondek (1963) emphasized that, "the respect which Al-Ghazali enjoyed as a theologian and as a teacher amongst the Muslims, and the sincerity of his teaching, which resulted from his own personal experience, favored the success of his endeavor" (p. 15).

Al-Ghazali began *Ihya'* (1997a) with a chapter on knowledge, both teaching and learning with sincerity, and he ended this tome with discussions of death, Paradise, and Hell. In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali used the term "sincere" more than 80 times, and the term "intention" more than 120 times. Al-Ghazali's model for the Master and Pupil described how the right path—that is, being sincere—led to Paradise. For example, he advised teachers to teach not for the salary, but for the glory it brings to God. He discouraged students from doing anything merely for the prospect of material gain.

Implemented successfully, this approach demonstrates Covey's (1997) concept of win-win. When all "members think in terms of mutual benefit, they foster support and

mutual respect. They think interdependently—“we” not “me”—and develop a win-win agreement. They don’t think selfishly (win-lose) or like a martyr (lose-win)” (Covey, p. 390). McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) cite one teacher who noted that, “I really don’t care how they learn it, as long as they learn it ...the object is to learn. If someone can get it across better than I can, fine” (p. 236). This teacher clearly emphasizes that reaching a goal—the child learns—is more important than personal gain. Al-Ghazali acknowledged that keeping one’s intention on the goal was often difficult. In this case, the goal was to teach selflessly, without being distracted by external influences. In an ideal society, if everyone operated sincerely, from a win-win position, there would be no wars or conflicts among and within the groups in society.

In order to make this concept the springboard from which family members can grow as a unit, this chapter suggests that we teach from this perspective, starting on a small scale – the family environment. Al-Ghazali (1997a) recognized that the family unit is one of the most significant and influential organizations in a person’s life. In order to take advantage of teachable moments occurring throughout the child’s life—even before the child begins school—Al-Ghazali suggested having family members teach one another, primarily parents and other adults teaching the youngsters, but also noting that children often teach their parents as well. Family education is a reciprocal arrangement in that that knowledge sometimes passes from parent to child, and sometimes it goes from child to parent.

Here is where I make the connection between Al-Ghazali’s perspective of the Master-Pupil relationship and my theory of superimposing the Master-Pupil model on his perceptions of the family relationship as they relate to his understanding of the dynamics of the family unit. His thoughts about education within the home are scattered throughout his

teachings. No single document or volume devotes more than a single chapter to this subject. Yet almost everything he said about the family and the Parent-Child relationship can be seen in the Master-Pupil relationship.

In Kuwait today, the mother usually has more time to devote to the children's schooling than the father. While the education system in Kuwait requires that both parents be involved in their children's education (Al-Houli, 1999), in truth, the mother who is usually the more involved parent. If women have less education, how can they support their own children's education? As many researchers (Abu Shuqqah, 1995; Al-Hibri, 2000; Bewley, 1999; Wadud, 2000) and others argue, Muslim women lost their rights to education in the last 300 years. Now is the time to address Al-Ghazali's point of view about women's education because of his centuries old influence regarding women needing less education. Thus, this section will gather and synthesize the pertinent data in order to facilitate parents' developing worthwhile educational programs for their children, and the inclusion of women in the Master-Pupil/Parent-Child relationship, especially since it is the women in modern Kuwait who are most involved in their children's education.

Al-Ghazali's Ideal Master-Pupil Relationship

Al-Ghazali (in Al-Barjis, 1983; see also Al-Shami, 1993; Muessig & Allen, 1962; Shalabi, 1954; Shams Al-din, 1990) suggested that the students should purify their souls "from impure traits and blameworthy characteristics because knowledge is the worship of man's heart as well as the prayer of his inmost self and the oblation of his inward being before God" (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, Vol. 1, p. 66).

Al-Ghazali had high expectations for his students in terms of respect and responsibility. He said, “A person has three fathers: one who begot him, another who fostered him, and a third who educated him, and the last is the best of all” (Al-Ghazali, in Shalabi, 1954, p. 175). In this context, a teacher merits the same respect one shows one’s father. Despite these high expectations, he recommended that students should seek knowledge gradually, striving towards the most important knowledge at every stage of development. As part of the learning process, students need to complete one branch of learning before embarking on the next branch, because knowing something about every area of useful knowledge was also an important responsibility of the students.

Teachers are also counselors, and Al-Ghazali noted that teachers assume many roles in their students’ lives, including advising or counseling students outside of the regular classroom experience. Al-Ghazali’s role model for the advisor comes directly from the Prophet Muhammad, who said in one of the *hadith* that religion is advice. Since Al-Ghazali was first and foremost a great Islamic thinker, we can understand that he would embrace the idea of counseling as part of his calling as a teacher.

As part of the process of learning, Al-Ghazali suggested that virtuous thoughts and deeds offer closeness to God and His angels. Therefore, paying attention to the primary religious objects of knowledge, which is the *Holy Qur’an* and *ahadith* (Prophetic sayings), is also part of the students’ educational responsibilities. Al-Ghazali also asserted that students are accountable for keeping themselves free from impure habits, because he believed that students of bad character and manner would never benefit by any knowledge they may possibly acquire. These duties were the first steps in the Master-Pupil relationship because

without this purification of the soul and the idea that knowledge cannot come to you unless you are sincere in your intentions.

Al-Ghazali was also very clear about the responsibilities of the Master to the Pupil. These responsibilities included teachers being kind to their students and treating them like their own children while encouraging good conduct and discipline with sympathy. Teachers also should teach without expecting any remuneration for it, teaching what they can, but reminding students that the object of education is to gain nearness to God. In addition, the teacher has the responsibility of being honest with the students about their progress, teaching only what the students are capable of learning. He also felt that teachers should speak well of other teachers, as well as live what they taught. Teachers “teach by [their] reputation more usefully than by [their] tongue[s]” (Al-Ghazali, in Shalabi, 1954, p. 146).

Al Ghazali noted that just as the student needs to respect the teacher, looking at the teacher’s responsibilities, he concluded that teachers also “must be sympathetic to their pupils and treat them as his own children,” citing a *hadith* that the Prophet said, “I am to you like a father” (Al-Ghazali, in Faris, 1991, p. 145). Al-Ghazali added that those teachers who desire to save their students from the fires of hell are more important than the parents’ desires to save their children from the fires of the earth (Al-Ghazali, in Faris, 1991, p. 145). My interpretation is that Al-Ghazali so the relationship as reciprocal much like a loving parent with a child who receives love and respect in return for what is being taught kindly and compassionately, keeping the Islamic principles at the core of the relationship.

Shams Al-din’s (1990) two-part work investigated the Master-Pupil relationship and the learning process from Al-Ghazali’s point of view. In the first part, he concentrates on Master-Pupil relationships, and in the second part he supports his research with writings

selected from Al-Ghazali's works. This researcher (1990) also asserts that Al-Ghazali attached great importance to the environment in which teaching takes place, and to the kind of relationships that are desirable for doing so. Malek (1999, pp. 69-71) also focuses on the manners of both teachers and students from Al-Ghazali's viewpoint. These researchers find no contradictions about Al-Ghazali's concept of the Master.

Even though there is more authority conferred upon the teacher, Muessig and Allen (1962) emphasize that this implies a two-way relationship built upon mutual respect and feeling, not merely that the teacher delivers the information and the student accepts it without analysis. Totah (1926) asserts that Al-Ghazali's writings exemplify this mutually satisfying relationship between teachers and students.

In his critical study entitled *Al-Ghazali's Epistemology and Cognitive Educational Objectives*, Benomran (1983) reports that Al-Ghazali's theory of the acquisition of knowledge does not address the learning process and dimensions of knowledge. For example, most contemporary educational philosophies address not only the material to be covered, but also the teacher-student interaction in terms of the intellectual and psychological processes involved in acquiring knowledge. Al-Ghazali "does not provide us with any explanations of how a teacher can bring a student to know. He only explains the moral duties of both teacher [to deliver the information] and student [to absorb the information]" (Benomran, 1983, p. 2). In light of this investigation into Al-Ghazali's life and theory of knowledge, I believe that he purposely did not go beyond explaining the moral duties in the Master-Pupil relationship, because each relationship of teacher to student is an individual entity. Al-Ghazali's tools for learning and his faith in the sacred texts as inspirational words for the students were the bases for the tutorial relationship. The

foundation was laid down first by the sacred texts, and Al-Ghazali clarified the concepts and then purposely left the details to be developed by the teacher/parent and student/child.

Earlier, I discussed Al-Ghazali's theory of knowledge and the way of knowing, with his focus on which part of the body and how the senses affect learning. Using all of this information as tools, the teacher can build the relationship with his students.

Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (1997a) was Al-Ghazali's most significant effort, and the majority of the information for this chapter has been gleaned from the first chapter, "The Book of Knowledge," which talks about Master-Pupil relationships, especially in terms of their social and academic interactions. In another chapter, "Disciplining the Soul," Al-Ghazali discusses good and bad character, "diseases" of the heart, disciplining children, and health information. Some of the stories he used in *Ihya'* will be used to support the recommendations in the model for this study.

Al-Ghazali asserted that his writings and teachings relied upon the *Holy Qur'an* and *ahadith*, as expressed by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Al-Ghazali believed that learning and teaching are the best forms of worship, and this worship is the highest priority for Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad placed knowledge on an equal footing with prophecy: "The learned men are the heirs of the Prophets" (in Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, 1997a, Vol. 1, p. 12). Al-Ghazali (1989) believed that this model—the Master-Pupil relationship—was the path to happiness. When Al-Ghazali ranked members of society, he positioned scholars second only to the prophets. Al-Ghazali (in Faris 1991) reported that Al-Hassan Al-Basri (a prominent *Sufi* figure) noted that Muhammad's opinion was that "the ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr" (p. 16). Al-Ghazali's teachings reflect Islamic philosophy, which is that spiritual knowledge and intellectual knowledge are not mutually

exclusive, and a number of his educational recommendations still influence the education systems in many Islamic countries. Al-Ghazali encouraged students to complete their spiritual development before committing to the business world, recommending that one be immersed in one's religious studies. He also believed that:

. . . the seeker after knowledge should not lord it over his teacher. One manifestation of such a pride is the pupil's reluctance to heed the advice of anyone except the popular and well-known [teacher]. This is foolishness itself because knowledge is the way to salvation and happiness. Besides anyone who is seeking an escape from the claws of a threatening wild lion does not mind, as long as he is saved, whether he is led to safety by a well-known celebrity or by an obscure person. The tortures which the flames of hell fire inflict upon those who are ignorant of God are greater than any which the lions of the jungle are capable of inflicting. Wisdom is the aim of every believer; he seizes it wherever he finds it, and is under obligation to anyone who imparts it to him, no matter who the person may be (Al-Ghazali, in Faris, 1991, p. 130).

Al-Ghazali (1997a) also admonished students to respect their teachers, and that the teacher be kind to the students, each learning from the other. A review of classical Islamic literature reveals that Al-Ghazali (1997a), Al-Mansur biallah (2001), and other scholars encouraged both students and teachers to learn from one other—wherever they find good knowledge, they should take it.

