MAKING AND SHAPING THE FIRST NISHKAM NURSERY:

A LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A

BRITISH SIKH PROJECT FOR CHILDHOOD

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study of the processes involved in creating the first Nishkam Nursery in 2009 in Handsworth, Birmingham. Led by British Sikhs, the project was embedded in wider work undertaken by the transnational 'Nishkam' community of practice. The research aim was to examine: 1) the blend of ideas and values guiding the nursery's creation; 2) the ways in which the nursery world was configured in and through day-to-day communicative and semiotic practice; and 3) parental responses. I took a linguistic ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis and adopted a case study design.

Three orienting theories guided the study: 1) 'the cultural production of the educated person' (Levinson, Foley and Holland 1996); 2) 'policy as/in practice' (Sutton and Levinson 2001) and; 3) 'figured worlds' (Holland et al. 1998). An ethnographic approach was best suited to this theoretical framing. It allowed me to examine the interplay of agency and structure in the creation of the world of this local nursery, in 'postsecular' societal conditions characterised by complex diversities and mobilities. It also allowed me to capture the ways in which national policy frameworks were interpreted by local social actors and blended with educational approaches stemming from the Sikh *dharam*.

DEDICATION

'By the toil of each and the fellowship of people good will happen.'

- quote on entrance signage for 'Uplands Allotments' in Handsworth, Birmingham

'None is a foe, nor a strange other; I've come to feel allied to all.'

- translation of verse located in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299

To all who bring hope

to the near and far worlds

which intersect this local study.

Following Sikh tradition, I ask forgiveness for any shortcomings or errors in this work which, in the end, represents a part of my ongoing process of learning.

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Gopinder Kaur Sagoo

Birmingham 2015

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GLOSSARY OF SIKH AND INDIC TERMS

Below is a list of Sikh/Indic terms which recur in the main text. (Other terms whose appearance is more localised are explained as they appear within the text).

Gurbani	the term Sikhs use to refer to the lyrical compositions which comprise their sacred teachings
Guru	a word denoting a teacher or enlightener. Sikhs use it specifically as a title for the ten successive Gurus who founded the Sikh faith (between 1469 and 1708) and for the volume of sacred text which keeps alive their teachings.
gurudwara	the Sikh place of worship – understood as the 'threshold' or 'gateway' (*dwar*) to the Guru's abode. Inside, one comes into the presence of the sacred text (see below), services are held and a meal (*langar*) is offered to all visitors, irrespective of background. In this study I have used the locally preferred spelling of *gurudwara*, although the spelling *gurdwara* tends to be widely used.
(Sri) Guru Granth Sahib	the compilation of sacred text which Sikhs revere as their 'living' Guru. '*Granth*' means volume of text, and '*Sahib*' denotes respect; '*Sri*' is often added to underline the esteem in which it is held. A copy of the volume is ceremoniously 'enthroned' inside every gurudwara and the teachings tend to be orally transmitted, through recitation and singing.
dharam	derived from the broadly used Indic term, *dharma*, which suggests the inherent nature and order of things and notions of responsibility, ethics, goodness and right conduct. Sikhs use *dharam* in Punjabi to identify distinct religious traditions (e.g. the Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh *dharam*) as well as to denote the day-to-day practice of living in the world, guided by a *dharmic* ethos.
Kaur	term used as a middle name or surname by Sikh females, derived from the Sanskrit '*kanwar*' meaning prince. Its connotations of dignity, sovereignty, courage and wise rule tend not to be captured in the widespread convention of translating 'Kaur' into English as 'princess'.

Khalsa	the order of initiated Sikhs created by the tenth Sikh Guru in 1699. Although just a small percentage of Sikhs are initiated into this order, its code of practice tends to serve as a measure for religious practice in the wider Sikh world.
kirtan	the tradition of singing verses from *gurbani* to musical accompaniment
langar	the vegetarian meal prepared and served in the gurudwara to all visitors, who are invited to sit at an equal level. The term *langar* also refers to the area or hall in which *langar* is prepared and served. It is essential to every gurudwara as a mark of equal hospitality to all.
nishkam	an attitude of unconditional altruism, which is free from ('*nish-*') any desire ('*kam*') for personal reward or gain.
sewa	(also sometimes spelt *seva*) the practice of serving others selflessly. The gurudwara provides opportunities to practice *sewa* (e.g. through helping in the *langar*) which can be extended to other forms of volunteering in wider social contexts.
sewadar	a person who takes on the role of doing *sewa*
Singh	term used as a middle name or surname by Sikh males, derived from the Sanskrit for 'lion'. Whilst its usage occurs across South and South East Asia, it has particular significance for Sikhs as a name bestowed by the tenth Guru to those initiated into the Khalsa order. Like Kaur (used by Sikh females), it is associated with dignity, sovereignty, courage and wise leadership and is adopted by Sikhs who inherit the tradition through birth, as well as those who formally commit to the Khalsa initiation.

List of Abbreviations

EYFS   Early Years Foundation Stage

GNNSJ   Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

SACRE   Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education

SGGS   Sri Guru Granth Sahib

SMSC   Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

RE   Religious Education

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The focus and approach of this study

This thesis presents a linguistic ethnographic case study of the processes involved in the founding of a new nursery in 2009, in one neighbourhood in Birmingham, central England. Known as the Nishkam Nursery, it became the first established institution of the Nishkam School Trust. The founding of the nursery was enabled through Sikh-led community-based participation and I had an opportunity to undertake the research, as a participant observer, from the early project stages.

This study examines the conceptual and social processes involved in the envisioning and creation of the nursery and its early day-to-day life as a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez et al., 1999) for social and educational practice. It also examines how the nursery's newly configured world was 'read' by parents who were becoming accustomed to it. As the study of a very particular local project, conceived of by its founders as an example of thoughtful innovation in the broader landscape of early childhood provision, it offers insights for the wider configuring of educational futures in a societal era now characterised by complex diversities and mobilities.

The transcultural approaches taken to theorise, create and develop the nursery project incorporated values and practices linked to the Sikh faith heritage as well as to widely recognised frameworks and approaches to early childhood education. Through the course of the project, the founders engaged with different philosophical and historical perspectives,

considered local to global contexts and imagined futures based on taking *'shared responsibility'* to bring about *'qualitative change'*. This change was seen as rooted in processes of individual and local transformation and developed through engagement between the *'grassroots'* and *'guiding institutions'*. Thus, the role being cast for the nursery included, but went beyond, that of providing culturally attuned provision for families of Sikh or other Punjabi background, who had formed the early client base.

The nursery founders therefore sensed wider social contributions to be made by identifying, interpreting and demonstrating perspectives rooted in their faith heritage. They were aware, however, that many historical factors for Sikhs (as a minority in India and as part of a diasporic network settling outside of it) had curtailed possibilities to do so. A project of the type they were envisaging was conceived by them as a form of participatory citizenship that required considerable knowledge-building, capacity-building and confidence-building, along with the building of new partnerships and infrastructure. In this regard, the nursery project was embedded in the work of an emerging 'Nishkam' group of organisations based around a Sikh faith-inspired civic-engagement agenda.

My choice to take an ethnographically-led research approach allowed me to chart the processes involved in creating the nursery as they naturally unfolded. This approach also brought into view the multifaceted identities of the people involved, their differing life worlds and life stances as their actions converged and interlaced to take forward the project. In addition, it allowed me to capture the reflective and far-sighted nature of the leadership shown by the overall nursery founder (and subsequent patron) who was responsible for mobilising and guiding their input. The research methodology thus enabled me to build an understanding of the emic perspectives of those who were at the heart of the project and to

situate their (trans)cultural practices in the particular social and historical contexts of this study.

In this opening chapter, I will outline the rationale and significance of this study and the key guiding ideas. I will then go on to introduce the nursery institution in its local setting, highlighting aspects which made it 'new' and attracted my research interest. I will also highlight facets of the aims and visions underpinning the nursery project. These had become apparent at the start of the project. In setting these out here, I can also introduce my journey into the research and my positioning within it. In the next section on key starting points for the research, I will elaborate on the circumstances which led me to the study and my own background and interests. I will also mark out the interdisciplinary bearings of this research by summarising key literature and the approaches I used. I will then provide an overview of key chronological phases of the nursery project as they occurred alongside parallel and interlinked developments in educational policy and research. Finally I will list the key questions guiding the research and outline the thesis contents.

1.2 Rationale, significance and key guiding ideas

In this section, I present the rationale for my study, its significance and key ideas guiding it. It must be pointed out that I did not have a preconceived rationale for the study, nor grasp of its significance during the time I was conducting my fieldwork, analysing the data and trying to figure out the kind of framings it was inviting me to use. Later, as the project to set up the Nishkam nursery unfolded and my awareness of relevant contexts grew, I was able to step back and consider which aspects of the research literature I had encountered along the way could be further explored and which key ideas could be used. The ideas

which were being articulated by nursery founders, staff and parents encouraged me to view this case as a representing a phenomenon of sociohistorical and cultural change, accelerated through one local educational project in the context of the wider organisational and policy contexts in which it was situated. This means that whilst this project drew on contrasting sources and frameworks of thinking about children's holistic growth and learning, a close examination of the nursery world through the lens of learning theories did not fall within the scope of this thesis.

I will now outline the study's rationale and significance, as it relates to contemporary social conditions and recent evolutions in social and cultural theory. I will alo touch on the ideas which motivated the study participants and on my own motivations for conducting the research. I will use the following subheadings to capture what I see this research as accomplishing through the specific conceptual framing I have adopted: *1.2.1 Demonstrating the need for a wide, yet cohesive interdisciplinary frame for research into the creation of nursery provision; 1.2.2 Providing insights into a particular British Sikh project for childhood; 1.2.3 Highlighting research approaches best suited to the examination of social complexity and social transformation; 1.2.4 Taking account of the processes involved in people's mobilities and moorings in superdiverse, postsecular conditions; 1.2.5 Examining the interplay of structural and agentive forces in the creation of the new nursery world; 1.2.6 Contributing to social and educational research and to Sikh Studies.* This outline will give readers a flavour of the main study which is to follow.

1.2.1 *Demonstrating the need for a wide, yet cohesive interdisciplinary frame for research into the creation of nursery provision*

At the heart of this study lies an interest in the ideas, values, commitments and visions we bring to the task of raising the very young. It recognises that, in the contemporary social world, usage of the pronoun 'we' often encompasses multiple and alternating identities set against overlapping layers and scales of context. Different forms of social provision for young children's care and education, along with people's capacities to offer, access or shape them, have historical, cultural, economic, political and philosophical underpinnings. As well as being linked to circumstantial constraints and opportunities, real-world responses to the task of raising new arrivals to our social world - as unique persons, group members, or as local/state/global citizens - can be traced to a web of personal intimations and culturally produced or institutionally circulated conceptions. Underlying these are notions about the meaning and purpose of being human and about the potentials which lie in individuals, communities and societies. So the first reason for this study is that it encourages us to think about social provision for early childhood in this wide yet cohesive, interdisciplinary frame.