Al-Ghazali also encouraged students to demonstrate initiative and not be shy about asking questions. The teacher should welcome inquiries, and it is permissible to ask the teacher to explain his examples. Like Plato, Al-Ghazali favored the use of interactive teaching methods where the students ask questions and the teacher responds. In *Ihya'* and other books, he spoke of not questioning the teacher, but this did not mean that the student should never ask questions or seek clarification; only that the student should not badger the teacher with incessant questions (Al-Zabidi, n.d.). The student should listen carefully to all that the teacher says, or in Al-Ghazali's words, "do not ask questions out of the proper time and season; the teacher is better informed than you are as to the things you are capable of understanding and as to their appropriate time for making them know (Al-Ghazali in Faris, 1991, p. 131). Then, if some clarification is needed on a particular point, it is acceptable to ask. In fact, in Al-Ghazali's manuscript of *Minhaj al-Muta'alim (The Path of the Learners)*, he mentioned that how one presents or phrases a question is half of the process of the pursuit of knowledge (Al-Ghazali, in Bazzun, 1997). Al-Ghazali's *O Disciple* is essentially a response to an inquiry from one of his students, demonstrating that he readily accepted comments from his students.

Al-Ghazali (1997a) suggested that teachers should be kind to their students, treating them like their own children. He asserted that they should encourage good conduct and discipline with sympathy. Teachers should be honest with their students about their progress, not misleading them to think that they know more than they do, and teaching only what the student is able to absorb in order to avoid teaching subject matter that is beyond the comprehension of the student. Teachers should follow the example of the Prophet, and both teacher and student need to remember that the object of an education is to gain nearness to

God. Teachers should exhort the students to do well, and rebuke them for misconduct. They should not criticize the subjects of fellow teachers to their students. Unfortunately, in today's Kuwait schools, some of this criticism does take place. Perhaps the information in this paper will remind teachers of Al-Ghazali's valuable recommendation not to criticize the subjects of other teachers.

Al-Ghazali advised teachers to practice what they teach in order not to confuse the students, and to support their knowledge with practice in order to inculcate the knowledge in the students' minds (i.e., Al-Ghazali suggests that teachers "teach by [their] reputation more usefully than by [their] tongue[s]" (Shalabi, 1957, p. 146):

If the actions of a teacher are contrary to what he preaches, it does not help towards guidance, but it is like poison. A teacher is like a stamp to clay and a student is like clay. If the stamp has no character, there is no impression on clay. Or he [is] like a cane and the student is like the shadow of the cane. How can the shadow of the cane be straight when the cane itself is crooked? God said: "Do you enjoin good to the people and forget it for yourselves? (2:44)" (Al-Ghazali, 1977a, Vol. 1, p. 70).

Al-Ghazali believed that a teacher should live:

. . . what he teaches and not allow his works to give...lie to his words, because knowledge is comprehended though the mind while it works through the eyes. But those who see with their eyes are more than those

who perceive with their mind, therefore when practice contradicts theory, righteousness is frustrated (in Faris, 1991, p. 152).

Al-Ghazali believed that it was possible to modify one's behavior and improve less desirable personal characteristics through effort and training. He argued that the organic function of religion is to guide people in the refinement of their character. If religion does not control and influence the people's behavior in this case, "then all Prophetic messages, advice, and education would have been groundless" (Asari, 1993, p. 89). Al-Ghazali offered the Master-Pupil relationship as the first step to modifying one's behavior and improving personal characteristics. He suggests four ways to modify undesirable characteristics:

1. One should seek a spiritual guide, that is, a religious teacher who has modeled his life according to the sacred texts of Islamic law (All Nadwi, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 150).
2. One should seek good friends,
3. One should take advantage of one's enemies by listening to what they say about him because they will describe his weaknesses, and
4. One should socialize with different people in society and pay attention to their good manners (Abul Quasem, 1978, p. 87; Asari, 1993, p. 89).

I argue that Al-Ghazali's methods of modifying behavior through effort and training contend that one must believe that evil character traits can be eliminated. To facilitate spiritual, intellectual, and moral development, one should seek a teacher to guide the process. This teacher should be able to identify the student's problem areas and recommend

the cure. The antidote for unacceptable conduct is to oppose its cause, which requires a detailed investigation of the source of the problem (see Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, 1997a, Vol. 3, p. 65; Abul Quasem, 1978, p. 92). As a practical example, if a person were miserly, the remedy would be to recommend that the person make frequent charitable donations (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, Vol. 3, p. 65).

When advising kings, Al-Ghazali (1987) attributed weaknesses in leadership to weaknesses of their scholars (teachers), and vice versa. Thus if the teacher's attitude can affect the leaders of society, then these same attitudes can affect the students with whom the teacher has a strong relationship. Superimposing this concept onto the family unit, it is reasonable to conclude that the weaknesses of the parents will also affect their children. Therefore, Al-Ghazali and other Islamic thinkers recognized that education can change and mold society.

However, the relationship between teacher and student is more than just the transmission of book knowledge. There are also the subtle elements of how to behave in a way that honors the self, and one's parents and teachers. Al-Ghazali (1951) offered a story that demonstrated the benefits beyond book knowledge. Here, a certain *shaykh* asked his disciple what he had learned in 30 years, and the disciple answered that he had gained eight benefits that served him well. The first was to do good deeds because it makes one feel good. Next, he learned to reject passionate desires and discipline one's soul to obey God, to seek comfort in spiritual wealth instead of worldly things, and to be pious because it is more attractive to God than accumulated possessions. In addition he had gained insight into what it meant to be satisfied with what one has, to hate none but Satan, to be thankful to God because He put us here and thus, we have to appreciate His generosity, and not to rely on

material goods but trust in God, as He is an excellent provider. These benefits are mentioned in the four great books of religion: the Torah, the *Qur'an*, the Psalms, and the Gospels (Al-Ghazali, 1951, 1997a).

Although Al-Ghazali held educators in high regard, he nevertheless warned a student that viewing one's teacher as a role model was acceptable, but that blind imitation of the teacher was not. The role of the student is to seek the truth. He advised students to use their minds to think and learn the truth, and not just rely on the teacher (Al-Ghazali, 1989). Al-Qaradawi (2000) and others who agree with Al-Ghazali observed that certain *Sufi shaykhs* essentially demanded devotion from their students (muridin), and that this was and is excessive and extreme. Although Al-Ghazali did espouse a *Sufi* orientation, he was by no means extreme and agreed that teachers serve as guides and that they are fallible.

Al-Ghazali (1989) believed that teachers should direct the efforts of the students, but that students should then take these guidelines and follow their own individual paths to reach the truth. He also proposed that students should research every school of thought without depending on a particular philosophy or scholar, in order to be fully informed. In practice, Al-Ghazali implemented this concept by researching all four branches of Sunni Islamic law¹⁹ in order to consider what the best approach would be to a particular situation.

Looking at Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil rights and responsibilities, one might conclude that the spiritual and moral characteristics were basic features of Al-Ghazali's model, with no contradictions from the researchers, who agree with his concepts.

¹⁹ These four branches were developed on the second Islamic century (8th CE), to interpret Islamic law. Their names are Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi'i, and Hanbali (Ziadeh, 1995, p. 456).

While most of the researchers are in agreement with Al-Ghazali's spiritual and moral ideas, they feel he does not emphasize many practical aspects of education for Muslims. In other words, his concepts are not complete for some researchers, and they make attempts to "fill in the gaps" by placing more of the intellectual sciences in the curricula along with the spiritual teachings.

Al-Ghazali's Ideal Parent-Child Relationship

Al-Ghazali (1997a) noted that a child is born with a thirst for knowledge, and that one is ready to absorb information from the moment of one's birth into this world. To wait until a child actually embarks on his or her formal education would mean missing these opportunities for developing the child's growing spiritual and intellectual capacities. Teaching not only the rituals but also the structure of the faith, therefore, begins within the family, and does not wait until the child enters elementary school.

Al-Ghazali also believed that it was the parents' primary responsibility to inculcate these characteristics into their children, meaning that the parents are charged with instructing their children on how to behave and what to do to assure everlasting life. Al-Ghazali also stated that training in morality should start from the very beginning of a child's life (Abul Quasem, 1978, p. 87). As an example, Al-Ghazali proposed that children have a wet nurse, one who was observant of Islamic religious guidelines and traditions, and consumed only lawful foods. Here, Al-Ghazali (1997a) believed the child's daily life would be affected in a positive manner by the wet nurse's pre-approved moral character.

Al-Ghazali discussed several different educational institutions, such as the mosque, the *maktab* (elementary school), and the *kuttab* (higher education) (see Al-Zabidi, n.d.). Al-Ghazali also described the family as the first educational institution for children. Thus, he asserted that parents are mandated to be their children's first teachers (Gil'adi, 1983). In medieval times, most Muslim girls received an informal education from their fathers (and then their husbands), either in their own home or in the home of another family in their neighborhood (Rahman, 1982; Shalabi, 1954).

While Al-Ghazali mentioned throughout his works his reliance upon the *Holy Qur'an*, he delegated primary responsibility for instruction within the family to the father, even though it is a foundation of Islam that both parents are equally responsible for the development of their children. Al-Ghazali specifically mentioned that it is the father who should teach, although, in practice both parents could use these guidelines. Because Al-Ghazali ascribed great importance to the family as the primary educative agent for young children, he covered this subject in great detail. He proposed his thoughts concerning the responsibility of every family member for teaching the others, acknowledging that each family member was a necessary component in the learning process (Nofal, 1994).

Gil'adi (1983) also asserts that Al-Ghazali proposed that it is the parents' responsibility to formulate their children's pre-school curricula at home. In his work *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali*, Abul Quasem (1978) discusses some of Al-Ghazali's theories from the latter part of his life.²⁰

²⁰ Although there is some controversy about the authenticity of a few books ascribed to Al-Ghazali these particular works have been unanimously accepted as authentic (see Watt, 1952, p. 24).

In his third chapter, Abul Quasem discusses Al-Ghazali's directions for training children to have good character. Interestingly, in the family context, Abul Quasem (1978), too, notes that Al-Ghazali gives the mother less parental authority regarding punishment and reward. He confirms the observation that Al-Ghazali places the responsibility for children's education solely on the father, which is a departure from the Islamic foundation that both parents educate their children.

While Abul Quasem reports this directive, he does not address the very real concept that this philosophy undermines the mother's influence in the home by designating authority for punishment solely on the father. In fact, even among contemporary Islamic educational scholars, virtually none of the researchers commenting on Al-Ghazali's works have noted his preference for the father as family teacher. Some researchers, such as Gil'adi Nofal and Abul Quasem, contradict Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the father's role because it ignores the importance of the mother's role. The fact that he gave greater responsibility to the father also contradicts Islamic principles.

However, Al-Ghazali's writings did acknowledge that the husband had certain responsibilities to his wife to ensure her spiritual and intellectual growth, which has yet to be explored in depth by other Islamic scholars. If one were to read only the works of the scholars examining Al-Ghazali's works, one would think that he never addressed these husband-wife interpersonal issues. In truth, Al-Ghazali did discuss husband-wife relationships, which these scholars have chosen to overlook. Perhaps his ideas about fathers and mothers followed the current practices or norms of his time, even though they were not exactly the words of the sacred texts, which require all Muslims to be guardians in their environment.

In order to integrate the Master-Pupil model with the Parent-Child relationship, first we need to look at two things. First, the parents' and children's rights and responsibilities in their interactive relationships; and second, what Al-Ghazali had already covered in his writings, briefly touching on the subject of education within the family. By using the Master-Pupil relationship as a model for the Parent-Child relationship, families can take full advantage of implementing some of the educational methods and materials in the family context that are customarily used only in formal schooling.

In the institutional school setting, the relationships and interactions are for a few hours a day, for a few years. Eventually the teachers retire and the students move on to have families of their own. While children are in school, their teachers may have as much or more influence on them than their parents, since young children spend the majority of their day in school. But the educator-learner context is always present in life; one never "finishes" learning. The anticipated outcome is that families realize and practice the belief that living is more than just eating and sleeping together, but also a lifelong learning process.

An example of actively seeking knowledge and then sharing it with family members is that of one of Al-Ghazali's students, Sa'ad Al-Khayr. He traveled to many countries (e.g., China and Spain), crossing seas and deserts in order to consult with different *shaykhs* (teachers), and returning with many unique books.²¹ Al-Khayr then taught what he had learned to his daughter, Fatima bint Sa'ad. Fatima ultimately learned enough *ahadith* and *fiqh* (Islamic law) not only to obtain a license (*ijazah*) to teach *ahadith*, but also to award the *ijazah* to other students who were sufficiently knowledgeable (Al-Dhahabi, 1994, 2001). In

this example of sharing education within the family, Fatima learned from her father, and she subsequently taught her grandson, Ali Ibn Ibrahim.²²

This explains several aspects of what we know about the history of education in Islam, and confirms that a Muslim woman in Al-Ghazali's era could be educated and could also be a *shaykhah* (the feminine noun form for teacher). Thus at least among the elite, it was accepted that women were capable of both learning and teaching, both at the elementary and advanced levels. Second, these women had both male and female students, suggesting that there was no discrimination or difference in desirability according to teacher gender, so there was no reason to believe that female teachers were inferior. Some women even went on to become *musnidat*,²³ which are highly qualified people (pl. feminine form) who can narrate the *ahadith*, as in Fatima's case.

Roded (1994) and Tritton (1957) note that not only were men and women teaching and learning from one other, but also that the proximity of the family members created a natural environment for learning. In addition, Roded reports that learned men frequently brought their young daughters to learn from scholarly colleagues. Thus, not only were they teaching the youngsters themselves, but they were also facilitating access to additional education. These models demonstrate how family members can interact as both learners and teachers.

²¹ He was such a frequent traveler, in fact, that when people mentioned him by name, they referred to him as Sa'ad Al-Khayr al-Andalusi al-Sini, which means Sa'ad Al-Khayr from Andalus who traveled to China (Al-Dhahabi, 1994).

²² An ethnographic content analysis revealed that some scholars (i.e., Khatib Murda and Ibn Al-Hafidh) traveled long distances to consult with Fatima bint Sa'ad in order to discuss such topics. Other scholars, such as Ibn Magreb, have included some of her teaching in their writings (Al-Dhahabi, 1994, Vol. 22, p. 318; Vol. 23, p. 325).

²³ This is an obsolete term used to refer to someone qualified to teach *hadith* science (in this case, the feminine form of the word), but it is no longer in common use.

Rosenthal (1952) notes the strong influence parents have on their children, and the importance of taking advantage of these opportunities to teach. He reports that children will do even dangerous things, like playing with wild animals, because they have no instinctive sense of self-preservation. That sense is acquired from the parents, who demonstrate when and where fear is appropriate. Al-Ghazali (in Watt, 1996) illustrated how children imitate their parents, since small children are imitative by nature:

The snake-charmer must refrain from touching the snake in front of his small boy, because he knows that the boy imagines he is like his father and will imitate him, and must even caution the boy by himself showing caution in front of him (p. 42).

My interpretation of Al-Ghazali's perceptions is that the Master-Pupil relationship is actually a reflection of the Parent-Child relationship – which Al-Ghazali often referred to as the Father-Child relationship; -- meaning that once children embark on a formal education, they develop a relationship with their teachers similar to the ones they maintain with their parents. Al-Ghazali was emphatic that parents are the child's first teachers. Many great philosophers have examined the nature of children and how they learn, and have confirmed that children learn from their parents, both formally and informally. Researchers have pointed out that even infants have the magnificent ability to develop self-esteem (Pettapiece, 1992, p. 158). Strom (1989, p. 40) notes the opportunity for early childhood education in the home because “preschoolers respect their parents, imitate them, and are responsive to family guidance.”

Al-Nashmi (2000) notes that some modern Kuwaiti parents seem to be “retired” from educating their children. The concept seems to be that their job is done and that it is now the schools’ responsibility to teach them. Part of the purpose of my research is to reestablish the educational aspects of the Parent-Child relationship by showing how Al-Ghazali took that original relationship, adapted it and expanded it to the Master-Pupil relationship. Recognizing the value of his philosophy, I have taken all his theories about the educational relationship between Master and Pupil, extracting what is appropriate for the family, and (re) superimposing the model back onto the Parent-Child relationship, extending it to include the role of the mother as an active participant in her child’s education.

Al-Ghazali (1997a, Vol. 3, p. 202) felt that the child’s heart is like a lump of clay, and the parents have the opportunity and responsibility to mold this clay into something valuable. Purification of the soul and acquisition of good traits cannot be accomplished without action. Therefore, parents must model the behaviors they want to inculcate in their children in order to demonstrate what is appropriate and how to avoid impure habits as much as possible, according to their capacities and abilities. Al-Ghazali (1997a) also believed that teaching the children when they are young is like writing on stone; it cannot be removed.

Historically, Muslims have believed that children need to realize and practice moral and spiritual virtues in order to be good learners. The Islamic philosophy of education of children emphasizes that the essential spiritual matters be grasped while the children are still young. Al-Ghazali and other Islamic thinkers have supported a practice of the Prophet’s in which, immediately after a child is born, one of the parents takes the infant and whispers in one ear the call to prayer (*‘Adhan*) and in the other ear, the announcement that praying is to begin (*iqamah*). This is done to establish from the beginning one of the five pillars of Islam,

which is prayer (*salah*). Thus, children grow up practicing many sacred traditions and rituals, and by the time they reach adulthood, these concepts are second nature. This aspect of Islamic training is still practiced today, particularly in primarily Islamic countries.

Zarabozo (1999) emphasizes the importance of being accountable for one's actions, and notes that proper training of children must start early in order that they know exactly what is expected of them by the time they reach puberty. He also advised them to seek knowledge gradually, without rushing through it; and that the lifelong goal is to pay attention to the primary object of knowledge, which is the Islamic faith and principles.

For example, Islam teaches that happiness in the next life must be the essential aim of any learning. Al-Ghazali cited one of the *hadith* that says, "When a man dies, all except three of his works perish: namely, a permanent endowment for charity, useful knowledge, and righteous progeny that bring honor upon his memory" (in Faris, 1991, p. 22). Al-Ghazali believed that even if a parent dies, the relationship with the children continues in the values the children have learned. The children visit the remaining family members and the deceased parents' peers, and offer prayers on the parent's behalf. Al-Ghazali consistently advocated that children respect the adults in their lives—parents, teachers, and others—and emphasized that this was a critical component of spiritual growth and harmonious social order.

From a socioeconomic perspective, Al-Ghazali suggests that parents from rich families teach their children the excellence of giving and to be generous, while children from less affluent families should be taught that it is mean and disgraceful to be greedy and not to depend on the generosity of others (Abul Quasem, 1978, p. 98). The *Qur'an* mandates that all people are held to the same moral and behavioral standards, without regard

to affluence, and that good manners and morals are as important for the poor as they are for the rich:

The one who does not know that they are poor thinks that they are rich because of their modesty. You may know them by their mark, they do not beg of people at all (2:273).

Al-Ghazali (1997a) recommended that these lessons be introduced to children in the home and incorporated throughout the learning experience. Parents cannot wait until the child reaches school and depend on the teacher to convey these lessons, because by then the child won't be socialized to co-exist in the classroom. From a theoretical perspective, many of Al-Ghazali's arguments concerning family education resemble those of a functional theorist. Functional perspectives explain how systems stay in a state of equilibrium. When those in higher socioeconomic classes use their resources to help the needy, this redistribution is the natural inclination to return to an equal state.

As with teachers, Al-Ghazali notes that the parents' reputations must be impeccable in order that the child perceives the parent to be a good and consistent example. The child is a reflection of the parents; unattractive and undesirable traits in the parents will be mirrored in the behavior of the children. In order that parents be qualified to perform this function, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that it is important to get "rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God, and to constant recollection of Him" (Watt, 1996, p. 54).

Al-Ghazali advised the teachers to have a compelling impact on the development of their students. They need to observe the students' manners carefully in order to tailor punishments and rewards to the specific behaviors. Many scholars (e.g., Al-Ghazali, 1997a; Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Taha Hussein, 1994; and others) discussed the concepts of punishment and reward for students:

Students should be admired and rewarded with something that gives him joy, and should be praised in front of others. But if the student does something bad, it is best to pretend not to notice and not to bring it to the attention of others, and if he repeats the action, he should be privately reproached and made to feel that it was a very serious thing and be told beware of doing anything like this again or I shall tell others and you will be disgraced in front of them (Al-Ghazali, in Winter, 1995, pp. 77-78).

Many of these thinkers, Al-Ghazali included, supported a systematic approach to punishment. For example, one shouldn't just beat the offender the first time the mistake is made. Rather, first bring the matter to the student's attention and request the better alternative. At the next offense, again call the mistake to the child's attention and remind the student of the desired action. If it persists, gradually increase the severity of the consequences until the unacceptable behavior is eliminated. We can take this concept one step further and apply it to Parent-Child relationship understanding the fact that Al-Ghazali afforded fathers more authority than mothers, especially in terms of educating the child. He discussed alternative educational means, such as fear through warnings and rebukes (Gil'adi,

1992, p. 64). These methods give the mother less authority regarding punishment and rewards. One example of this philosophy is what leads to such comments as, “Just wait until your father gets home...” This is a particularly ineffective concept if the father travels or is out of the home when the child commits the offense.²⁴

To explain his understanding from a different perspective, Al-Ghazali (1951) compared the role of an educator to that of a farmer. The farmer takes the undeveloped resources (earth, seeds, water) and combines them to make food. In this same fashion, the Master/Parent takes the Pupil/Child and the lessons, and puts them together to convey knowledge and help the child to grow. As part of the process, the farmer removes the weeds and thorns and dead leaves to help nurture the growing item. When the Master/Parent fosters appropriate interpersonal relationships, corrects inaccurate ideas, and demonstrates what is good and what is not, this further nurtures the child’s good character. The primary responsibility for children’s education and integrity falls on the shoulders of the parents, and the parents will reap what they sow. If they neglect the child’s upbringing—that is, do not remove the weeds—they will bear the burden of the sin of neglect (Al-Ghazali, 1977a).

Al-Ghazali recommended that the parent/teacher consider what the child/student is capable of learning in terms of these phases when developing or assigning curricula to young children. In terms of individual differences, parents should remember each child’s ability and capacity for learning. In this light, children should not be taught things that are

²⁴ Al-Barjas (1983) suggests that Al-Ghazali’s intent was not, in fact, to limit the mother’s authority over the children, but rather that each parent approach discipline from a different direction. He proposes that Al-Ghazali meant that the father should be the person who metes out the punishment, and that the mother should use reasoning skills, to balance the impact of discipline imposed on the child.

beyond their comprehension. Al-Ghazali encourages educators “to speak to men by way of illustrations and examples as they were ordered to speak to men according to the degree of their intelligence” (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'*, Vol. 2, p. 25).

Although Al-Ghazali did not talk about girls' education within the family unit, other researchers describe his era by saying that transmission of knowledge from adult to child within the family, especially for the education of girls, was not uncommon in medieval Islam, and that the transmitters were both men and women (Roded, 1994). Roded also comments that this was a natural occurrence because of the proximity of the relatives, and that many of the young women who began their education at home were so fascinated by learning that they subsequently sought further education with other teachers.