1.2.2 *Providing insight into a particular British Sikh project for childhood*

A second reason for this study is that it offers insight into the uncommon phenomenon of a 'local cultural project for childhood' (a term I lift from Moss, 2007, which was employed to describe initiatives involving citizenship participation in Italy's regional municipalities). In this study, the social actors involved were an intergenerational group of British Sikhs, socialised and educated in different regions of the UK as well as in different regions of the British Commonwealth, in India and Africa. The study reveals how the project took shape in the context of their affiliation to a Birmingham-based, transnational Sikh faith

organisation involved in civic and interfaith engagement projects aimed at fostering the 'common good' in local, national, and more global arenas of activity. The ways in which they sought to vision-build by taking stock of 'losses and gains' experienced by Sikhs (e.g. through periods of upheaval, migration and resettlement) and wider societal losses and gains (in providing well for the crucial life phase of early childhood), underscored their actions and the multiple forms of belonging which were being assumed through the course of the nursery's creation.

1.2.3 *Highlighting research approaches best suited to the examination of social complexity and social transformation*

A third reason for this study is to demonstrate the application of social and cultural theory stemming from post-structural traditions in anthropology, ethnography and sociolinguistics. The research approach takes social reality to be continuously produced and made meaningful through people's discursive, interactional and semiotic practices as they occur in unfolding social contexts. Within a wider context of uneven power relations, people's agency may be constrained by the conditioning effects of structure as it slowly and historically evolves whilst their agency may also serve to reshape conventions in fleeting or enduring ways (Rampton 2006: 390). Ethnography and sociolinguistics – and their integration into 'linguistic ethnography' (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015) – enable situated practices to be studied in contexts which are immediate and far-reaching as well as layered and alternating. This study thus seeks to show how the research approaches developed within the field of linguistic ethnography are particularly well suited to the examination of social complexity and transformation and thus earn themselves increased significance as social scientific methodologies.

1.2.4 Taking account of the processes involved in people's mobilities and moorings in
superdiverse, postsecular conditions

This takes us to a fourth reason for this study: It provides insights into a nursery project that was (and still is) a 'child' of contemporary societal conditions which are being described as 'superdiverse' (Vertovec 2007) and 'postsecular' (Habermas 2006; 2008). This follows the 'tremendous increase in the texture of diversity' resulting from the interaction between new and more complex forms of migration, communication and knowledge circulation (Blommaert 2012: 8;10) and, for varying reasons, the persistent and increased public profile of religion and of discourses articulating 'spiritual' needs and concerns. New forms of encounter, engagement and identity formation are thus emerging from a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994), revealing points of 'fusion', 'rapprochment' and 'negotiation' (Beaumont & Baker 2011: 1; Cloke 2011: 249) between religious and secular positionings as well as culturally contrasting ones. Awareness of people's 'mobilities <u>and</u> moorings' (Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006: 1-5) and the phenomenon of 're-grounding' (Ahmed et al 2003) shifts interest to how social practices (e.g. linguistic, cultural, religious) undergo 'recontextualisation' as they travel via flows, new settlements and networks of people (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 18-19).

This study is able to demonstrate how theoretical approaches sensitised to real world change allow Sikh identities and subjectivities to be examined in ways which do not constrain them to the lens of 'sedentary' social scientific precepts (e.g. those construing an 'ethnic minority' or a 'faith community' as a static, bounded entity) nor to wholly 'liquid' conceptualisations (preoccupied with unbounded cultural fragments) (Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006: 2-3). Indeed, drawing on a mobilities paradigm, this study sheds light on a leadership rationale to

'*mobilise resources*' from a shared Sikh '*mooring*' in the world, in order to '*conserve*', '*adapt*' and '*innovate*' across changing historical, geographical and cultural contexts. Also shown is how the notion of '*fusion*' was being advanced to imply a considered integration of specific frameworks grounded in contrasting cultural/religious/secular traditions of thought and practice, more so than a cosmopolitan blending. Analysis of interactional data from nursery life and interview data from nursery parents reveals too how those participating in the new world of the nursery were navigating contrasting identities, balancing contrasting priorities and responding to contrasting needs in ways that underscored superdiverse, postsecular conditions and the effects of people's personal, intergenerational and group-based trajectories on their ways of being in the world.

1.2.5 *Examining the interplay of structural and agentive forces in the creation of the new nursery world*

A fifth reason for this study, around which its context-building and analysis chapters cohere, is that it draws attention to the interplay of structural and agentive forces through which the Nishkam nursery came into being and took shape as a new and hybridised cultural world. Three orienting theories allowed me to formulate both a wide-angled view and a close-up view of the structuring contexts and agentive practices involved, over slow historical stretches of time on the one hand and in moment-to-moment communicative interaction on the other. Influential to all three is the theoretical contribution of Bourdieu (1991) which allows us to draw attention to forces of social reproduction as well as the transformative potential of agency and cultural production (see May 2013: 12-14).

The cultural production of the 'educated person'

The first orienting theory I use is that developed by Levinson, Foley and Holland (1996) of 'the cultural production of the educated person'. This illuminates how culturally specific conceptualisations of the 'educated person' have converged with state-regulated and more globally pervasive ones, following processes of European colonisation, nation-building, urbanisation and globalisation. Consequently, my context building for this study includes an examination of the historical formation of childcare and early educational provision and associated critical, postcolonial and global perspectives. The data analysis reveals Sikh-inspired understandings of the 'educated person' which the study's social actors were carrying into the British institutional and policy contexts of this study.

Policy as/in practice

Linked to this, the second framing (developed in the ethnography of educational policy) conceives 'policy as/in practice' (Sutton and Levinson 2001). This framing is also reflected in recent developments in the ethnography of language policy (Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Hornberger and Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2009, 2013; McCarty 2011). In both fields, policymaking is viewed as 'a complex social practice', involving 'agents, levels and processes' (Ricento and Hornberger 1996: 408) as official policy texts get interpreted and appropriated through local 'frameworks of cultural meaning' (Sutton and Levinson 2001: 3) and as policy is made in everyday social practice. The research thus turns attention to considering what Cairns (2009: 3) describes as the 'culture fit' between 'macro-education policies' and 'micro-school cultures', in a UK-based study aiming to support a civic conversation about the role of 'faith schools' in plural societies. As outlined in Chapter 5, the discourses of the Nishkam nursery practitioners reflected an overlapping of state-/independent-/faith-/ community- and home-education provider identities from England's

inherited landscape of provision. Its founders and early staff can also be seen as 'interpretive conduits' (Hornberger and Johnson 2007: 528) between official state policy frameworks and their understandings and articulations of Sikh faith-inspired frameworks. By examining developments in a 'third space' of policy interpretation and appropriation, this study further underlines how approaches grounded in ethnography and sociolinguistics are ideally placed to make sense of and draw meaning from complex policy processes.

Figured worlds

The focus on actual sites of policy appropriation and cultural production led to the adoption of a third and final orienting theory which framed the new nursery as a 'figured world' (Holland et al, 1998: 49-65). 'Figured worlds' are introduced by these authors as collectively realised, culturally produced 'as if' realms which constitute contexts of meaning for the activities, roles and artifacts within them. Practices which are played out in a given realm gain significance because of the values and meanings attributed to them in the 'ambit' (1998: 65) of that figured world. By drawing on conceptual tools from research on multilingual classroom interaction, this study reveals how the Nishkam nursery constituted a hybridised figured world, with concurrent 'ambits'. I will show in Chapter 11 that, as practitioners moved in and out of professional and culturally familiar family-like roles, they drew on multiple linguistic and semiotic resources and appropriated contrasting policy frameworks.

Importantly for Holland et al. (1998) figured worlds are sites where agency is exercised and identities are formed. This idea points back to what Holland and colleagues see as a more fundamental question, namely 'how historical persons are formed in practice' (Levinson et al. 1996: 14). It also points to how, building on Bourdieu's (1991) theorising of the

interplay of structure and agency, 'dispositions' become historically embodied in individuals (May 2013: 12-14) This heightens the significance of researching the formative early environments experienced by young children as they figure out - rather like ethnographers - the worlds they enter (Massey and Walford 1998). They also figure out who they are through their participation within and outside these worlds (Urrieta 2007: 107 - 109).

1.2.6 *Contributing to social and educational research and to Sikh Studies*

Whilst the three orienting theories enabled me to examine a process of social change through complementary lens settings, they also brought to the surface challenging social and educational issues, including the following: participatory citizenship in the context of increased globalisation and localisation; inclusive education and integrating cultural difference in both global and local contexts of knowledge production and educational practice; meeting wider social challenges to child wellbeing. Because of this, I envisage the present study to contribute to wider strands of social and educational research. I will provide a brief explanation of these issues below and finish by highlighting how, as an empirical study, this research is reflective of recent theoretical developments in Sikh Studies.

Citizenship participation in the light of increased globalisation & localisation

The study builds on a 'citizenship' framing provided by Dahlberg and Moss (2005) and Moss (2007). These authors envisage people's potential to participate, not as passive consumers in a childcare market, but as participatory citizens guided by an agreed framework of broad principles, values and goals. This raises the 'possibility' for early childhood institutions to be understood as 'forums, spaces or sites for ethical and political

practice' (Dahlberg and Moss 2005: 1-2) rather than as services based on a consumerist or technical rationale in the wake of their market-driven expansion and policy-driven regulation nationally and internationally. Similarly, as processes of increased globalisation and localisation challenge and edge forward entrenched national and corporate discourses, there is greater scope for people to act as 'makers and shapers' rather than 'users and choosers' of services, and for increased accountability and responsiveness from institutions in ways that can be mutually transformative (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000; Gaventa 2002). Increased opportunity for agentive action is acknowledged as problematic, however, in conditions of social inequality and long-term underinvestment in public provision; the 'tense relationship' between unity and decentralisation, standardisation and diversity is in constant flux and always a contestable political issue (Moss 2007: 18). As I point out in Chapter 5, debates along these lines have pervaded the social climate for this study in the wake of policy changes which led up to central government's launch of a 'free schools' programme, inviting bids from parent and voluntary groups to set up new, independently run state-funded schools.

Inclusive education: redressing global-historical imbalances and responding to contemporary local realities

Researching the social positioning of minority community-driven supplementary schools in England (operating outside of mainstream school hours), Simon (2013: 8) construes these 'not merely as educational spaces but as social and political enterprises'. This introduces another twist to the agency-structure dilemma when conditions of cultural and religious diversity are factored in. Recent research on supplementary (or complementary) schooling suggests that such, mainly voluntary-run, provision beckons mainstream attention for the way in which many provide opportunities to 'perform successful learner identities, as well

as explore their heritage identities and the multicultural identities constructed as they grow up in a diverse society' (Creese et al. 2006). This shifts policy interest beyond managerial issues of integrating or accommodating the 'problem' of cultural difference and invites consideration of how this difference, along with group-based mobilisations to educationally provide for it, can be positively viewed and built upon. This stance was articulated by several social actors in this study, who were keen to steer away from a 'deficit' model of minority citizenship to one which emphasised social contribution.

A related impetus for this research, given the wider global-historical framing, comes from a significant body of ethnographically-oriented studies which raise critical awareness of childcare and early educational discourses which have risen to a position of dominance in global contexts. These studies are discussed in 4.3. They include work by Gupta (2006) on the practices of preschool practitioners in urban India, which argues for greater recognition – in a postcolonial, globalised world - of cultural frameworks beyond the 'Euro-American' models which tend to be exclusively taught in professional training institutions, even in India. Echoed here is awareness raised by participants in this study of the impact of British colonialism on the educational history of the Punjab and also on the psyche of South Asians about what counts as 'education'. Other research which inspired this study includes case studies of preschool life in Japan, China and the United States (Tobin, Hseuh and Karaswa, 2009) examining practices born at the intersection of culturally contrasting discourses on child-rearing and education. Additional writing by Tobin (2005) critiques 'one-size-fits-all' configurations of provision in a culturally heterogeneous society such as the United States. This suggests that the issue of articulating and integrating cultural frameworks is not only related to redressing historic global imbalances; it also related to the ways in which provision is configured where globalisation increases local diversities.