To summarize Al-Ghazali's perception of parents as educators, one finds that families need to provide an adequate learning environment that is also a nurturing place with clear religious purpose. Family education must be based on a fundamental concept of parents' responsibilities. Parents are accountable for training their children and implanting in their hearts and minds the seeds of good traits. These enable them to practice the obligatory devotional acts such as praying and fasting in order to become conscious of their own choices. Parents need to safeguard their children by preventing them from hearing vile anecdotes and associating with bad friends: “A [child] should be directed not to join bad company” (Al-Ghazali, 1997a, Vol. 3, pp. 75-76).

Summary of Al-Ghazali's Educational Model of Relationships

I have demonstrated that the Master-Pupil relationship can be superimposed over the Parent-Child relationship, so that in most cases what Al-Ghazali recommended for teachers and their students could also apply to what he would have recommended for parents and their children. For example, Al-Ghazali made note of how teachers are role models for their students, in the same way parents are role models for their children. Al-Ghazali (1997a) was referring to the Qur'an and hadith, where there are several instructions directing people to model the kind of behavior they expect from others. This is especially true with children, who learn how to behave from observing the adults in their environment.

In this chapter I discussed the details of Al-Ghazali's core understanding of such topics as treating the child as a '*tabula rasa*' (Nofal, 1994), meaning that he believed that children are born with the true faith (*fitrah*)—ready to learn and absorb this knowledge. Al-Ghazali is one of many scholars who recognized the enormous potential for learning in the home. The family environment is the child's first educational institution. Because the parents teach the children first and direct them in their spiritual growth, he advocated that all parents take advantage of these learning opportunities and offered guidance to support this process. Al-Ghazali (1997a, 1989) had many suggestions for how both teachers and students should conduct themselves and respond to others, and what each party can expect to obtain from and contribute to education. He also had many suggestions for what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach in the home. Even after children embark on their formal education, the family is still involved in facilitating that process (e.g., helping with homework, involvement in school activities, and introducing children to additional educational

resources), as well as instilling in their children a life-long love of learning such that they continue pursuing knowledge even after completing their formal education. Then, as now, the family is the first place that learning begins. Ideally, the ideal model of the Master-Pupil relationship can be superimposed on the Parent-Child relationship so that learning at home prepares the child for formal education.

This discussion involved an extensive search for all analyses and comments related to Al-Ghazali's teachings. While there may have been some documentation missed for the purpose of this review, the other writers' commentaries on Al-Ghazali's works (Khawajah, 1986; Mubarak, 1988) located in this search, however, indicate that few of the other studies refer to his thoughts on education regarding the rights of women. One could conclude from this idea that Al-Ghazali did not address these issues in his works, although that would be incorrect.

Before one can officially identify Al-Ghazali's theories as either germane or outdated, however, one must recognize that Islamic society in Al-Ghazali's era differed in terms of its priorities and values than society today. In his time, and until the last 40 to 50 years, it was customary to offer direction in terms of "he" should do such and such. This does not necessarily mean that the directive applied only to boys or men, only that writers were less concerned with what was "politically correct" than they are today. It is, therefore, necessary first to determine which of his philosophies he addressed specifically to men (i.e., excluding women), and which Al-Ghazali directed that "he" do something or "he" be responsible for something, where "he" included all persons. In those situations where he speaks directly to or about women, however, this would obviously not apply.

Finally, if I were to compress all of Al-Ghazali's ideas concerning the Master-Pupil relationship and, by parallel, the Parent-Child relationship, I might choose the *hadith* that Al-Ghazali brought to the people: "Whoever does not respect elders and be kind to children does not belong to us (Muslims)" (Al-Bukhari, 1999, p. 157). All of Al-Ghazali's teachings, advice, writings, and philosophies are based on this idea that older people are valued for their wisdom and need to be respected. In addition, children need to be treated kindly so that they will model the adults and grow up to be kind to their children, just as Prophet Muhammad respected elders and showed kindness to children. The cycle repeats itself generation after generation. Even though Al-Ghazali lived hundreds of years ago—and the companions of Prophet Muhammad even before that—the basic concepts of the *Qur'an* remain the core of Islam, with the *ahadith* providing daily guidance for parents, teachers, and children. The most critical concept that Al-Ghazali offered for all professions, not just teaching, is to do all things sincerely. Be genuine in all you do.

CHAPTER 7

AL-GHAZALI'S VIEWS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Background

Women are part of the family unit and their educations have a great impact on their children and family members. As mentioned before, there are critical analyses that must be brought to bear when translating Al-Ghazali's theories into a family model. Thus, this section will discuss Al-Ghazali's views on women's education and social status, and how this has an impact on the Parent-Child role, especially in relation to the current social trends in Islamic countries.

In order to understand Al-Ghazali's perceptions and teachings about women's education, they need to be considered in the context of the era in which he wrote. By examining these concepts and comparing them to the sacred texts on which he relied for inspiration, we will gain a greater understanding of women's status in his day, and can extend our findings to the present day.

In medieval Muslim society—and in other cultures during the same time period—the majority of the literature concerning raising children refers to males as authority figures. Gil'adi (1992) reports that there was explicit discrimination against females. Al-Ghazali's concept of knowledge and ideas on methods of teaching, like those of many Western philosophers in the 18th century (e.g., Rousseau), was concerned more with boys' education than with girls' education. Even though the Islamic religion encourages females to educate themselves, Al-Ghazali proposed that education for women be very limited, maintaining that

females should be educated only by their parents or husbands. Ironically, even though Al-Ghazali (1997a) acknowledged that teaching and learning are the highest level of worship, he asserted that women needed only religious education. Al-Ghazali perceived that women needed to learn only the fundamentals of religion in order to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers. In the *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali (in Holland, 1998) reported his opinion that women should not endeavor to acquire any loftier forms of knowledge other than religious education. Al-Ghazali noted that the woman's father—and her husband, after she marries—were responsible for educating her about the rules of ritual prayer and other necessary spiritual and moral qualities.

A man who is getting married should learn about menstruation and its rules, so as to observe the necessary restraints. He should teach his wife the rules of ritual prayer, and about when prayers must or need not be made up by women after menstruation. For he is commanded to preserve her from the Fire, in the words of Allah (Exalted is He): Guard yourselves and your families against the Fire (66:6).

He should instruct her in the beliefs of those who follow the Prophetic model, and should remove from her heart any innovation she may have heard of. He should instill the fear of Allah in her if she is lax in the matter of religion.

He should teach her all that is necessary of the rules of menstruation and irregular bleeding, although the latter is a lengthy

subject. The essential knowledge a woman must be given about menstruation concerns the prayers that are to be repeated.

If her bleeding stops just before the sunset prayer, she is obliged to make up the midday and afternoon prayers; if she stops bleeding by midnight, then the next morning, she must make up the [preceding] sunset and late evening prayers. This is the minimum that women observe.

If the husband is seeing to her instruction, she may not go out to consult the scholars. If the husband's own knowledge is inadequate, but he consults the Mufti [scholar] on her behalf and conveys the reply back to her, again she may not go out. Otherwise, she does not merely have the right to go out for consultation, but is duty-bound to do so, and it is a sin for the husband to stop her. "Once she has learned her religious obligations, she may not go out for a session of divine remembrance [*dhikr*] nor for extra studies, unless she has her husband's consent.

Whenever the wife neglects one of the rules governing menstruation and irregular bleeding, and the husband does not tell her about it, he is equally at fault and becomes her partner in sin (Al-Ghazali, in Holland, 1998, pp. 70, 92-93).

The information above is the total extent of Al-Ghazali's references to women's education. Given his enormous body of works, this information, although quite minor, contradicts original Islamic principles. In her anthropological study, Dahl (1997, pp. 157, 179) found that some of Al-Ghazali's arguments concerning women's duties and rights have

been and still are taken quite literally to this very day. Bear in mind that even though Al-Ghazali proposed that only males be well educated—which was not unusual in his era—it is not a foundation of Islam that women have fewer educational opportunities. Safi (2001) emphasizes that:

. . . while Islamic sources differentiate men's and women's responsibilities within the family, all limitations imposed by classical scholars on women's rights in the public sphere were based on faulty interpretation of Islamic texts, or practical limitations associated with the social and political structures of historical society (p. 34).

Safi notes that some classical scholars have misinterpreted the genuine Islamic sources. This situation supports a comprehensive re-examination of the genuine Islamic texts to ensure that today's interpretation is both accurate and applicable to contemporary societal needs.

In addition to considering only that fathers be responsible for teaching their children, another important factor is that Al-Ghazali spoke about education being provided for male children only. As mentioned earlier, it is a foundation of the Islamic faith that all persons are entitled to education (male and female) to the full potential of their capacity, and that any person (male or female) is capable of teaching another. One must realize that there were many women in early Islam, even in his time, who had achieved prestigious academic

status.²⁵ Nevertheless, Al-Ghazali's view of women, for the most part, was that they had limited intelligence and that a virtuous woman was a rare phenomenon (in *Ihya'*, 1997a, pp. 163-164). He placed women at a lower rank than men, and he enjoined them to obey men and to remain inside the home (Nofal, 1994, p. 533).

Although Al-Ghazali maintained that girls may claim from their parents—and wives from their husbands—the right to be educated, such education would be limited. Khawajah asserts that Al-Ghazali felt that it was sufficient that a young girl learn the fundamentals of religion; she should not endeavor to acquire any loftier forms of knowledge, nor should she, except with the permission of her husband, go outside the home to seek knowledge as long as he performs his duty by educating her. If, however, the husband does not educate his wife, she may go outside the home to seek education, and that any man who would prevent her from so doing is at fault.

While many of the researchers I investigated contradict this limited view of women by Al-Ghazali. In addition, he was not the only early Islamic philosopher to confer inferior status upon females. Despite the fact that Islam's spiritual policy is concerned with improving the social status of women and devoting attention to their education, the later *ahadith* and the social and educational principles derived from them limited their status because of the influence of other cultures as well as the time in which Al-Ghazali lived.

²⁵ Some of the most important Islamic male scholars were taught by women, Berkey (1991, p. 151) reports that "Al-'Asqalani (852/1449) provided the name of 53 women with whom, in one way or another, he studied [*ahadith*]. Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) relied heavily on women as his sources for hadith: of the 130 *shaiikhs* of exceptional reliability on whose authority he recited [*ahadith*], 33 – more than a quarter of the total – were women."

Nofal's (1994), Mubarak's (1988), and Khawajah's (1986) studies explain Al-Ghazali's negative tendencies regarding the way in which women are to be considered, dealt with, and educated. The number of his writings that actually refer only to men, however, is sometimes difficult to determine due to Al-Ghazali's use of the pronoun "he" to refer to all persons (male and female), rather than just men (Winter, 1997).

In light of Nofal's (1994) and others' criticism, Al-Ghazali's views on women's education merit additional intensive investigation. However, while Nofal criticizes Al-Ghazali's gender discrimination, he offers no supporting data to validate his (Nofal's) position. There has also been no investigation into how or why Al-Ghazali reached these restrictive conclusions, in light of the fact that Islam holds more tolerant views on the same subject. Contrary to Al-Ghazali's negative point of view on educating women, Tritton (1957) notes that, historically, Islamic women were not only trained to read and write—they were actually employed to do both, giving as an example a woman in the Middle Ages named Fatima bint Al-Hasan who received 1,000 dinars from Khalifa Al-Kunderi for writing a treaty. This is especially significant when one realizes that they did not have conventional printing methods at the time. All "printed" matter was copied, one document from another, so accuracy and penmanship were critical skills.

Ibn Al-Jawzi (d. 1201 CE) and other medieval Islamic thinkers have documented their observations and interpretations of life in the Middle Ages, reporting that Islamic women in the 11th century (CE) were mostly illiterate, although it is worth noting that women were still making significant contributions to society, regardless of literacy, as indicated in Table 7.1. Evidence of this is included in Ibn Al-Jawzi's collection of biographies of his contemporaries, in which 240 women (23% of the total number of people

mentioned in his writings) were mentioned as having made notable achievements (in Roded, 1994, p. iv).

It is important to note that these women's biographies do not include every significant female in medieval Islamic history. It is also impossible to compare these figures to equivalent information about noteworthy women at the same point in Western history, because European history also makes comparatively few references to the contributions of women and, of course, there is no information to report about women in North America, the U.S. in particular, prior to the early 17th century. Roded (1994, p. viii), however, notes the "plethora of source materials" concerning women in Islamic history.

Table 7-1

Biographies of Muslim Women (in Roded, 1994)

<u>Author</u>	<u>Date (AD)</u>	<u># Women Entries</u>	<u># Male Entries</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% Bios of Women</u>
Ibn Sa'ad	845	629	3621	4250	14.8%
Ibd Al-Barr	1070	399	3826	4225	9.4%
Ibn Al-Jawzi	1201	240	793	1033	23.2%
Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani	1449	1551	11753	12304	13.0%
Al-Sakhawi	1497	1075	10616	11691	9.2%

A reasonable conclusion to make is that as Al-Ghazali looked around the society he lived in and documented his observations, he would have reflected what he noticed in his recommendations concerning women's education. Understandably, he might limit or control female formal education to some extent, and he probably wanted to ensure that women did not miss out on learning the family traditions and basic education, first learned informally at home with fathers and husbands. He stressed the importance of religious education and mentioned several guidelines for teaching this material, but addressed only teaching boys and men; he did not specifically mention what or how to teach unmarried girls. Al-Ghazali's writings give us the impression that boys are entitled to more education than girls. Because he is not here today to clarify this impression, it is a complex task to determine what he intended. In addition, undoing Al-Ghazali's opinion of women has not been easy because his influence has been felt for centuries, with his works still found in university textbooks and in current literature on Islamic law.

Influences on Contemporary Islamic Women's Education

The concept of reexamining the classical literature to return to one's original roots is not exclusive to Islamic theory. There are many scholars (e.g., Pagels, 1979; Scholer, 1993, 1997; Wilson, 1849) who have addressed a comparable shift in women's roles in other times, places, and cultures. This section will address Al-Ghazali's philosophies concerning women's education and analyze how they have influenced women in many primarily Islamic countries.

From the inception of Islam, women have been encouraged to seek knowledge. The Prophet himself reported that it was God's intent for all to know His *Qur'an* and directed each person to teach and share what was known with others. Muslims regard the age of the Prophet as a golden epoch in the history of Islam. Women were visible in the realms of education and philanthropy (Ahmed, 1992; Amal, 2000; Roded, 1999). Roded (1994) notes that 41 percent of the endowments in Ottoman Aleppo were documented as having been established by women, suggesting that Muslim women (particularly affluent ones) were committed to scholarship. These were not insignificant contributions; Roded (1999) mentions buildings and highways in several places in the Middle East named for the women who financed their construction. In contrast, Mazrui (2001, p. 67) notes that British women "however were granted the right to own property independent of their husbands only in 1870." Thus, Muslim women had, and were exercising, their rights to own and distribute property more than 12 centuries before British women were accorded the same rights.

Both Muslim and even some non-Muslim researchers (Armstrong, 2000; Coulson, 1964; Esposito, 1982; Iqbal, 1996; Spring, 2000) agree that Islamic law (i.e., the *Holy Qur'an* and Prophetic sayings) is broad enough to support modern legal structures concerning women's equality, and that it meets the needs of modern life, especially in terms of family law. The Prophet did not teach or consider that women were inferior to or less entitled than men. El Saadawi (1980) maintains that there are positive aspects in Islamic culture that must be sought and emphasized, and negative aspects that should be exposed to bring about further change. She points out that "women in the time of the Prophet obtained rights, which today, are denied in most Arab countries" (El Saadawi, p. 212). Because some Muslim women today are being deprived of opportunities that the Prophet had conferred

upon them, a gradual, yet major, shift in attitudes towards women's rights has occurred in many Muslim countries.

As one example, Al-Dhahabi (1994, Vol. 12, p. 493) was a medieval Islamic thinker born after Al-Ghazali's era. He describes a book written by Al-Muzani that summarized Al-Shafi'i's school of *fiqh* (law). Al-Dhahabi noted that Al-Muzani's book was readily accessible in the Middle Ages, and that many families would give their daughters a copy when they married, so that they would know what they could reasonably expect and be responsible for in their new lives. These young women would bring this book as part of the goods their families sent with them for establishing their new households, to refer to and consult if they had any questions.

If one examined this book, copies of which are still available today, the first thing one would notice is that it is written in the formal language of the well educated. If women were not knowledgeable in those days, what would be the point of sending this book along as a reference if she could not read it? Interestingly, this book (or something comparable) is seldom included in a young bride's belongings today, suggesting that perhaps many Islamic families today are placing a higher priority on the material value of what they send with their daughters when they get married, rather than on the ongoing spiritual and moral support they could offer with such a book.

There have been some Islamic thinkers over the last 14 centuries (e.g., Al-Qabisi, 2000; Al-Qurtubi, 1966) who have espoused positions conflicting with the guidelines established by the Prophet. They assert that they are protecting women by denying them literacy and an education, which now requires leaving the home and attending an institution of learning, thereby exposing them to the outside world. These scholars support their idea,

using the *hadith* reported that the Prophet's wife, 'A'ishah, said, "do not teach the girls how to write. But teach them sewing and the *Al-Nur* chapter" (in Al-Mannawi, n.d., Vol. 3, p. 430).

Reviewing *hadith* literature, however, one can see that this *hadith* had some problems. First of all, this *hadith* is problematic by virtue of its *isnad* (the chain of authority at the beginning of a *hadith*). Unlike Al-Qurtubi, (1966) many scholars (e.g., Al-'Abadi, in Al-Muhaddith, 2000) have confirmed that this *hadith* has weak *isnad* due to the fact that Al-'Abadi addressed an entire chapter to the subject of this *hadith*. In addition, there is a problem with the *matin* (the main text of a *hadith*), as it contradicts other *ahadith* that 'A'ishah narrated. 'A'ishah is considered to be one of the utmost authorities on the *ahadith*. Students from many countries wrote letters to consult on various spiritual matters, and she and her female assistant would reply to them.

Al-Bukhari, (1999, pp. 479-480) mentions a *hadith* narrated by 'A'ishah concerning her correspondence with other women. It is clear, then, that any *hadith* discouraging female literacy contradicts what 'A'ishah, herself, was doing, and is in conflict with other Prophetic sayings that encourage women to seek education. This false attribution not only opposes Islamic tradition, but contradicts what we know about 'A'ishah's entire personality and character. If accepted as truth, however, then Muslims could use this weak *hadith* to justify preventing women from seeking an education. This "fabrication" has far-reaching effects in modern Islam, in which we can see a division between those who believe that women's education is a privilege, and others who believe that girls and women have the right to choose whether or not to pursue higher education.

Many times these maverick opinions have been accepted and implemented as if they were official Islamic law, when in fact they are merely traditions established by humans.²⁶ Thus, in order to restore the equilibrium present in the Prophet's era, researchers are looking back to the *Holy Qur'an* and *ahadith* to determine what is true and what is innovation, in order to ascertain the official positions with regard to the rights and responsibilities of women. In *Muslim Women and Higher Education*, Ahmad (1983) clearly emphasizes the Islamic position from the Islamic sacred texts, that both men and women should be educated. He strongly states his position: "Therefore, no sane person can think that men alone should be the beneficiaries of this knowledge" (Ahmad, 1983, p. 54). He emphasizes that Islam emphasizes that all skills needed to live an Islamic life need to be learned by all Muslims, not just men. Ahmad asks how a society can say its members are living Islamically when, in some Islamic countries, women are deprived of the opportunity to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to function in the family and in society.

Even though women may not understand the meaning of the words in the *Qur'an*, the traditional (cultural) view is that as long as women are able to read the *Qur'an*, that is enough. This cultural view is in direct opposition to the core of Islam, which emphasizes the necessity of education regardless of gender (Ahmad, 1983, p. 54). Noteworthy is the fact that, in the very beginnings of Islam, both men and women had access to education. Only in the last 300 years did tradition somehow shift this position so that women lost their access to equal education and were restricted in their social interactions.

²⁶ From the Middle Ages, some Muslim men feared that educating women would lead them to establish correspondence with men and, thus, cause problems in the home. This idea was adopted and subsequently used to justify denying access to education, even into the 20th century (Doumato, 1989).

Bewley (1999) tackles these issues in her book, *Islam: The Empowering of Women*. She offers historical sources demonstrating that women were indeed active in all areas of life throughout Islamic history, until 300 years ago. When we consider that Islam has been a recognized religion and way of life for over 14 centuries and that only in the last 300 years have women's rights been curtailed, her investigation into how women's roles as scholars, politicians, and spiritual leaders were lost is very relevant. How and why could Muslim women lose their rights and respect from men when they had already proven their value in the home and in the public arena?

Bewley points to colonialism as marking the beginning of the downfall of women's rights in Islam. She offers examples such as how, at the end of the Mameluk period in the 14th century CE, it was hard to find a woman without a teaching license. Even before this period there were large numbers of such women, such as Fatima Al-Samarqandiyah, who not only had an *ijazah* (license) for teaching, but also had the capacity to authorize *fatwas* (legal opinions). Fatima read law with her father, and her husband used to consult her (Roded, 1994). Several pages in Bewley's book mention the names of women who, like Fatima, taught both the *Qur'an* and *ahadith*, who were *muhtasibah* (market inspectors), who exercised *faqihat* (jurisprudence), and who were also active in politics and civic affairs.

In the preface of her book, Bewley enumerates the factors she believes contributed to the loss of women's rights earned in early Islamic history, which led to women's disempowerment and subsequent loss of educational opportunities and public activity. Her explanations confirm what Barazangi (2000) and Roded (1994) report, and include a re-assertion of pre-Islamic concepts of patriarchy; converted Muslims maintaining non-Islamic practices that furthered patriarchy; the influence of Western ideas (which also, until recently,

asserted that women were inferior); and the legacy of modern colonialism, which asserted that Islam was barbaric and that only Western ideas were civilized. This last concept was further reinforced by the Islamic ruling elite, who inherited this legacy of colonial power and imposed it on the Muslim world, which “de-throned” women from their place of importance in every aspect of Islamic life: education, politics, and religion.

These ideas merit further study, and may be the key to reopening the door for women in Islam to regain the privileges lost in the last 300 years. Roded (1994) notes that what was proposed in the ideal and what occurred in reality may have been different, and that there were social factors which impacted women’s freedoms outside the home. Roded also refers to one complication in determining the exact manner of women’s seclusion because it is possible that historical biographers didn’t provide certain details because they may have been common knowledge at that time. But she notes that women were in fact meeting with men for business and academic purposes without compromising their modesty, even though the details of these meetings are no longer available.

Some Muslim social thinkers (e.g., Bashier, 1981; Ghabbian, 1995; Nasr, 2000; and others) have tried to categorize Muslim thoughts about women’s issues into two positions: Traditionalism, of which there are two sub-types—conservative tradition and modern tradition—and secularism. Rahman (2000) notes that the two trends “are, for the most part, brutally juxtaposed, and produce two types of people who can hardly communicate with each other” (p. 8).