Meeting wider social challenges to child wellbeing as part of the nursery's layered thinking

As I have earlier suggested, at the heart of this study lies a philosophical and practical interest in the kind of provisions we to make to welcome and raise the very young. Recognition in the nursery project of increasingly shared social challenges, beyond those particular to 'minority' groups, also provides a rationale for this research. Information on these challenges was gleaned from the first international attempt to report on child-wellbeing in economically advanced nations, where the UK and USA were ranked bottom of list (UNICEF 2007). Also considered was the UK's first independent inquiry into the conditions that lead to a good childhood, reported by Layard and Dunn (2009). Its subtitle, *Searching for values in a competitive age* indicates how the challenges it identifies are of a largely social and cultural nature, e.g. excessive consumerism and individualism along with less cohesion in day-to-day family life (2009: 4). Researching further, I noted similar findings in a qualitative study (Ipsos MORI and Nairn 2011) comparing experiences of childhood in the UK with those in Spain and Sweden (where child wellbeing was ranked high). A case for greater societal investment in 'early intervention' (Allen 2011), underlined potential long term impacts of children's earliest social and emotional experiences.

Given these concerns, this study is able to reveal how, once the nursery opened, early staff viewed official policy frameworks as useful starting points to address children's wellbeing and educational needs, in ways that were complementary to their ideas from a Sikh positioning. These principles included those from the national framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF 2008), i.e. 'positive relationships', 'enabling environments', 'learning and development', the 'unique child' along with the focus on the cultivation of 'dispositions' provided by the locally-agreed framework for Religious

Education (Birmingham City Council 2007). These principles also reflected an emphasis given to the nature of the 'space' that would be created rather than 'outcomes' expected, when the nursery was being envisioned. Whilst practitioners inevitably framed much of their thinking around the national framework and their professional training, interviews with them also reveal how they were construing Sikh-inspired notions of individual uniqueness, learning potential, the key influence of relationships and environments and new possibilities each child brings. So another interest in this study has been to reveal this layering.

Reflecting theoretical movements in Sikh Studies and postsecular stirrings in social and educational theory

From the onset of this study I became conscious that one 'raison d'etre' for Nishkam's initiatives in education, outside of official policy developments, was the centrality of the concepts of education and citizenship within the conceptual framework of the Sikh *dharam* (or faith). According to the overall leadership vision for the nursery, this reasoning was based on taking 'Sikh' to mean 'a learner' and *dharam* to entail a commitment to participate in the world with 'loving responsibility'. This participation involved an orientation to 'harness' values and dispositions rooted in an intrinsic spiritual self, seen as located at the centre of each person's otherwise 'concentric identities'. Also emphasised was the social outreach of Sikh teachings, formed in conditions of cultural and religious plurality in South Asia where the tradition grew as a grassroots movement interfacing with local and imperial governing powers. The resulting inclination to 'inter-human' engagement was considered particularly relevant to the current era of unprecedented globalisation and unavoidably shared challenge, which was manifesting itself in the inner city area where the nursery was located as well as other arenas of Nishkam's activity as a transnational organisation.

By examining the discursive and interactional production of ideas, this empirical study reflects moves in Sikh Studies to encourage non-Western traditions to be approached as resources for 'conceptual thinking' more so than as 'living relics' (Mandair 2009: 386). These moves are echoed in stances offered from a Maori positioning by Stewart-Harawira (2005) and Tuhiwai-Smith (2012). Direct analysis of Sikh teachings (*Gurbani*) does not fall within the scope of this study, but it does illuminate how scriptural concepts were drawn on to encourage shifts in perspective or attitude, often in ways that fostered human solidarity. This observation is echoed in work by Bhogal (2001) who argues for lifting studies of *Gurbani* from the weight of scholarly traditions anchored in conditions of imperialism, modernisation and Christian missionary activity in India and to consider the implications of its lyrical, linguistically fluid and practically performed nature. Given that its form is not one of abstract and systematised philosophical discourse, its verses are thus better seen as 'sites' or 'locations of engagement' (2001: 94). This was certainly reflected in the usages I observed in this study.

Also revealed in this study, given wider process of civic and interfaith engagement underlying the nursery's creation, was the ways in which the production of ideas involved alternate leanings towards western religious and secular civic discourse. The resultant espousing and abandoning of conventional translations such as 'religion', 'faith' echo an ambivalence captured in the recent scholarly usage of a hybridized 'Sikh(ism)', where a qualitative, indigenous notion of 'Sikhi' is seen to be latent within more established modern/colonial constructions of 'Sikhism' (Mandair 2013; Bhogal 2014). Reflected in the emergence of such ideas is the distinction made by Ahluwalia (2011) between Sikh diasporic identities which have been forged in an 'age of colonization' and those which are being forged in an 'age of globalization'.

Finally, in a volume exploring critical social theories and education, Levinson (2011) suggest there is scope to expand the critical social theory canon to recognise the 'transformative potential of religious and spiritual thought', although this may seem at first controversial because of the largely humanistic and atheistic intellectual milieu in which the canon has developed with a predominantly critical stances towards religion (2011: 239). Examples cited include the marshalling of Buddha's life and teaching to suggest a critical educational practice (2011: 240). As the cross-section of interviews presented in this study reveal, the nursery creation served a spectrum of purposes, which certainly can be attributed to desires to enable bilingual early nurture, heritage transmission, a home-like atmosphere or formal schooling provision. Significantly, this study is able to indicate how these contrasting aspirations were intertwined into an underlying movement which was being guided by Bhai Sahib (as overall organisational lead and nursery patron) to articulate and share Sikh dharmic concepts and sentiments about how we do 'education' and 'citizenship' in the world.

1.3 Introduction to the nursery site and the nursery project

1.3.1 *A first encounter with the new nursery*

For a person visiting the Nishkam Nursery just after it had opened, on a busy main road in the inner-city area of Handsworth (known for its cultural and religious diversity, past historical significance and contemporary social challenges) the facility would have appeared 'new' in several respects. Disused for some three years as the site of a former council-run nursery, the derelict street corner property had been freshly renovated through extensive

Sikh community participation. It now offered an example of newly conserved local city heritage, since its 'listed' status had entailed some careful conservation of its Georgian features, reflecting the building's original role as a private residence.

Stepping in, one might have been struck, therefore, by the resulting homeliness of the school setting, with its fireplaces and sash windows. Visible alongside this were arrangements of resources standard to mainstream nurseries, brought up to date with a computer placed in each of the rooms. At the same time one would quickly notice, on encountering the people inside (more so than the material environment itself), distinctive linguistic and cultural practices revealing the largely Sikh and Punjabi heritage of its founders, initial staff and families.

It was this broad heritage, locally present since the postwar migration of South Asians to the UK from India and East Africa, which also informed elements of the nursery's guiding ethos. As I have already noted, it presented a new kind of 'third space' for social and educational practice. Reflected in its visual and textual environment and in practitioner accounts was its work to integrate a national framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) introduced in 2008, a city-wide framework of 'spiritual and moral dispositions' extrapolated from a locally-agreed syllabus for Religious Education in Birmingham launched in 2007, along with understandings from the Sikh heritage and consideration of other approaches originating from within and beyond Europe. This forging of new blends of knowledge and practice was an underlying aspect which I had set out to research.

1.3.2. *The aims and visions underpinning the nursery project*

Also multifaceted were the aims and visions behind the nursery project, which I learnt about after being invited around 2006 (I am a Sikh myself and I had become a first-time parent) to early project meetings bringing together a small team of *sewadars*. The term *sewadars* is a Punjabi word with an English plural marker. It denotes people who volunteer time and other resources to doing *sewa*, a core Sikh principle popularly translated as 'serving others selflessly'. In this particular case, '*sewadars'* refers to those contributing to the work of the locally-based, transnational Sikh faith organisation whose name (see 1.4 below and Chapter 6 for further background) was centred around the concept of '*nishkam sewa'*. The word '*nishkam*' stresses the unconditional nature of *sewa* when it is detached from ('*nish-*') any desire ('*kam*') for personal gain and can be directed towards seeking *'sarbat da bhalla',* the 'wider wellbeing of all'. Through the organisation's civic engagement activities, these various words from Indic tradition got linked to contemporary English-language notions of 'volunteering' and 'social action' for the 'common good'.

From my occasional presence at early nursery project meetings, a number of underlying intentions and visions became apparent. The project took a lifelong educational perspective, underlining the importance of investing in the early, formative years at the start of life to support future wellbeing and success. Under the overall direction of the faith organisation's chair and leader, known by the title of Bhai Sahib, *sewadars* were encouraged to 'soul search', and attempt informal research, to unearth both personal and Sikh heritage perspectives on raising children, whilst acknowledging the historical panning out of widely established ideas, frameworks, guidance and regulations. This grassroots process of enquiry was in part stimulated by the notion that 'Sikh' meant 'a lifelong learner' (associated with the Punjabi verb *sikhna*, to learn). This served to raise philosophical questions about the

purposes of education, of human life, of childhood and of society, which were introduced to deepen and expand some of the thinking.

This ideational process ran in tandem with a more immediate task taken up by a small collective of Sikh women who were just starting young families and who came to play a significant role in the early concept-building and pilot phases of the nursery project. Mostly British-born in their twenties and thirties, they were trying to juggle and balance new demands, questions, hopes and concerns as they reconfigured their lives during maternity leave, or perhaps considered new personal, professional and community-oriented life directions after parenthood. Already involved in various forms of *sewa*, they had come together to plan a small parent-child group or childcare facility that would be holistically attuned to their children's needs and as well as to theirs as a new generation of Sikh parents.

The nursery was also part of a longstanding vision to create a 'Sikh ethos, multifaith' school. This was a concept which, as outlined by the lead of the education trust to advance the project (see 1.5 below), did not fit at the time into existing categories for establishing new school provision. Envisaged to adopt good practice and engage in innovation so as to raise achievement and aspiration locally, it saw Sikh and non-Sikh pupils as being able to benefit from the non-proselytising Sikh faith dimension.

The education planning projects had, in turn, had been based inside a new Nishkam Centre for 'civic engagement' set up to facilitate 'value-led' projects and partnerships, local to global in scope, engaging Sikh and broader networks of civic life. Partially supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the building's construction also involved significant Sikh community investment and volunteering mobilised by its parent faith-based

organisation, located in the adjoining Sikh gurudwara. The nursery's eventual location opposite both a religious and civic centre (appendix 1) underscored the overlapping nature of its identity and of people's impressions of its role. It was aspects of this overlapping process that I was able to unravel through my positioning there as a participant observer.

1.4 Personal starting points for the research

Here I will here give a brief outline of the starting points for the research. These stem from my own background as a researcher and from key themes and approaches I had identified. As I have already noted above, the need for an ethnographically-led, methodological approach became quickly apparent, since I had undertaken to do research with people engaged in developing a 'work in progress'. Less apparent was the thematic and interdisciplinary scope the research would involve. This emerged through my ongoing reading and very much through the ideas which were being expressed and reinforced by the research participants as I collected the ethnographic and textual data.

Link to the Nishkam network

This research is born out of a series of life circumstances that led to my association with the 'Nishkam' network. I was born in London to Sikh parents who had migrated from East Africa at the turn of the 1970s. My move to Birmingham, in late 2001, marked the start of my married life and new involvements in Sikh community life. These arose from my attending a Sikh gurudwara which was headquarters to the Sikh registered charity known as *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ)*. This organisation had been set up in the mid-1970s to revitalise faith practice amongst new Sikh settlers in the UK and to promote, as the name suggested, the practice of '*sewa*' (see 1.3.2 above) guided by the value of being

'*nishkam*' ('altruistic'). Within the last decade, this latter term has come to be used as a shorthand for naming the organisation and its various centres and projects (the 'Nishkam Centre' and 'Nishkam Nursery' being early examples). GNNSJ's origins go back to an earlier wave of Sikh migration from India to East Africa over a century ago. This association touched, therefore, on my own family history. It included links to the Kenyan Rift Valley town of Kericho, associated with GNNSJ's founder, Sant Puran Singh (Sagoo 2009), and to the 'Khalsa School' in Nairobi, which was mentioned in one of the interviews conducted in this study.

Family history

In London, I was brought up in fairly close contact with extended family, having a sense of my parents, uncles and aunts relating in various ways to 'being a Sikh' as they built their family and working lives, some having studied elsewhere in the UK and continental Europe. A range of different leanings and affiliations, and life trajectories, on- and off-the-beaten-track, were generally held together well through the family network. Gurudwara attendance was also a familiar affair, which habituated us to aspects of Sikh communal religious life, a broader sense of heritage and the existence of wider networks of Sikhs.

Punjabi language practices

In my family's earlier East African context, a translingual upbringing was typical for most South Asians as they readily moved in and out of speaking Punjabi, Gujerati, Hindi and Urdu as well as English and Kiswali, as social contexts required. A partial consequence of my parents' proficiency in English meant that my spoken Punjabi 'got me by' in social situations but was less developed. The main galvaniser of basic literacy for me was learning *Gurbani* or the verses of Sikh teaching and the habit of reciting them as an initiated Sikh.

This introduced me to the linguistically fluid world of North Indian devotional expression as preserved in the Sikh sacred text, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. These dimensions of Punjabi knowledge allowed me to readily manage and interpret bilingual elements of interviews I conducted and interactions I observed, as well as to make sense of occasional flows of ideas, where points were elaborated using scriptural teachings.

Academic and Sikh educational background

In terms of my own education, after attending a local state primary school, I was fortunate, given our economic circumstances, to be awarded a scholarship to attend a local independent school and a full grant to attend university. I chose a degree in Modern & Medieval Languages (where the curriculum was defined entirely with respect to European languages) and my study of French and Russian encompassed historical, cultural, philosophical and political movements. I later undertook a Masters degree in South Asian Area Studies, whilst working in children's publishing. This introduced me to academic stances on the study of Sikh scripture, of classical music and the religious and philosophical traditions of India. These various longstanding interdisciplinary and intercultural interests are reflected in the present research.

On occasions I would receive requests to introduce Sikh tradition, be it through talks or writing for broadcasting and publishing. In making sense of this heritage I would find myself suspended between contrasting sources and angles of knowledge, views that people might adopt or subliminally hold, and my own evolving experiences and standpoints. Once in Birmingham, new involvements with GNNSJ led to other educational roles. Running a Sikh Studies course for multi-aged adults affirmed the diversity that exists in people's ground-level formations of knowledge, be it through text books, gurudwara or school RE

classes, learning transmitted through social networks or gleaned through personal enquiry. It also underlined, as did volunteer work to host visitor tours to the gurudwara, how understandings often rest on previously constructed and circulated norms of insider and outsider (and 'in-betweener') knowledge. I therefore became interested in how the nursery project was stimulating reflection on concepts and practices stemming from the Sikh faith and on ways of articulating and applying them in new ways for new contexts.

Parenthood

In 2005, I gave birth to my first child, which ushered in an obvious, practical interest in early childhood. This was joined by a keenly felt 'spiritual' (for want of a better word), cultural and temporal dimension to the experience of becoming a parent, involving the sense of mystery, possibility, continuity and responsibility that comes with greeting a 'new arrival', alongside more typical and everyday hopes and concerns. I later became linked to the Nishkam nursery as a parent, my daughter being amongst its first intake of children. My son's birth in 2013 and subsequent attendance at the same nursery has allowed for sustained reflection as I have worked to complete this thesis.

Involvement in revising Birmingham's syllabus for Religious Education

As I indicated above, in section 1.3.2, my link to the nursery project itself had begun in 2006, when I was invited to early exploratory project conversations. Aside from my status a new parent, this invitation was prompted by my role, from 2004, as a Sikh representative on Birmingham's Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE). Whilst Religious Education (RE) is a statutory subject in the national school curriculum, its syllabi are to date locally agreed by SACRE bodies, instead of being centrally controlled.

My involvement with SACRE from 2004 coincided with the revision of Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus for RE, which led to a revised framework of twenty-four 'dispositions' – qualities or values that are embodied or practiced. This framework was seen to facilitate engagement between contrasting religious, cultural and secular positionings of teachers and pupils, foregrounding a curriculum requirement to foster 'personal and social development' and, by extension 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development'. This was linked in turn to ideas in RE pedagogy about enabling pupils to 'learn from' as well as 'learn about' religious traditions (see 5.2.3).

The SACRE involvement gave me some early opportunities to consult with the overall leader of GNNSJ (whom I refer to in this study, as earlier mentioned, by his title of Bhai Sahib) and with the then lead coordinator of the education trust (see 1.5) who was overseeing the nursery project (whom I refer to as R. Singh). This enabled me to bring to the SACRE table some thinking-through of educational ideas from a Sikh perspective. I noted, for example, Bhai Sahib's emphasis on conceiving the Sikh faith as a '*dharam*', where 'spirituality and secularity' are seen as 'fused' (see Chapter 9). This he preferred to the (usually inevitable) use of the word 'religion' which tended to suggest a bounded sphere of social activity. In the way Bhai Sahib described it, *dharam* amounted to a value-conscious 'moment-by-moment' practice of everyday life and, in this respect, facets of religious tradition offered ways to foster, motivate and carry forward such a consciousness. Sikh scriptural and historical examples of advancing intercultural, interfaith, and as he put it, '*inter-human*' dialogue, with no intent to religiously convert, was also seen to chime with the dispositions focus of the newly anticipated RE syllabus of Birmingham City Council.

For the founders of the nursery project, the Birmingham dispositions framework, along with aims to foster SMSC development, were seen as vital to any provision for the highly formative, early years of childhood. The project, as I saw it, was thus poised to incorporate and explore these locally and nationally agreed educational requirements from new cultural and Sikh *dharmic* perspectives and for new contemporary contexts.

1.5   Summary of the nursery project: key phases and developments

This section summarises key developments and events in the period leading up to the nursery project, at the time when the nursery came into being and during its first two years of operation. A number of parallel and interlinked developments are outlined below and summarised in Table 1 at the end of this chapter. This table is designed to contextualise the nursery development within wider education policy developments, the emergence of relevant reports, as well as my ongoing discoveries of relevant literature.

1.5.1   Key moments in the creation of the nursery

Embedded as it was in a longer-term project for establishing a school, the nursery project was being advanced by a trust which had been registered in 2003 as the *Guru Nanak Nishkam Education Trust*. This followed on from various meetings that had been held over the previous decade with other Sikh bodies, local education providers and the city council about the education needs of Sikhs in Birmingham. In 2005, formal expressions of interest were made to local and national government bodies with a view to opening a nursery and a school. In 2006, following the closure of a community nursery run by the city council, which had moved to a new premises, GNNET submitted a formal expression of interest to acquire the building in Handsworth for use as a nursery. This led eventually to its purchase

by GNNSJ in 2008 and a renovation period in 2009 leading to its opening in September that year.

It was also in 2006, that I became aware of project meetings to discuss educational visions and approaches for the nursery. These meetings took place in the new Nishkam Centre. Whilst negotiations regarding premises for the nursery were still underway, it was decided that a pilot 'parent-child playgroup' would be set up to test out and develop ideas, to further capacity-build people to take the project forward and to start to build a client base. An area within the gurudwara complex was specially refurbished for this purpose, with financial and volunteer input from the gurudwara. Following the pilot phase from 2007-8, the project focus was to make ready the newly acquired nursery premise and get preparations underway to run it as an institution when it opened in 2009.

1.5.2   Parallel and interlinked developments across the period

The first national curriculum frameworks for early years care and education were introduced in the first few years of the twenty first century: in 2000 ('*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*') and 2004 ('*Every Child Matters*' reforms supported by The Children's Act 2004). These were consolidated and taken forward in 2008 in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (to be revised and simplified later in 2012). In terms of the 'dispositions' framework of the locally-agreed syllabus for Religious Education in Birmingham, the revision process had begun in 2004 (the same year as a non-statutory national framework for Religious Education had been introduced) and the syllabus was launched in 2007. It was thus ready to be incorporated into the nursery's curriculum planning when it opened in 2009.

Over various phases of the nursery project, note was taken of newly published research and policy reports identifying social failures with regard to provision for children in the UK in comparison with other industrialised nations and pointing to the long term social benefits of investment in early childhood. These publications included: *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries* (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007); *A good childhood: searching for values in a competitive age* (Layard & Dunn, 2009); *Early intervention: the next steps* (Allen, 2011). Having been introduced to these reports, I also came across emerging research literature, which I occasionally shared with members of the project team. This led at times to a sense that my research was as much embedded in the nursery project, as the nursery project was embedded in my research. These connections are brought out in Table 1, at the end of the chapter.

1.6   Key research questions

During the course of this study, the questions I was addressing were as follows:

1. What blend of ideas and values were guiding the process of creating the nursery?

2. How was the world of the nursery being configured and reconfigured in and through the day to day communicative and semiotic practices of those participating?

3. Why did parents participate and how did they respond to the nursery project?

1.7   Outline of the thesis

Part A of this thesis introduces the theoretical basis of this study and includes Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 sets out the ontological assumptions, epistemological stances and orienting theories guiding the study. Chapter 3 explains why the study builds on research approaches

that have been honed within the relatively new field of linguistic ethnography. It shows the advantages that accrue from linking ethnography with linguistic analysis of interaction, in educational settings where new ideas, new policies and new forms of provision are being developed.

Part B presents the historical, cultural and policy contexts of the study and it includes Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 surveys a broad literature on early childhood provision and includes a historical perspective. It first outlines sociohistorical processes and key influences and movements which have shaped public provision in the global north and west. It then goes on to introduce critical, global perspectives. Chapter 5 summarises aspects of UK education policy and curriculum developments that are relevant to this study and discusses associated research themes. The first part of the chapter (5.1) traces the complex and changing landscape of educational policy in England, detailing developments in mainstream schooling, in faith-based state maintained schools, in supplementary and complementary schooling and home-based education. It also touches on contemporary moves towards diversification and marketisation of provision and discusses the paradoxes and dilemmas that stem from nationally configured provision. The second part of the chapter focuses on national and Birmingham-based curriculum developments that are relevant education in the early years. The curriculum developments include: the 'Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS); 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (SMSC); 'Religious Education' (RE) and; 'citizenship education'.   Chapter 6 introduces Sikhs and their heritage, by summarising: the early evolution of a Sikh ethos and identity; new definitions and directions engendered by colonial encounter and migration; ongoing formations of ideas, identities and institutions in the diaspora.