Conservative traditionalists assert that change, if needed, will be gradual. If the system has worked this way for this long, then they assert that there is little if any need to change it. Modern traditionalists, on the other hand, have noted inconsistencies between the

way things are and the way they're supposed to be. For example, the *Qur'an* advocates that everyone is entitled to an education, but some Muslim women are being denied that option. Their recommendation is to return to the official guidelines for the faith and determine what the original intent was.

Muslims advocate educating males and females separately, and prefer that students have same-gender teachers. In order for today's young women to be educated in this context, however, women have to be trained as teachers. There are some conservatives who are willing to accept that women do need some education, but that a high school education is sufficient. But who will be teaching in these high schools if the women are not going to college? This would seem to dictate that women need to be educated without imposing limits on what they can know, because in order for females to attend schools with well-trained female teachers, education beyond that offered in the home must be acceptable.

Al-Ghazali asserted that women were primarily mothers and housekeepers, and that men supported the family (e.g., by being employed in some capacity outside the home) and taught their wives and children. After all, if everyone worked outside the home, who would take care of the children? But instead of merely using this opportunity to reinforce the delegation of responsibilities, he used it to usurp women's authority. This was manifested in restrictions imposed on women's social and educational freedoms, even though early Islam had no such restrictions.

Ibn 'Umar (in Al-Bukhari, 1999, No. 212) reported that the Prophet said:

All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for your flocks. A trustee is a shepherd, and he is responsible. A man is a shepherd for his

family, and he is responsible. A woman is a shepherd over the home, and she is responsible. Verily, all of you are shepherds.

The Prophet also taught that, “Women and men are equal halves” (Ahmad & Abu-Dawud, in Al-Albani, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 399). The first hadith explains that each adult has a sphere of responsibility that he or she is completely accountable for. The second explains that men and women come together in marriage to complement each other, and that they should take these opportunities to consult with each other in the management of their responsibilities. However, each should maintain the authority in his or her spheres, and if one party encounters a challenge, then the other person has to assume responsibility for that challenge.

The conservative traditionalists have not questioned Al-Ghazali’s philosophies; they merely implemented them as is. The modern traditionalist, however, has raised a reasonable issue for these conservatives: If you limit women’s education and restrict them to the realm of household management, then who will teach our daughters? Furthermore, if women are not well educated, they will not feel confident about teaching their children—male or female—at home, nor will they be able to support their children’s academic performance in school later in life.

There have also been allegations posted by secular educational theorists, which can be contrasted dramatically to the traditional positions. In their zeal to critique Al-Ghazali’s philosophies, these secularists note that Al-Ghazali’s “misogynous” writings not only classify females as secondary sources of power, but also as slaves and/or toys for the husband (El Saadawi, 1981; Ibn Waraq, 1995, 2001; Mubarak, 1988; Rafiqul-Haqq &

Newton, 2000). These scholars assert that Al-Ghazali fostered male domination in society, and conferred inferior domestic status on women. Realistically, men in the Middle Ages usually worked. It was also common for them to travel extensively for both business and to continue their education. Consequently, the women remained at home in order to take care of the children. There also appears to be some concern that it was not safe for women to travel alone. Thus, if she traveled less, her educational opportunities would have been less frequent.

The modern traditionalists advocate a return to the fundamental Islamic sources and their directions concerning equality in education. Al-Hibri (2000) asserts that, “we need to devote a great deal more time and effort to critiquing various elements of our traditional jurisprudence that are based on domination and suppression. We also need to contribute to the evaluation of a better Islamic jurisprudence based on Divine logic” (p. 71).

Modern Muslim traditionalists have been working to expose those areas where non-Islamic traditions and customs have infiltrated Islamic culture, noting that some of these traditions contradict Islamic principles. Consequently, several generations of Islamic women have been denied their right to an education. Contemporary international media sources are reporting that there are Muslim women who are successful in all facets of life, including as scholars and jurists in Islamic law (*fiqh*), demonstrating that women are beginning to recapture the rights conferred by their Islamic faith. The trend to modernize need not mean giving up one’s Islamic faith in order to be “liberated,” as advocated by the secularists. In fact, only by embracing the true meaning of the original Islamic sacred texts can one be free—perhaps not according to the Western model, but according to the culture

that Muslims have embraced. The Islamic umbrella can and does empower women, if interpreted correctly (Ezzat, 2000).

Ironically, modern traditionalists believe that Islam does confer rights upon women, the same rights that secularists believe are denied by Islam. Thus, while both factions advocate women's education, their paths and motivations are different. Perhaps this discrepancy has more to do with the fact that Western ideology's concept of emancipation does not agree in some parts with Islamic ideology, and does not draw its strength from Islamic law. The secularists would advocate that women study and take jobs outside the home in order to have economic opportunities equal to men. However, "women realize that work, as it relates to them, is a created need deliberately built into the economic system so as to 'push' them to it, causing them to work out of deprivation, not to achieve any self-realization" (Arebi, 1991, p. 105).

Knowing what we know today, we can see the effect that Ghazalian educational traditions have had on modern education and what the ramifications have been. His teachings have been implemented as curricula in several Islamic educational institutions for many decades. Is this perpetuating a problem?

From an education perspective, there is no contradiction between possessing knowledge beyond the religious and domestic realms and a woman's ability to assume successfully the roles of wife, mother, and Muslim, even if she enters the workforce. The capitalist economic ideal, with its institutional setting of the business environment, has encouraged a reduction in childbearing in order to "liberate" the woman from the domestic arena so that she can participate more fully in the labor force. Modern Islamic traditionalists do not go this far.

Analyzing this from an educational policy perspective, in spite of the Kuwaiti government's "official" position that it supports education for all, this really isn't the case, particularly among women scholars. While all Kuwaiti women are officially encouraged to pursue higher education, in reality, few of these women are actually able to seek this level of education. Some of the policies in place that are intended to facilitate her education actually sabotage the effort. Once her scholarship to attend graduate school has been awarded, these Kuwaiti women have to make some difficult choices.

For instance, Muslim women are discouraged from traveling abroad alone. But if her husband chooses to accompany her, he loses his salary if he takes a leave of absence from his job while she studies. The state of Kuwait also pays families a monthly stipend for each child in the family. But since this stipend is connected to the father's income,²⁷ if the husband takes an unpaid leave of absence, then the stipend is suspended until the husband resumes working. The alternative is for her to travel and live abroad alone, which conflicts with the high priority Islam places on family cohesiveness. Until recently, even if she did come alone, she would see her family only once every two years, because that was how often the government would pay for a plane ticket home.²⁸ Thus, these policies meant that married women with young children could not pursue graduate-level studies outside their country without compromising their maternal responsibilities with the family.

²⁷ In Kuwait and other Islamic countries, the father is the parent primarily responsible for the support of the family. In fact, in many cases, mothers do not work outside of the home. Thus, this stipend is distributed with the fathers' income because, in theory, this money is already being used for the support of the family.

²⁸ The policy of the government providing travel back to Kuwait for scholars studying abroad was amended from once every other year to once a year in the spring of 2001. The student has always been able to travel at the student's expense.

Thus, if a woman chooses to continue her education abroad, she often has to make a difficult choice between pursuit of knowledge (a practice respected in Islam and likened to a form of worship) and maintaining the family as a closely-knit, interdependent unit (which is perceived to be her highest priority). Furthermore, should a female student be forced by any circumstance to discontinue her studies once she has begun, she is also liable for repayment of the scholarships she was offered. Fear of initiating a course of action that could conceivably create grave financial hardship for her family is a considerable impediment to her continuing education. It would be realistic at this point to consider a complete overhaul of the policies supporting education abroad, from the perspective of the affected students and their families, to determine whether these policies actually benefit the student in the long run.

Al-Ghazali and other conservative scholars did not advocate that women attend educational institutions, which made it difficult to establish such institutions for girls in many Islamic countries for centuries. One example is Al-Azhar University in Egypt, which was founded in 978 CE. Not until the early 1960s did Al-Azhar University open its doors to women. In 1988, Al-Azhar University added a limited program to train women as preachers (Reid, 1995).

Our review of Islamic historical literature confirms that higher education for women had been fairly common in earlier eras, but that policies excluding Muslim women from different institutions were instituted over the last few centuries. As an example, the mosque has played a significant role for Muslims as both a social and an educational institution. It was not only where the community—both men and women—gathered for prayer and instruction, but also served as a place for social gatherings. Al-Ghazali maintained that

women should be banned from these institutions, justifying his position by stating that widespread moral deterioration made public spaces unsafe for all but elderly women, and encouraged women not to leave their homes except out of necessity (Hoffman-Ladd, 1995). Unfortunately, Al-Ghazali's ideas on women have persisted for centuries. This influence can be seen in statistics from UNESCO that more than 50 percent of Muslim women are illiterate.

In reality, genuine Islamic sources do provide many freedoms for women, such as access to education, the right to choose her mate, the opportunity to work for pay and have discretionary income, and the ability to own property and acquire wealth (Al-Mana'i, 2001; Husain, 2001). However, at the First World Conference on Muslim Education in 1977, the following was pronounced: "Education should therefore cater to the growth of man²⁹ in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic" (Haw, 1998, p. 58). Further, Haw notes that denying women access to knowledge is the same as denying females access to the path of righteousness and implies marginalizing them in this life as well as the hereafter.

Given that the Islamic faith grants these opportunities to women as their right, does our review confirm that Islamic educational institutions extend these rights to women, or is society ignoring these aspects of Islamic education? Are these institutions enabling women to write about their own issues, since many of these issues, including health and personal matters, have historically been written by men?

²⁹ The term 'man' in the *Qur'an* is interpreted as non-gendered, referring to men as well as women when used collectively, as it is in this statement.

By the same token, why do educational institutions for women lack training in handicrafts, which have historically been an important part of women's lives—not only from the creative viewpoint, but also from an economic perspective, since women can contribute to the family finances by selling their handmade items. This is even more troublesome because Kuwaiti girls' schools teach certain functional domestic skills, such as cooking and sewing, but are neglecting the traditional crafts, such as weaving rugs and tent manufacturing. Why not include these creative crafts and skills in the schools? The secularization of education has resulted in a replacement of traditional crafts and, therefore, a reduction in the number of women accomplished in these crafts and skills that have been important to Kuwaiti culture.

Taking this concept to the next level, why not teach crafts that make ecological use of what is available in Kuwait? For example, glass blowing would be a wonderful skill to teach boys and girls because sand is readily available in Kuwait. What good is woodworking training if we have no trees? Education must reflect the needs of each generation, as well as promote the crafts of prior generations, as a way of maintaining ties with the past while still learning about the future, which must include equal opportunities for both genders.

Summary of Al-Ghazali's Views on Women's Education

In general, Al-Ghazali's approach to women's education corresponds primarily with the conservative tradition, as is evident in the limits he imposed on female education and socializing outside the home. He did acknowledge that women needed religious instruction,

and asserted that no Muslim should remain ignorant of spiritual matters. But beyond that, he did not encourage further scholarship for women.

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) state:

Institutional theory...is mainly concerned with how the institutional environment, comprised of socially created beliefs and cognitions, widely held in society and reinforced by corporate actors, affects organizations...(modern) societies contain institutionalized rules in the form of rationalized myths, and these beliefs shape organizational forms (p. 391).

If we consider this contemporary statement in terms of Islamic history, we realize that Islam provided a discrete set of values affecting women's roles and responsibilities in society, and that these values were accepted for centuries. Over the last few centuries, some Islamic thinkers proposed non-Islamic innovations in social values, which were gradually accepted as norms, and which have since been reinforced by Islamic culture and affected women's education. These thinkers proposed that women did not need to learn to read or write, which expressly contradicts the original Islamic principles, then and now. As these concepts were assimilated into Islam, these rationalized myths caused women to remain uneducated for centuries, the fallacy being that females were not entitled to the same education as males. Although these assertions impacted Islamic society for many centuries, recent Islamic scholars have been challenging these ideas and comparing them to documented Islamic principles.

In her article on Muslim women in modern civilization, Al-Mana'i (2001) and Lang (1994, 2000) report that even in the 20th century, some Muslim thinkers still advocate restricting women's education to high school. Others who advocated more extensive education still limited women's professional options to teaching or nursing. This has no foundation in Islamic educational history, however, where women are documented as having been involved in many professions and were visibly active in many aspects of society.

Schimmel (1997, p. 180) notes that "much suffering has fallen to the lot of women because simple [*Qur'anic*] precepts have been interpreted more and more narrowly over the course of time," and she attributes this to male domination. Safi (2001) emphasizes that historically, some Islamic texts must have been interpreted incorrectly because Islam, as a religion, has no barriers to women's education. Schimmel (1997) encourages a hermeneutic re-examination in terms of the original sacred texts, because "there ought to exist no difference between man and woman in the realm of spiritual life" (p. 181).

Regarding the three social trends (conservative, modern traditional, and secular), all three have aspects that we cannot ignore when applying them to the women's education and to Al-Ghazali's theories concerning women's education. We may not agree with all the theorists; however, each of the theories contains an element of truth. Acknowledging the core of Islam conservatism, reviewing the original Islamic texts within modern tradition, and listening to the critical trend (secular point of view) all bring many important issues to examine. Each of these trends that have a piece of the truth can affect modern Islamic institutions for passing on norms—whether they be the institutions of marriage, education, or religion—that surround and influence Muslim's daily lives. Instead of ignoring one or another trend, the modern Muslim family can look at each one closely and decide which of

the concepts within each trend conform to the sacred texts. Regarding Al-Ghazali, within the historical context, he seemed to be forward thinking. He was not against females being educated; in fact, his ideas of spirituality and religion for the woman are still valid. What is needed is an expansion of his concepts to include the needs of women today.

The issue of educating Muslim women is a complicated one that cannot be resolved merely by making education compulsory for all. By returning to the original teachings offered in the *Holy Qur'an* and the *ahadith*, and by looking at what the Prophet Muhammad advocated and practiced in his own life, we are finding that women did have a great deal of educational freedom, but that this opportunity was rescinded in later years (after the first three generations of Islamic history), creating a society in which women were not encouraged to seek an education. Educating women does not have to mean the end of her Muslim faith or her family life. In fact, her choice to continue her education should be a path that strengthens her faith and her family. Women should be free to choose the extent of their own education, as well as what they wish to do with that education once it is complete.

In terms of some of the inconsistencies noted in Al-Ghazali's teachings and Islamic principles, we note that the Prophet directed that both parents are equally responsible for raising and educating their children. Al-Ghazali, however, asserted that women have less responsibility and authority than men. Given the social and historical context at that time (11th and 12th centuries), and the writing style in use in his day, this was not an extraordinary concept, although we can see today how much of this information could possibly have been misinterpreted or misapplied.

While other researchers have evaluated Al-Ghazali's writings and theories, most of the studies were theologically oriented; it is difficult to find works that comment on Al-

Ghazali's thoughts concerning women's education. Nofal (1994), Khawajah (1986), and Mubarak (1988) briefly note that Al-Ghazali did address education for women, but they have all documented the fact that Al-Ghazali placed limits on what women were entitled to learn, and that this is not supported by Islamic principles.

Chapter 8

**THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF AL-GHAZALI'S RECOMMENDATIONS
ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN KUWAIT**

Earlier chapters have discussed Al-Ghazali's teachings concerning education in terms of both the curriculum and the relationships, and compared them to the foundations of Islam. This chapter will propose how some of Al-Ghazali's teachings that are supported by Islamic principles can be applied to educational development in primarily Islamic countries. This will be explored in terms of both the formal and informal aspects of educating children and women.

Al-Ghazali's recommendation that the family is the first educational institution to make educators and learners of its members is proof that the Parent (Father)-Child relationship is crucial to the Master-Pupil relationship, once the child enters formal schooling. Thus, reversing this concept by stating that the Master-Pupil relationship can be used to design the Parent-Child relationship seems logical. While Al-Ghazali adopted ideas from other countries that he felt would benefit Islam, he kept his focus on basic Islamic principles.

Today, global perspectives largely influence education today in every Muslim country. Worldwide ability to share information on virtually any subject has afforded access to the latest educational trends and philosophies to everyone. Educational systems seeking an updated approach are implementing some of these concepts in their schools, particularly in the case of less developed nations adapting the ideas of the more developed nations. As an example, education in the United States is held in high esteem by many countries, and

policy developments implemented here are frequently incorporated in other nations, sometimes with questionable results. The key to implementing new ideas and materials into Islamic education is to Islamize the information and presentation to ensure a successful integration into the schools. This process is called Islamization, which is the integration of Islam from another, non-Islamic concept (Ashraf, 1985; Golshani, 2000; Roald, 1994).

To assess how well Islamic education meets the needs of Islamic society, I recommend a thorough review Al-Ghazali's teachings concerning curricula and methods, updating them to meet our contemporary needs. Policymakers need to look at the issues as Al-Ghazali did, examining others' ideas in terms of both content and culture and Islamizing them if necessary, before incorporating them into Islamic educational systems. These policymakers may have to surrender, if necessary, some of their beliefs about Al-Ghazali, especially since his views on educating women will not work within the Parent-Child model that I have described.

While the Master-Pupil relationship is the model for the Parent-Child relationship, it cannot be superimposed without the re-examination of women in modern Muslim countries. Barth (2001) has said it quite clearly: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." Policy makers may need to unlearn and relearn in order to create educational policy that reflects the needs and responsibilities that women are entitled to based on the original Islamic texts. The teacher's job is to provide a love of learning to their students, because learning is the highest form of worship and the path to truth. Using this concept within the family, the parents must also motivate their children, and my contention is that this cannot be done without the full participation of a mother who herself has had full access to learning.

In addition, Al-Ghazali's concept of the father as the main link in the child's education must also be surrendered. As women become educated, they will be able to help their children in school, and become just as important in the children's education as the father has been. Al-Ghazali's concept of the father as the more important parent in the child's education will have to be forsaken as Muslim women gain more access to a full education.

In light of my study, I recognize that the Kuwaiti government is listening to women, and encouraging them to speak up and speak out about the issues that concern them, especially those relating to their education. Education is their stepping stone to a more active role in their families and in their society. My own opinions regarding education policy for women studying abroad were published in the Kuwait Embassy in the United States, and I was encouraged by policymakers at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington, DC, to submit more of my ideas (Alkanderi, 2001).

For various cultural and personal reasons, some Muslims choose to limit their children's participation in some of the arts. In order to accommodate these children's needs, classes in such areas as music and art education could be offered as elective subjects, available to those who want it, with acceptable alternatives for those who don't. It is important for policymakers to create a status for these artistic courses such that they are available to those who elect to take them, but other appropriate options are provided for those who elect not to take them.

While acknowledging that Western education has a great deal of valuable information to offer, Kuwait and other Islamic countries are now re-examining the areas where Western influences have been adopted in their schools to ensure that the course

material and presentation do not conflict with Islamic culture and tradition, and adapting them to ensure conformance. Before Islamization can take place, there is a need to master the Islamic legacy (Mohamed, 1994). Another important part of the Islamization of education is the acknowledgment and communication of Islamic contributions to civilization. What is needed, according to Jameelah (in Esposito & Voll, 2001), is a modern Al-Ghazali to ensure that Islamization continues.

Another aspect of Islamization is to control the reaction to Western (or Eurocentric) influences in education. The Islamization of education should also include an examination of Islamic contributions to civilization (Golshani, 2000; Roald, 1994), and these contributions need to be acknowledged and communicated. Davutoglu (2000) asserts that the existing Euro-centric orientation now means that “an educated Chinese knows more of Plato than of Confucius, and an educated Muslim knows more of St. Thomas Aquinas than of Imam [Al-Ghazali].” Yes, it might be true for some countries; however, many Islamic countries still maintain their Islamic thoughts in their educational system. As I mentioned in other chapter, Kuwaiti college students cannot graduate until they take a course about Islamic thinkers. Although some of these Western influences are considered the ‘ideological antithesis’ of Islam, the schools do need to teach secular subjects while maintaining an Islamic curriculum to maintain the students’ ties with their faith (Roald, 1994). Therefore, re-examining the classical Islamic literature and going back to the core of Islam is a necessary part of Islamization within today’s culture.

Another type of Islamization is adopting foreign concepts so long as they do not conflict with Islam. For instance, Al-Ghazali did disagree with virtually all non-Muslim philosophers, although he did acknowledge that there were components of their teachings

that were valuable, such as logic. But it would be unrealistic for policymakers to state that, “Al-Ghazali recommended the following courses of study, and that is all we are going to teach.” While his curricula orientation was valid in the Middle Ages, too much has been discovered in the last 900 years to ignore more recent developments. One example is the use of computers and the Internet to promote Islamic knowledge. Software available in Arabic contains programs explaining the *Qur’an*, and there are many Muslim sites on the Internet. None of this was available in Al-Ghazali’s time, but has still been successfully integrated into Islamic society today.

Although school systems in every country are able to consider input from around the world, there needs to be a return to the educational roots of each particular country in terms of its own culture, vocabulary, history, and attitudes. This would include a comprehensive examination of a variety of key contributors to Islamic education throughout history. To depend on a single scholar or school of thought as the basis for establishing a foundation for education is misleading. Other scholars and schools of thought need to be considered.

The current situation in many Islamic countries is that there are many schools of thought and social trends, which is good. However, because there is little or no collaboration between these scholars and trends, the process of social and educational progress is difficult. In Islamic history, there were always many schools of thought. The difference is that there seemed to be more collaboration and cooperation among those who followed different paths. For example, one of Al-Ghazali’s students critiqued Al-Ghazali’s methods in the philosopher’s own time; despite their differing opinions, the two still maintained a strong relationship. We need more of this idea of challenging the concept

without destroying the relationship. If we can transfer this concept to the family unit, ideally each family member can have an opinion without destroying the family unit.

Basic human values eclipse time and remain applicable in every generation. Perhaps what we need, as Idris (2001) suggests, is media exposure to discuss the interconnectivity between Al-Ghazali's philosophies and "modern" education in Muslim countries, to demonstrate how his concepts are actually can support the contemporary education in Islam. However, policies for women's education need to be updated to meet the current demands of modern Kuwait and the role that women can play to bring fulfillment to themselves, their families, and to the country itself. This updating is necessary, because Al-Ghazali did have some flaws in his philosophies that, especially as they concern women, should be re-examined in the light of true Islam.

Some of these "traditions" do not, in fact, reflect true Islamic thought, yet they have been implemented for hundreds of years. However, from the social theory point of view "the history of intellectuals in Muslim societies provides an important foundation for activist reforming intellectuals in the twentieth century" (Esposito & Voll, 2001, p. 10). There are a number of approaches that could advance and reform education of women in Islam. First, we propose an increase in the publication of Al-Ghazali's works, with hermeneutic re-examination and updating of his ideas on women's education in terms of genuine Islamic principles. Next, there is a need to establish organizations to support educating Muslim women about their rights within Islamic law, and to facilitate the sharing of this knowledge with others. Third, opportunities should be provided in various media for Muslim women to express their ideas and communicate with one other about issues that concern them. In this way, Muslim women can educate one another in a supportive environment. The current

environment is that males have significantly better opportunities and media access than women, and this must be rectified in order for all women to take their place in society.