Part C of the thesis gives an overview of my case study of the Nishkam nursery. It includes Chapter 7 and 8. Chapter 7 provides an account of the urban context of the study, the research site and research participants. Chapter 8 outlines the research methods, ethical considerations and the gradual process of making sense of the data in the light of my positioning as a participant observer.

Part D features the data analysis chapters, comprising Chapters 9 to 12. Chapter 9 focuses on the wider process of envisioning the nursery project and introduces themes emerging from the personal histories of the four initial interviewees. The themes from the wider process are summarised as 'ways of seeing; ways of doing; ways of nurturing; ways of speaking.' Chapter 10 describes the ways in which the world of the nursery was created and configured, through its material environment and through the relationships and practices characterising its day-to-day life. Chapter 11 presents a series of small vignettes offering close analysis of the communicative practices associated with the day to day cycles of life in the nursery and chapter 12 examines parental responses to the nursery initiative.

Part E (Chapter 13) presents a discussion of the research findings. Here I revisit the research questions, I consider the relevance of the case study and I draw attention to the constraints on the research that I conducted. I finish with suggestions for future directions in research.

Table 1: PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS OVER KEY PHASES OF THE NISHKAM NURSERY PROJECT			
Year	Nursery project phases	State policy developments	Publication of key interdisciplinary sources
2003	Guru Nanak Nishkam Education Trust is registered; building of Nishkam Centre for civic engagement begins.	Chief Secretary to the Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters.* Norwich: The Stationery Office.	Ahmed, S., Castaneda, C., Fortier, A. & Sheller, M. (2003) *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration.* Oxford: Berg.
2004	Start of Nishkam input into revision of Birmingham's locally agreed syllabus for RE	*The Children's Act 2004.* Qualifications and Curiculum Authority (QCA) (2004). *Religious Education: the non-statutory national framework.* London: QCA Ofsted (2004) *Promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.* London: HMI. Revision process for Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus for RE commences	Erickson, F. (2004b) *Talk and social theory: Ecologies of speaking and listening in everyday life.* Oxford: Wiley Jackson, R. (2004) *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy,* London: Routledge Falmer Rampton et al. (2004) UK linguistic ethnography: a discussion paper. Online: www.ling-ethnog.org.uk
2005	Contruction of Nishkam Centre is completed, providing a base to develop faith-inspired civic engagement projects and parternships in local and global contexts.		Ahluwalia, P., Mandair, A. and Singh, G. (2005) 'The subject of Sikh Studies' in *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory,* 1 (1) pp. 1-11 Dahlberg, G. & Moss, P. (2005). *Ethics and politics in early childhood education.* Abingdon: Routledge Falmer. Gardner, J., Cairns, J. and Lawton, D. (2005). *Faith schools: Consensus or conflict?* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge Falmer. Stearns (2005) *The history of childhood in a global context* Stewart-Harawira, M. (2005) *The new imperial order. Indigenous responses to globalization.* London: Zed Books.

Year	Nursery project phases	State policy developments	Publication of key interdisciplinary sources
2006	Nursery planning project commences (in the context of a wider school planning project) based in the new Nishkam Centre builing.	DfES (2006) *School Admissions Code: consultation document*. Nottingham: DfES Publications – requiring local authorities to respond to parental representations	Eaude, T. (2006), *Children's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development: Primary and Early Years,* Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd Gupta, A. (2006). *Early childhood education, postcolonial theory, and teaching practices in India: Balancing Vygotsky and the Veda.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Habermas, J. (2006) 'Religion in the public sphere'. *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 1-25. Hannam, K., Sheller, M. & Urry, J. (2006) 'Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings'. *Mobilities* 1 (1): 1-22. Lawy, R. & Biesta, G. (2006). Citizenship-as-practice: the educational implications of an inclusive and relational understanding of citizenship. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 54 (1): 34 - 50. Stearns. P. (2006). *Childhood in world history.* New York: Routledge
2007	Pilot parent-child playgroup is set up in gurudwara complex to trial approaches which foreground values and dispositions and are responsive to life worlds of children and parents.	Birmingham City Council (2007). *The Birmingham agreed syllabus for Religious Education*. Birmingham: City Council – a revised local syllabus based on a framework of 24 spiritual and moral dispositions	Hornberger, N. H. and Johnson, D. C. (2007) Slicing the onion ethnographically: Layers and spaces in multilingual language policy and practice. *TESOL Quarterly* 41, 509 – 532. Moss, P. (2007). *Bringing politics into the nursery: Early childhood education as a democratic practice. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15 (1) 5-20. Tusting, K. & Maybin, J. (2007) Linguistic ethnography and interdisciplinarity: opening up the discussion. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11(5), 575-583. UNICEF (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries.* New York: United Nations. Urrieta Jr., L., (2007). Figured worlds and education: An introduction to the special issue. *The Urban Review*, 39 (2): 107-116. Vertovec, S. (2007) Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(6): 1024-1054.

Year	Nursery project phases	State policy developments	Publication of key interdisciplinary sources
2008	Year long pilot parent-child playgroup phase ends	DCSF (2008) *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications – launch of a new national framework integrating care and education in the early years	Ball, S. (2008) *The education debate*. Bristol: Policy Press Day Ashley, L. (2008). *Creating and connecting local and global communities: Tagore's university and rural reconstruction experiments at Santiniketan*. 'Beyond the Lecture Hall': Conference of University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education and History of Education Society UK, Homerton College, Cambridge (unpublished conference paper). Habermas, J. (2008) 'Notes on a post-secular society'. *Signandsight.com*, 18 June, 1-23.
2009	Nursery building purchased and renovated though community investment and participation; Nishkam Nursery opens in September following a Sikh religious opening ceremony.	Birmingham SACRE commissions educational film resource on the 'dispositions' framework, with input from participants in the Nishkam pilot 'playgroup'.	Cairns, J. (2009) *Faith schools and society: Civilizing the debate*. London: Continuum. Layard, R. and Dunn, J. (2009) *A good childhood: searching for values in a competitive age*. London: HMSO. Mandair, A.S. (2009) *Religion and the spectre of the west: Sikhism, India, postcoloniality, and the politics of translation*. New York: Columbia University Press. Tobin, J., Hseuh, Y., Karasawa, M. (2009). *Preschool in three cultures revisited: China, Japan and the United States*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
2010	Official civic ceremony to mark launch of the Nishkam nursery; nursery's first OFSTED inspection; nursery expands to a small independent primary school; GNNET considers the new 'free schools' policy window as a route to establish school.	Academies Act (2010) – through which the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government introducesthe free schools programme	Cleghorn, A. & Prochner, L. (2010). *Shades of globalization in three early childhood settings*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. Cottrell, M. (2010). Indigenous education in comparative perspective: Global opportunities for reimagining schools. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, 1(4), 223-227. Creese, A. and Blackledge, A. (2010) 'Towards a sociolinguistics of superdiversity. *Z Erziehungswiss* (13: 549-572). Osberg, D.C. & Biesta, G. (2010). The end/s of education: complexity and the conundrum of the inclusive educational curriculum. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14(6): 593-607. Teece, G. (2010a) Is it learning about and from religions, religion or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it? *The British Journal of Religious Education*, 32 (2): 89-103

Year	Nursery project phases	State policy developments	Publication of key interdisciplinary sources
2011	Community particpation to renovate building adjacent to Nishkam nursery for September opening of the first Nishkam Primary School, as part of the first wave of new 'free schools'.	Allen, G. (2011). *Early intervention: The next steps. An independent report to Her Majesty's Government.* London: Cabinet Office – outlining long term benefits of early intervention	Ahluwalia, P. (2011) 'At home in motion' in *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, 7:2, 95-109 Beaumont, J. and Baker, C. (eds.) (2011) *Postsecular cities. Space, theory and practice.* London: Continuum. Martin-Jones, M. (2011) "Language policies, multilingual classrooms: resonances across continents". In K. Kendall and F. Hult (eds.) *Educational linguistics in practice: applying the local globally and the global locally.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 3-15. McCarty, T. L. (ed.) (2011) *Ethnography of language policy.* New York: Routledge
2012	Community particpation to build the first Nishkam High School, in Birmingham, in an adapted industrial unit, ready for opening in September.	Revised EYFS framework is introduced	Blommaert, J (2012) Chronicles of complexity: Ethnography, superdiversity, and linguistic landscapes. Tilburg Papers in Cultural Studies (Paper 29). Gorski, P., Kyuman Kim, D; Torpey, J. and Van Antwerpen, J. (2012) *The post-secular in question: Religion in contemporary society.* New York: New York University Press Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2012) *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* New York, NY: Zed Books
2013-14	Planning begins for a new school building for Nishkam High School. Project is completed ready for opening in September 2014.		Bhogal (2014) Postcolonial and postmodern perspectives on Sikhism. In P. Singh and E. Fenech (eds). *The Oxford handbook of Sikh studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Peterson et al. (2014) *Schools with soul: a new approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.* London: RSA Action & Research Centre Sagoo, G. K. (2013) Citizenship as social, spiritual and multilingual practice: fostering visions and practices in the Nishkam Nursery Project. In V. Ramanathan (ed.) *Language, policies and (dis)citizenship*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

CHAPTER 2:

ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS, EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCES AND

ORIENTING THEORIES

This chapter sets out how this study is theoretically framed. Typical for research of this kind, this framing could not be wholly pre-determined before I embarked on collecting data. As I discuss in 3.1, I was following a naturally unfolding process whose progress and outcomes were unknown to me. Rather, the theoretical framing gained definition through a process of 'shuttling' between analysis of data and reviewing of literature and making connections between ideas which both research activities were bringing to the table. The literature review involved early phases of familiarising myself with the interdisciplinary research terrain and later identifying a coherent theoretical frame, once I was able to step back and make better sense of the study as a whole.

I begin this chapter by outlining, in 2.1, the ontological assumptions on which the study is based, i.e. the underlying view about the nature of social reality which it presumes. To make this view explicit is vital to understanding what constitutes knowledge in this study and to appreciate the epistemological stances that I was thus taking. These stances are outlined in 2.2. I go on to discuss, in 2.3, key orienting theories which emerged as pertinent to this study. Because readers may take an interest in this study from a number of disciplinary starting points, this chapter importantly sheds light on how notions of 'language', 'culture' and 'identity', along with 'religion' and 'citizenship', are being construed through this vein of research. It sets out how the theoretical underpinnings recognise the interplay between agency and structure in both long-range and close-range investigations of the social world

as it is continuously reproduced and revised. Finally, it lays conceptual foundations for Chapter 3, in which I link together 'Ethnography, discourse and education' to elaborate on my methodological approach.

2.1   Ontological and theoretical assumptions

In social research, the nature of the social world which is being assumed has a bearing on the kind of knowledge which is sought, questions that are asked, investigative approaches that are used and on how findings are assessed. In this section, I explain the processual view I was taking of social reality. In this view, social life is understood as being continuously produced through discursive and interactional practice and the dynamic interplay of structure and agency. Here, I draw on the post-structural tradition as well as on perspectives which have gained currency in response to salient patterns of contemporary social change. I also indicate how the study itself invited an ontological openness and consciousness of the historical production of established analytical lenses.