What is needed is a forum to establish both mothers and fathers feeling comfortable and confident in teaching their children and interacting with the teachers. Full educational reciprocity between parents and children is complex, however, because many older women in Islamic countries are illiterate. Thus, it is important to establish educational policies that advocate educating both males and females to validate the need for both parents to take an active role in their children's education.

Related to this is an encouragement for women to enroll in different educational institutions in order to be more active in their children's education, since they are already the active parent anyway in most Muslim countries. Now they need to be educated in order to help their children, and they need to have the educational tools to do this. Finally, additional research on women's social and educational status throughout Islamic history is necessary, especially the disappearance of their rights about 300 years ago, which Bewley (1999) asserts coincides with colonial/Western influences.

At the same time that the needs of women in education have to be addressed, there is another need to bring Kuwait's educational system to the level of other modern countries. Like most countries, families in Kuwait and other, primarily Islamic countries have the same desires and motivations to stimulate the development of their children. The Ministry of Education has a commitment to deliver and provide educational resources from an Islamic perspective. Because the existing programs in these Islamic countries are newer than those in the U.S., there are fewer resources available. For example, Kuwait needs more public libraries and the technology found in the West in these libraries, such as online

encyclopedias. These resources are needed to contribute to children's complete education in Islamic countries.

In order to make Al-Ghazali's teachings accessible to a wider audience, the body of his resources could be published in a wide variety of media. One complicating factor in this research was that even though approximately half of the resources used in this research are written in Arabic and this researcher is an expert in Arabic language, many of these resources were written in formal language that has fallen out of regular use, necessitating frequent consultations with several dictionaries. This process makes comparable research by the average Muslim very difficult, and for a non-native Arabic speaker, virtually impossible.

To facilitate a comprehensive examination of these historical resources, it would be extremely helpful to develop a dictionary of formal and obscure educational terms used in older Arabic writings, to help future researchers understand the language without being frustrated by frequent interruptions to search for definitions of terminology. Educational policymakers would also benefit from improved access to a larger body of research, giving them a broader base to call upon when developing new policy.

Summary and Recommendations

This study investigated the social dimensions of education in Islam by exploring Al-Ghazali's concept of the Master-Pupil relationship as a model for education within the Islamic family. The research examined Al-Ghazali's and others' thoughts on the Master-Pupil relationship and proposed curriculum for Islamic education, the application of the

Master-Pupil model to education within the family, and the application of that model to include education for women in order for her to be a part of the Master-Pupil relationship with her husband.

The intent of this research is to promote Al-Ghazali's Master-Pupil relationship as a model for the Parent-Child relationship within the Islamic faith and lifestyle. There needs to be a monumental shift in educational attitudes towards women for this to occur. The essential element in the education process is the family unit. If both parents now teach their children, this takes the knowledge to the next generation. This process will repeat itself.

Al-Ghazali's primary role model for establishing the characteristics of the Master-Pupil relationship was Prophet Muhammad. Al-Ghazali incorporated most of the values and methods the Prophet used in instructing his companions about his model for this relationship. By maintaining a strict adherence to original Islamic teachings, which includes full education for women, the educational system in Islamic schools can be assured of compliance with the spiritual goals from the sacred texts.

The application of many of Al-Ghazali's ideals concerning the Master-Pupil relationship and his curricula to Muslim contemporary environment are still valued, such as the rights and responsibilities of both Master and Pupil. However, there are some ideas that need to be re-examined to meet the needs of modern Islamic countries. In English, Al-Ghazali's foremost work, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, translates to mean the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*. The concept of re-examining existing processes to ensure relevance to future needs is not a new discovery. This consideration of Islamic references—Al-Ghazali's writings, the sacred texts, and other Islamic scholars' works—to inspire continuing growth within the contemporary family is a process that has been in use since the inception of Islam.

By reexamining Al-Ghazali in light of modern education, we are reviving his work in the same way he revived works of his time.

Muslims can use Al-Ghazali's *Ihya* as a manual or handbook for human behavior, beginning with the outer action of the person's worship and social relations, and culminating in the inner behavior of the mind or heart. Therefore, as Al-Ghazali explains, this is a life journey that requires knowledge of the outer and inner aspects of the Science of Right Practice (Gianotti, 2000). In general, Al-Ghazali proposals concerning family education reinforce the values of religious and spiritual formation, which form the infrastructure of Muslim families. Specifically, his ideas about women's education need to conform to original Islamic texts, which will provide modern Muslim women the educational tools they need to actively participate in Muslim society. The practical aim of family education is "to motivate and assist believers in living the Islamic way of life, both externally and internally" (Gianotti, 1998, p. 23). Al-Ghazali (1997a) emphasized that he was systemizing Islamic education, rather than introducing new philosophies. He explained that his intent was merely to gather and then to explain the various teachings from Islam, so that they would be convenient to review and consider as a cohesive group. An ethnographic content analysis reveals that, yes, the majority of Al-Ghazali's teachings are based on original Islamic sources, including the *Holy Qur'an*. He has done a great service by gathering these individual ideas and assembling them for use by Muslims everywhere.

The pursuit of knowledge was Al-Ghazali's highest priority, as one of the highest forms of worship. He asserted that people needed knowledge to protect themselves, noting that only its pursuit can serve that purpose. His theories of knowledge include its definition, its merits and excellence, the role of the intellect, the way of knowing, the learning process

itself, and the obstacles to the learning process. In other words, Al-Ghazali proposed an extensive curriculum for students for gaining knowledge in a systematic and orderly fashion. In this way, students would ultimately attain all of the knowledge they needed in the manner best suited to a comprehensive understanding of the concepts. In the context of his era, his concepts have been proven to be effective over the years because these classifications are still influencing basic curriculum development and educational methods today, used in home and in school, for both males and females. This would necessarily include incorporating Al-Ghazali's observations that any educational system must provide practical, educational solutions on how to produce employable graduates in such a way as to meet society's professional and trade needs. In Al-Ghazali's time the king was the policymaker. Today there are professional policymakers who decide which courses children should be taught, and the teachers are to follow these recommendations. Thus, the educational policymakers have the responsibility of making sure that the children are taught by their teachers in such ways that the students can participate fully in society.

A brief examination of the college courses available to education students in Kuwait at the Basic College of Education revealed that while courses are available in child development from a biological standpoint, only a few courses are integrating this knowledge with Islam. One of the goals of this research is to facilitate the development of a more comprehensive course in child development, incorporating the teachings of the religious texts and Islamic thinkers throughout history. Policymakers might benefit from reading this thesis in order to remind them of the importance of incorporating more of the works of Islamic thinkers.

Concerning the education of females, many Muslim women are living with inaccurate information about their rights and entitlements according to Islamic law. Some of this incorrect information (reported by various classical Islamic philosophers) contradicts the instructions in the Islamic sacred texts; consequently, many women are being denied access to an education. Thus, these features need to be reviewed and reconsidered in light of the foundations of Islam so that organizations can be formed to facilitate educating Muslim women about their rights within Islamic law. The basic curriculum and theories of knowledge first compiled by Al-Ghazali must now be applied to equal education for both genders. In addition, more research needs to be done and published regarding contemporary issues of concern to Muslim women.

My recommendations also include a course to be taught that would explore women's education in Islam from its historical roots to the present time. It would involve critical thinking skills in order to know the source of our problems concerning the education of women, and sources that support female education in all areas of life from the earliest times. Educating females needs to begin in the home, in childhood. The ability to make rational, informed decisions is learned by making choices and accepting the consequences of those choices. If women are denied access to this trial and error learning process, and cannot develop the leadership and resourcefulness skills they need as parents, they will arrive at adulthood ill-equipped to guide or lead their children. The unfortunate fact is that the United Nations reported that adult female (i.e., age 15 and over) illiteracy in 1999 in the Arab States was 51 percent (UNESCO, 2000, p. II-8). Worldwide, female illiteracy for the same year was about half of that (26.4%) (UNESCO, p. II-7). Even if one considers the percentage of female illiteracy in all developing nations, the rate for that population is only

34.2 percent (UNESCO, p. II-7). Comparable rates for male illiteracy are 27.1 percent (Arab States), 14.7 percent (worldwide), and 18.6 percent (developing countries) (UNESCO, pp. II-7, II-8). While UNESCO reports noticeable improvement in literacy overall, both male and female, there is clearly a problem where such a sizeable portion of the population cannot read in nations that value education. Islam prizes knowledge, and familiarity with and understanding of the sacred texts is highly valued. Until all Muslims who are functionally able to read are given the opportunity to choose for themselves whether to learn, educational policymakers in primarily Islamic countries cannot state that they are achieving their goals.

The overwhelming majority of experts in Islamic jurisprudence are male. Women need to be encouraged to pursue this field so that Muslim women can learn about their rights in Islam from a woman's perspective so they can teach other women in Islamic society. Once women have equal access to career opportunities, they will provide good role models for young children, especially girls. While some researchers acknowledge that Islam advocates equal access to education, in reality, these concepts are not put into practice.

Regarding my research, one could conclude that there is no elaborate or independent treatise concerning family education from Al-Ghazali's standpoint. In addition, gender issues such as women's education have only been briefly addressed in a few studies of Al-Ghazali's work. It is not that Al-Ghazali never spoke of these concerns; in fact, he devoted a chapter to family education that focused on women's rights, education, and conduct. But given the fact that he wrote more than 400 books on the Islamic way of life, why did he devote only one chapter concerning women's education? Unfortunately, there has been very little examination of his lack of writings on family education that included the woman's

right to be educated the same as a man. Some contemporary writers (e.g., Khawajah, 1986; Nofal, 1994; and others) are beginning to look critically at Al-Ghazali's restrictive views and directions concerning the education and social lives of women. There is still a need for deeper investigation of Al-Ghazali's views regarding women's status to determine how they relate to contemporary Muslim life.

In light of the findings in this study, there is further opportunity to evaluate and extend Al-Ghazali's theories about family education in order to address the contemporary social and educational environments. It is unrealistic to accept the assertions of scholars such as Khan, who believe that the Muslims' salvation today can be restored by simply implementing Al-Ghazali's thoughts into Islamic education (Ali, 1995, p. 4; Benomran, 1983, p. 2). This is not appropriate because some of Al-Ghazali's ideas concerning gender issues contradict women's educational rights, as guaranteed in Islam.

While prior investigations have covered many of the topics he developed—including education and social convention—there has been very little examination of his ideas concerning family life and interpersonal relationships within the family (e.g., husband-wife, parent-child, and child-child). This, too, leaves a wide variety of topics still to be explored that can have an impact on educational theory and policy and the impact of women's access to education, to ensure that both parents are active participants in the Parent-Child relationship.

Perhaps I can use the analogy of the bird, as Al-Ghazali did when he talked about the two wings being fear and hope. However, in my analogy the two wings are the two parents, and both wings are needed for a bird to fly. If one wing is not working (that is, the mother cannot participate in her child's education because she herself is uneducated), then the bird

will not fly. This means that both the mother and father must be able to help their children, and to do so they need to be educated as well. Thus, Al-Ghazali's ideas of education for women need to be revised so that both parents can be active participants in their children's education. Islamic law commands it, and only through equal education for both men and women will Muslim society realize the full, future potential of their children.

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