2.1.1 The continuous production of the social world: post-structuralist perspectives

This study examines the phenomenon of the Nishkam nursery's creation in terms of the social actors and social contexts involved, located as they were in the unfolding of broader sociohistorical processes. The assumptions on which it is based stem from a series of ontological turns - particularly in the traditions of anthropology, sociology and linguistics - which led to an understanding of social reality as 'being discursively constructed, reproduced, naturalised and sometimes revised in social interactions, in the course of large-scale historical, political and socioeconomic configurations' (Perez Milans 2013: 30). Seen in this way, the social world is continuously taking shape through the interplay between people's reflexive and agentive participation, on the one hand, and its dominant discourses

and regulatory structures (both implicit and explicit), on the other hand. These discourses and structures also evolve over larger stretches of time and space. These structures both 'configure' and 'constrain' locally situated interactions and, in turn, locally situated interactions can reshape conventions, often in 'fleeting' and sometimes in 'enduring ways', within a wider context of power relations involving the unequal (re)production and distribution of symbolic and material resources. (Perez-Milan, 2013: 31, Rampton, 2006: 390).

Because the social world is understood to be continuously produced through discourse and interaction, the communicative ways (both linguistic and multimodal) in which people make and signal meaning (i.e. engage in semiotic practice), in different contexts of communicative practice, become a key focus of attention. This emphasis on the social world as populated by agentive subjects, whose practices varyingly respond to evolved and evolving structures of social life, thus provides a rationale for linking linguistics and anthropology/ethnography in the study of language and society. Paradigm shifts towards such an understanding of the social world are summarised by Blommaert and Rampton (2012) and Rampton et al (2015). These authors underline how palpable real-world change shaped by processes of globalisation (see 2.1.3 & 2.1.4), 'intensifies the relevance' of an accumulated body of thinking pioneered over the decades by linguistic anthropologists and social and cultural theorists (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 10) (some of whom I refer to more closely in Chapter 3). The relevance of this combined body of thinking I discuss further in 2.2.

In the ontological and epistemological shifts from structuralist approaches to theorising language and society (which assumed the natural, self-existence of linguistic and social

systems isolated from everyday social practice, and of entities such as 'nation' or 'community') to the kind of poststructural approaches outlined above, the interplay between agency and structure was theorised by scholars such as Bourdieu (for a discussion, see May 2013: 12-14). Structured and structuring sites of social reproduction were conceived by him as 'fields', characterised by varying types of valued 'capital' (economic, cultural, intellectual). A field exerts influence on, but does not wholly determine, the 'habitus' – or complex of gradually embodied, 'historically constituted dispositions' (Bourdieu 2000: 18) - of agents. Empirical investigation, as reflected in this study of a new nursery's creation, can enable one to discern 'the degree of balance between reproduction and transformation' and 'degree of porosity, within and across particular fields' (May 2013: 14, referring to Heller 2008).

I touch on Bourdieu's work as a base-level introduction to theorising the interplay between the conditioning effects of social structure and the dynamic yet constrained condition of agency which was salient in the processes observed in this study. His vocabulary and his key concepts also found echoes in my thematic analysis of subjective understandings guiding the vision of the nursery's creators (see Sagoo, 2009 and Chapter 9 of this thesis).

Prompted by his own, early ethnographic research experiences as a French intellectual in North Africa, Bourdieu also drew attention to the conditioned 'habitus' which shapes the ontological starting points of researchers themselves and need for researcher self-reflexivity and flexibility to think differently (Blommaert 2015: 3-4). To outline how I treaded forward to generate an optimum frame to 'see' my study, I now introduce the ideas of 'superdiversity' and, related to this, 'mobilities and moorings' (2.1.3) as well as that of a 'postsecular turn' (2.1.4). These turned out to be key landmarks on my own reflective

journey, demonstrating how real-world change may prompt adjustments of conceptual lenses and so bring into view hitherto lesser noticed dimensions of texture, connectivity and 'third space' engagement to be investigated in the social world.

2.1.2 Superdiversity, mobilities and moorings

The term 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007) acknowledges the 'tremendous increase in the texture of diversity' resulting from the interaction between new and more complex forms of migration, communication and knowledge circulation - conditions which make it difficult to answer: 'who is the Other? And who are We?' (Blommaert 2012, 8-10) Highly textured social diversity is certainly not a new phenomenon, as pointed out by May (2016). It is strikingly reflected, for example, in the interweaving of communicative repertoires to form the 'multivocal' (Bhogal 2007) body of Sikh sacred text which was intermittently observed in the settings I traversed in carrying out this study. The obscuring of diversities is largely attributed to the phenomenon of modernist nationalism, whose ideological framework served to abstract language, culture and identity and represent them as symbolic properties shared by the whole nation (Heller, 2007; Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese, 2012). In the context of India, the effects of colonialism, nation-building and modernist narratives on the construal of cultural, linguistic and religious identities is closely examined by Mandair (2009).

As a 'lens', superdiversity helps to 'debunk some of the homogenising categories' through which 'past immigrant populations' have been represented (De Bock 2015). It also draws attention to the ways in which 'daughters and sons, grand-daughters and grand-sons, great-grand-daughters and great-grand-sons of immigrants (and non-migrants) negotiate their

place in a changing world.' (Creese & Blackledge 2010: 550). Because contemporary patterns of dramatic social change in Europe (evident in the inner-city neighbourhood in which the study is set), as well as new formations of virtual social space in the digital age, now foreground 'mobility, complexity and unpredictability', this further 'disrupts a very long tradition in which language, along with other social and cultural features of people, was primarily imagined as relatively fixed in time and space.' (Blommaert 2012: 10-11). Apparently fixed structural features of a social system are subject to '*slow change*' alongside other much faster-changing aspects of contemporary social life and momentary fluctuations in local neighbourhoods (2012:123). By way of example, he analyses the changing dynamics of his own Belgian neighbourhood to explain 'how different forms of infrastructure emerge, develop and are consolidated' (2012: 32). So these differences in pace also texture diversities, highlighting the multifaceted, historically-shaped, contingent identities of both 'agents' and 'structures' as they interplay.

Likewise, the notion of a 'mobility turn' spreading into and transforming the social sciences was spotlighted by Hannam, Sheller & Urry (2006: 1-5) as 'putting into question the fundamental 'territorial' and 'sedentary' precepts of twentieth-century social science'. Recognition of people's 'mobilities *and* moorings' (2006: 2) highlights the phenomenon of 're-grounding' (Ahmed et al 2003) as well as 'spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities' (Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006: 3). Seen in this way, 'multiple and extended connections' of social life become organised through certain 'nodes' and enacted through 'distinct social spaces that orchestrate new forms of social life' (2006: 12).

These ideas provide a basis to understand the mobilisation of group-based identities, in ways that go beyond political and intellectual concerns over 'ghettoization' or 'essentialism' and celebratory or eclectic approaches to affirm diversity. Importantly they highlight people's situatedness within wider communities which shape and influence who they are, giving rise to more plural and communitarian notions of citizenship (May 1999; 2016). They also highlight collective dimensions of agency, entailing people's participation and 'situated learning' in 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991) and networks of association. This allows for static conceptualisations of 'community' to be transcended and also makes it possible to develop a practice-based concept of citizenship rather than seeing it merely a status that one acquires or holds (Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

2.1.3 The postsecular turn: extending contexts for postcolonial notions of third space

As notions of 'superdiversity' and 'mobilities' were emerging (around the time I first heard about the project to set up a nursery) they were being joined by articulations of a 'postsecular' turn (Habermas 2006, 2008). The emergence of this term was prompted by the evident persistence and increased public profile of religious forms of belonging (contrasting secularist assumptions of their progressive privatisation and decline), be it associated with global conflict and terrorism; the growth, diversification of and increased government engagement with faith-based organisations; and increased social and professional interest in 'spiritual' wellbeing, values or care. Another driving factor has been the 'diasporic flows' which have been (re)shaping the 'postcolonial' and 'postsecular' city (Beaumont & Baker 2011:33), contributing to the 'innovatively mutating presence of religion' in postmodern, late capitalist Western urban contexts (Beaumont and Baker 2011: 263). Such social and cultural changes have given rise to 'narratives of fluid, hybridized and identities', and so have disrupted colonial and modernist narratives (2011: 33). Urban spaces impacted by

religious identity can thus be seen as 'places of belonging' and 'places of becoming' (2011: 15-33) where new identities have emerged from a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994: 53-56).

Grounded in postcolonial theory, Bhabha's notion of 'third space' involved a consciousness that the parallel birth of Western modernity (and critically rational personhood) and expansion of 'Western connoisseurship' through colonial possessions and relations had had far-reaching consequences for conceptualisation of culture(s) (Rutherford 1990: 218, 208). Following his observance of liberal moves to entertain and contain cultural diversity in postwar Britain, Bhabha's theorisation of 'third space' helped to shift focus towards what emerges from the 'in-between' spaces of transcultural encounter and interaction. Rather than an end-point, a boundary thus 'becomes the place from which something begins its presencing' (Bhabha 1994: 7, drawing on Heidegger). As Rutherford (1990) has put it, the condition of 'hybridity', from which new forms of cultural meaning are generated (and hence where culture, as a process, could be seen to be located), 'bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it' and 'puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses' (1990: 2011). When understood as more than eclectic or cosmopolitan blending, hybridity can be seen as reflected, for example, in moves to deconstruct a 'utopian linguistics of community' and to recognise instead 'a linguistics of contact' (Pratt 1987). This 'third space' emphasis on encounter, interaction and transformation was echoed in an analogy expressed to me in Punjabi as I conducted this study, when reference was made to the culinary use of live cultures ('*jaag*') to turn milk into yogurt, bringing to mind a processual, more so than static, view of culture.

From a 'third space' perspective, then, the postsecular condition is seen to involve points of 'fusion', 'rapprochement' and 'negotiation' (Beaumont & Baker eds. 2011: 1, Cloke 2011:

237-253) between religious and secular positionings, as can be observed in the new 'discursive and praxis arenas' (Cloke 2011:244) of the postsecular city.   Analyses of the impact of religious identity on urban spaces have tended, however, to be 'emblematic' and have 'generally ignored the closely grained and unique character of local spaces and spatialities' (Beaumont & Baker eds. 2011: 33). Studies have also overlooked ways in which 'externalities reflect deeper and more hidden processes of identity formation and the expression of values and ethics' (2011: 36). For Habermas (2006; 2008: 22-24), seeing society as 'postsecular' invites more 'self-reflexive' forms of both secular and religious consciousness and opens up opportunities for the kind of mutual learning and recognition which is 'constitutive of shared citizenship' beyond a mere 'modus vivendi'.

For Gorski et al. (2011), the idea of a 'postsecular turn' also invites critical consideration of the question: 'Which world has changed – the "real" one or the scholarly one?'. To deconstruct entrenched religious-secular divides in the academy creates scope to evolve the self-understanding of the social sciences (2011: 15) and shape future directions of social research. The culture of polarising both positionings is animated, for example, in Erickson's account of managing a separation between his secular academic and religious 'alter identity' (Johnson & Amador 2011). For Braidotti (2008:1) the concept of the postsecular helps to historicize the twentieth century dominance of an 'oppositional consciousness', rooted in the Enlightenment critique of religious dogma and clerical authority, and makes room to assume that 'agency… can be conveyed and supported by religious piety and may even involve significant amounts of spirituality'. Between the varyingly interpreted poles of the religious and the secular, the notion of the 'spiritual', contested as it is, can be seen to occupy a 'liminal space' (Gorski et al. 2011).

This present research exemplifies a movement away from heavily structure-oriented perspectives on religion as 'ideology' based on the examination of 'power' and 'interests' or as a form of 'cultural structure' or 'social organisation' (Gorski 2011: 3-4). En route, it addresses a challenge acknowledged in contemporary Sikh scholarship (echoed from a Maori positioning by Stewart-Harawira 2005 and Tuhiwai-Smith 2012), concerning the tendency for non-Western traditions to be studied as 'living relics' rather than resources for 'conceptual thinking', where the task of 'decolonizing the postsecular' still remains (Mandair 2009: 386). In the context of this study, religion is viewed – rather like 'language' and 'culture' from the sociolinguistic and anthropological perspectives I introduced in 2.1.1 - as a structurally-evolved resource, which people may agentively and reflectively (hence also conceptually) draw on and which is bound up with forms of day-to-day linguistic and semiotic practice (Lytra, Volk & Gregory 2016). Although this study brings up the notion of the 'spiritual', it is not used as a category for analysis and is examined, rather, in terms of its usage by the social actors in this study and in literature which introduces the study's educational, cultural and socio-political contexts.

By overlapping the lenses of 'superdiversity', 'mobilities and moorings' and the 'postsecular' in the ways that I have, new ways are opened up to notice the mobility, recasting and 'recontextualisation' of forms of linguistic, cultural and religious practice as they travel from and across different contexts, via flows, new settlements and networks of people (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 18-19). This broadens the focus beyond the 'use-value' of such practices within specific settings and events to their 'exchange-value' as they are projected across time and space, accentuating a 'layered and multiscalar conceptualisation of context' (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 19) - a stance which this study's participants, by articulating ideas of migration, transportation and transfer, revealed

they were keenly adopting (Chapter 9). Together, the lenses I employ, form a basis to apprehend the presencing, from within a complex social fabric, of ways of seeing, ways of participating and ways of providing for early childhood nurture which emerged out of the creation of a 'third space of enunciation' by British Sikhs. As this study shows, these processes involved interpretation, negotiation and blending of ideas, identities, practices, policies and frameworks.

2.2   Associated epistemological stances

When social reality is viewed as discursively produced, involving the interplay of agents and structures through which dispositions are historically constituted and new meanings produced in third spaces of transcultural interaction, it follows that what counts as knowledge is a holistic understanding of the dynamics of a given social phenomenon and interpretation of what people say and do in relation to their situatedness in immediate and more far-reaching sociohistorical contexts. In this regard, the traditions of anthropology and sociolinguistics overlap to build understanding from the inside-out and outside-in by interpreting meanings produced and worlds which are evoked through people's everyday communicative practice. As I noted in 2.1.1 (inevitably, because of the ties between ontology and epistemology) an 'interdisciplinary region' has evolved from this overlap. This present research sits within this region which has come to be called 'linguistic ethnography' (e.g. Rampton, B., Tusting, K., Maybin, J. Barwell, R., Creese, A. & Lytra, V., 2004; Rampton, 2007; Creese, 2008; 2010; Copland & Creese, 2015; Tusting & Maybin, 2007).

In Chapter 3 which follows, I explain how the unfolding nature of the phenomenon under study and its uniqueness as a case (with something to tell rather than typify), invited an ethnographically-informed approach and attendant methodology (3.1). I then give an outline of how ethnography serves to link together language, discourse and society (3.2) and I explain my use of conceptual tools associated with research on classroom-based interaction (3.3, 3.4). The purpose of this section (which I have retrospectively written) is to clarify how, in the light of my ontological assumptions, I draw on ethnography as an epistemology, more as an approach to investigate and contextualise participants' practices and beliefs than as a data collection 'method' (Rampton et al 2015: 8). I also draw on sociolinguistics as an analytic tool-kit for the study of language and semiotic practices to sense and interpret the production of social meaning and to capture traces of processes of social change.

2.2.1   *An ethnographic way of knowing*

An inductive and intersubjective approach to grasping complexity and change

What can be drawn from my discussion in 2.1 is that the process of researching the Nishkam nursery's creation invited recognition of the superdiverse and postsecular condition of contemporary realities and, as such, prior ways of seeing (e.g. employing a twentieth century notion of multiculturalism) to make sense of this social phenomenon would have been too 'behind the curve' (Beaumont & Baker, 2011: 265). From this perspective, ethnography is of particular value because of 'its commitment to taking a long hard look at empirical processes that make no sense within established frameworks, often because of an intrinsic complexity that defies inclusion in well-known categories' (Rampton et al. 2015: 8). In this way ethnography can provide an epistemological avenue to develop 'descriptors better tuned to complexity' to displace the 'continuing circulation and application of anachronistic

social categories' (Rampton et al 2015:11). It is thus able to hold 'influential discourses to account with descriptions of the everyday' (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 23) and allows theory to take shape out of the research process.

Ethnography's 'long hard look' involves a sustained, broad- and close-range analytical gaze and engagement with research participants. As Rampton et al. 2015: 8) have put it, in ethnography it is assumed that:

> The meaning of a form or practice involves an interaction between a number of different dimensions of socio-cultural organisation/process; that the researcher's own cultural and interpretive capacities are crucial in making sense of the complex intricacies of the situated activities being studied; that tuning into these takes time and close involvement and that questions may change during the course of an enquiry, with a dialectic between theory, interpretation and data being sustained throughout.

These factors constitute an inductive and interpretive approach to knowledge-building and, hence, one could say a modest and open one. It is also a non-linear approach, which anticipates many reviews, revisits and shuttles between a growing body of data and of research literature, turning new corners and stumbling on new insights, through the deepening and widening of a researcher's knowledge and fine-tuning of his or her sensibilities.

Because the researcher aims to get to know (or to get inside) the subjective understandings of participants, through extended participation alongside them, ethnography involves the use of inter-subjectively generated knowledge as well as recourse to established theories to interpret and draw conclusions from observations. It hence takes into account what Vasilachis de Gialdino (2009) calls the 'epistemology of the known subject' (i.e. research participants' ways of knowing) and the 'epistemology of the knowing subject' (the researcher's stance, resting on external circulations of knowledge and theory), where the

latter can risk pre-constricting research readings. There is a balance to be struck between the continuous 'alternation between involvement in local activity' and 'an orientation to external audiences and frameworks beyond' (Rampton et al. 2015: 15) – especially when the researcher can be counted as being an 'insider' on familiar territory. This issue of achieving balance is discussed in my section on reflexivity in Chapter 7.

The epistemic importance of social context

Central to both ethnography and sociolinguistics is the epistemic importance given to context (Blommaert et Rampton 2012) (see also 3.2). Because of the processual ontology, context is seen as temporal/historical (rather than static) in character. Part of my research was the analysis of the broader social and institutional contexts (which have had a bearing upon 'individual persons' and 'situated encounters' in this study - see 3.2). These institutional contexts have been bound up with pervasive social structures which have undergone slow historical change (see Chapter 5). In this particular study of the creation of a new British nursery at the start of the third millennium, led by a locally-based, transnational network of diasporic Sikhs, I had to make decisions about what to include as sociohistorical context. My decisions were guided in part by my evolving insider knowledge about the layering and local-to-global scaling of perspectives informing the nursery project. This led to the organisation of my context-building chapters in Part B of this thesis to include: the wider global, historical and contemporary picture of formations of social provisioning for early childhood and dominant forces, philosophies and movements (Chapter 4); UK education policy contexts and associated educational and academic discourses (on: providers and frameworks for early childhood care and education; spiritual, moral social cultural development; religious and citizenship education) which also shape ways of reading people's (civic, religious and cultural) identities, ideas and practices in this

study (Chapter 5); historically evolving contexts and framings for ways of doing 'being Sikh' (Chapter 6).

In Part D, I analyse the envisioning, creation and day-to-day life of the nursery through close examination of people's discursive and interactional practice in local and emergent contexts, where 'meaning takes shape within specific social relations, interactional histories and institutional regimes, produced and construed by agents with expectations and repertoires that have to be grasped ethnographically' (Rampton et al, 2015: 18). At this level, sociolinguistics provided conceptual tools (discussed in 3.4) to highlight how communication is organised around the enactment of 'genres, activities and relationships'; involves people's flexible exercising of a 'linguistic repertoire', where communicative practice carries 'connotational' as well as literal significance (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 11; 13). I thus understood context as implicit and explicit, immediate and far-reaching as well as alternating and layered. Beyond the grasp of my analytical approach were other understandings of context articulated by the study's participants (on the 'felt-sense', 'ambiance', 'emotional/relational aspect' of social context) and in the research literature on affective dimensions of education (e.g. involving 'values-sensing' faculties – see 5.2.2 – where values are understood not so much as attitudes or behaviours which hold currency or power, but as those which hold a spiritual or moral quality – see Appendix 3 on SMSC).

2.2.2   A linguistic ethnographic way of knowing

Because ethnography seeks to interpret the meaning of social phenomenon by building and gradually fine-tuning a researcher's perception and understanding of context, sociolinguistics can be seen to help strengthen this enterprise by putting a magnifying glass to the making and signalling of meaning (semiosis) in moment-to-moment communicative

practice, both linguistic and multimodal. Communicative phenomena can thus provide 'insight into social transformation' (Blommaert and Rampton 2012:9) in everyday local worlds.

In Chapter 3, I outline the conceptual tools I used to analyse discursive and interactional data in this study (data gleaned from the day to day life in the nursery as well as from the communicative events of one-to-one interviewing). In this section, I highlight how the relevance of this toolkit becomes reinforced when the phenomenon under study is understood as constituting superdiverse social conditions. In this study, close analysis of communicative practices helped to foreground a view of the social actors as belonging to a 'community of practice' where the different resources in their linguistic repertoires were being drawn upon (along with resources in their semiotic repertoires, that are associated with cultural and religious practices). This approach contrasts with construing such actors as representatives of a 'speech community', or as members of a homogeneous 'cultural' or 'religious community'. This epistemological stance highlights 'individuals' very variable grasp … of a plurality of differentially shared styles, registers and genres which are picked up … within biographical trajectories that develop in actual histories and topographies' (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 12). It also highlights the ways in which they 'take on different linguistic forms as they align and disaffiliate with different groups at different moments and stages' (2012: 12). Rather than linguistic or cultural competency, the idea of 'sensibility' helps to move towards capturing this 'relational positioning amidst a number of identifiable possibilities' (2012: 12).

The social complexity associated with superdiversity (and the postsecular) also challenges prospects for establishing common ground so as to understand indexicality or the

'connotational significance of signs' (and hence achieving inter-subjectivity) (Blommaert and Rampton 2012: 13-14). A similar challenge arises when, to interrogate mobility and change, research valuably addresses the perspectives of different generations (2012: 25). The growth in significance of 'non-shared knowledge' can lead to indexical signs being unintentionally 'given off' and a 'multimodal barrage' of semiotic signs (linguistic, cultural, religious) which are prone to divergent or unintended interpretations (2012: 14). In these conditions, the 'management of ignorance' becomes an issue which ethnographically-supported sociolinguistic and ethnographic analysis can serve to address to enable the 'critical illumination of contemporary life' (Rampton et al. 2015: 16).

2.3   Orienting theories

Building on the philosophical assumptions introduced above, I now introduce three orienting theories that guided my study of the recent creation of a Sikh-inspired nursery in central England, in response to local and global histories, contexts & visions. As I will show, the three theoretical perspectives complement each other closely. The first of these perspectives is that which centres on 'the cultural production of the educated person'. This is a pivotal notion which threads through an international collection of critical ethnographies of (mass or globalised) schooling and local practice, which was first proposed by Levinson, Foley & Holland (1996). The second theoretical lens is 'policy as/in practice'. This lens has been developed in two related fields: the ethnography of educational policy and the ethnography of language policy. Both fields of research characterise policymaking as a multi-scalar process, involving numerous social actors. Taking this idea further, recent research in the field of the ethnography of language policy distinguishes between the processes involved in language policy creation and the processes involved in language

policy interpretation and appropriation, by different social actors, within the discursive and interactional practices of local educational spaces (Johnson, 2009; 2013). I extend the notion of language policy to include other dimensions of education policy pertinent to this study. The third theoretical lens is that which hinges on the notion of 'figured worlds'. This notion highlights the formation of identities and exercise of agency in culturally produced, socially organised day-to-day worlds (Holland et al., 1998).

Together, these three orientations constitute my lens-settings for conducting this research. They have also had a bearing on my 'speed-settings'. By bringing together the magnified, slow-speed capture of evident real-time change and the more wide-angled, fast-speed capture of gradual historical change, the framing provided by these theoretical lenses has enabled me to investigate how agency and structure have interacted, in the case of the Nishkam nursery's creation, to configure a new form of nursery provisioning in the local and national institutional fabric, against a more global historical backdrop.

2.3.1   *The cultural production of the educated person*

'The cultural production of the educated person' is a concept that has been developed by Levinson et al. (1996) in the field of critical and qualitative education studies (1996:3). It was introduced in an international collection of historical-ethnographic case studies which examined the 'social and cultural projects of modern schools' (1996: 2). In these studies, local definitions of the 'educated person' converge with state-regulated ones and more globally-pervasive ones, providing an opportunity to consider the interplay of agency and structure in schooling and local practice (1996: 14). Whilst being 'relentlessly local in their

analyses', the editors of the volume - and the contributors - were committed to a 'broad historical and cultural purview' (1996: 2).

The idea of 'cultural production', together with the culturally specific and relativised conceptualisation of the 'educated person' was first articulated by these authors as part of a broader theoretical shift in anthropological and sociological studies of schooling. Bourdieu (1991) is credited for his influence in shifting interest beyond the reproduction of economic or class structures in education towards a recognition of the role of cultural reproduction and uses of 'cultural capital' as a social and educational resource. This capital may consist, for example, of tastes and skills which signify 'intelligence' (as it is dominantly construed), thereby determining the kind of knowledge which is privileged and made to appear universal and objective in schools. It may also consist of the kind of symbolic credit one acquires by learning to embody and enact it (Levinson et al. 1996:6). Whilst associated 'social reproductionist' literature has tended to focus on Euro-American societies and deterministic models of structure, culture and the state (and use of schools as instruments of control), (Levinson et al, 1996:7) point out that Bourdieu's work opens for consideration the potential for schools to establish 'new forms of symbolic capital while displacing old ones' as well as revealing 'the effects of schooling across historical and cultural contexts.'.

Another key influence on the work of Levinson et al. (1996) consists of developments in North American educational anthropology – a discipline with its roots in earlier literature on socialization and cultural transmission in non-Western, non-industrialised societies and in the growth of interest in problems stemming from the construction of 'cultural and ethnic difference' in modern North American schooling systems (1996: 7-8). Ethnographic and micro-ethnographic studies were carried out to elucidate 'discontinuities', 'conflicts' and

'mismatches' between mainstream school culture and the cultural backgrounds of minority children (see Chapter 3 for further details). As Levinson et al. (1996:8) have observed, the 'cultural difference' approach downplayed the role of social and historical forces and tended to essentialize the cultural repertoires of minority groups. The dominance of this approach, along with a focus on identifying 'culturally responsive pedagogies' meant that a critical analysis of structural contexts remained largely neglected until the mid-1980s. As ethnographic research turned its attention to the dynamics of power relations in schools, the concept of cultural production was used in new ways to challenge simpler reproduction models (1996: 9) While taking account of the dynamics of power relations, such research also challenged the notion that the workings of symbolic dominance were entirely unopposed and it characterised 'social agents' as 'active appropriators' of existing structures rather than 'passive bearers of ideology' (Willis 1981: 175). Through close ethnographic work and extended engagement with research participants, the 'contingent and fluid identifications' and 'subjectivities' of social actors was revealed in new ways (Levinson et al. 1996:11).

Significantly, a further influence on the thinking of Levinson et al. (1996) and on the formulation of the concept of cultural production came from developments in cultural studies. In anthropology, they note, emphasis is placed on culture as a 'continual process of creating meaning in social and material contexts' and as 'something which is continually produced, even as it may be reproduced' (1996:13). From a media and communication studies perspective, culture tends to denote 'texts' or tangible cultural forms. Cultural production refers to the processes by which new texts, artefacts or commodities are created, with the analytic focus being on textual or semiotic forms, while tending to overlook 'lived' culture (1996: 13). By transferring various ideas from cultural studies and research on

cultural production to research in schools, Levinson et al. (1996) offered a view of schools as 'sites for the formation of subjectivities through the production and consumption of cultural forms' (1996: 13-14), where cultural production offers one way of envisioning and responding to the larger question of 'how historical persons are formed in practice' (1996: 14).

The ambiguity of the phrase 'cultural production of the educated person' indexes the dialectic between structure and agency (1996: 14). It enables researchers 'to portray and interpret the way people actively confront the ideological and material conditions presented by schooling' (1996:14), by highlighting how the educated person is culturally produced in specific sites, as well as the cultural forms which the educated person produces. It is particularly well suited to comparative exploration of local appropriations and responses to western schooling paradigms, stemming from the rise of mass public-education systems (and parallel phases of colonial expansion) and from the rise of the nation-state and its tendency to advance, through systematic education, two twin identities for the modern state citizen – national and individual identities (1996: 15-16). It is thus possible to claim that one of the effects has been to 'eclipse' other means and models of education, e.g. intergenerational ones. The model proposed by Levinson, et al. encourages a view of the potential of schools to 'provide each generation with social and symbolic sites where new relations, new representations, and new knowledges can be formed, sometimes against, sometimes tangential to, sometimes coincident with, the interest of those holding power.' (1996: 22). Underlying their view is an ethical concern for 'distributive and curricular justice' and for seeking to 'expand educational spaces which might accommodate diverse models of the educated person.' (1996:23)

This first-level framing for my study, sketched above, helps to explain the historical, cultural and critical scope of my context-building chapters (4, 5 & 6). It also explains how, in my examination of the ideational and social processes involved in configuring the new nursery world (Chapters 9-12), I reveal moves by founders and staff to explore, unearth and transport (following their own migratory trajectories) concepts of the 'educated person' rooted in Sikh teaching. Their thinking and their actions were guided by their understanding of the word 'Sikh' to mean 'a learner' (associated with *sikhna*, to learn). The empirical work presented in this study has had a second-level framing that has been constructed from an ethnographically-informed view of policy as practice, a view that has been particularly well-honed in the field of language policy studies. This framing has been adopted because the nursery's creation was also spurred on by and shaped out of educational policy developments in England,

2.3.2 Policy as/in practice

Given the wider framing for this study, the view of policy-making as process and social practice (introduced by Sutton and Levinson, 2001; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Hornberger and Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2009; 2013; McCarty 2011) has proved to be a particularly useful research lens for the study of educational processes, including discourse and interaction at the classroom level. It is useful for three main reasons: it deals close to the wire with issues of cultural difference and with local interpretations, appropriations and enactments of policy; it deals with discursive and interactional, hence sociolinguistic dimensions of policy-making; it coheres with the practice/process-oriented philosophical underpinnings of this research, since it is based on reconceptualising education policy - commonly associated with policy declarations in official texts - as 'a complex social

practice, an ongoing process of normative cultural production' (Sutton and Levinson, 2001, p. 1). In order to grasp this, McCarty (2011:3) suggests viewing policy as a verb. This suggestion echoes the adoption of the notion of 'culture as a verb' discussed by Heath, Street with Mills (2008). From this standpoint, policy, like culture, never just 'is' but rather 'does' (2008: 7; Levinson, Sutton & Winstead 2009: 771). Consequently, the ethnography of language policy tends to ask 'what does language education policy "look like" in social practice?' (McCarty 2011:4) and offers insights into 'why practice takes shape the way it does' (Stritikus and Wiese, 2006: 21).

Martin-Jones (2015) summarises the shifts in scholarly focus in this field that have taken place over the last two decades, from representing the power of policy-making as 'residing primarily with the state and with policy texts' towards approaches (influenced by post-structural and post-modern theory) which 'foregrounded the diffuse and discursive workings of power' (2015: 453). Ethnography has come to be viewed as a means to investigate what Ricento and Hornberger (1996: 408) referred to as the different 'agents, levels and processes' involved in language policy and planning (LPP). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) represented the interconnected 'layers' of policy-making using the much-quoted metaphor of an 'onion'. As demonstrated in subsequent research by Hornberger and Johnson (2007: 509), by 'slicing the onion ethnographically' and combining the study of policy texts with ethnographic and discourse-analytic research into local practices and processes, a fuller picture can be gained of how policy-making unfolds. For these scholars, an 'ethnographic understanding of some local context' is vital because policy texts 'are nothing without the human agents who act as interpretive conduits between the language policy levels (or layers of the LPP onion)' (2007: 528).

Scholarship conducted in this vein can bring into view the tripartite process of the 'creation, interpretation and appropriation' of language policy (Johnson 2009: 141) and provide accounts of the 'interrelationships between language policy intent, implementation and experience' (Davis 1994: xiii). It can show how policy processes operate 'at multiple, intersecting levels: the micro-level of individuals in face-to-face interaction, the meso level of local communities of practice, and the macro level of nation-states and larger global forces' (McCarty 2011:3). Moreover, the ethnography of language policy can throw light on 'the power of both societal *and* local policy texts, discourses and, and discoursers' (Hornberger and Johnson 2011: 280). The interest taken in 'how people make policy in everyday practice' (2011: 281) meshes well with established approaches to discourse analysis and to the study of multilingual classroom interaction (see Heller & Martin-Jones 2001; Saxena & Martin-Jones 2013 for examples).

Also revealed by an ethnographic approach to policy processes are the varying 'language orientations, language attitudes, and language ideologies' (McCarty 2011: 9) which underlie policy-making across the spectrum, from policy creation to policy interpretation and appropriation. For Ruiz (1984) language ideologies can be divided into: a '*language-as-a-problem*' orientation (e.g. where policy aims at linguistic assimilation and 'ameliorating' presumed deficits, rather than fostering bilingualism); a '*language-as-a-right*' orientation (where policy is based on addressing the human right to education in the home language as well as the language of wider communication) and a '*language-as-a-resource*' orientation towards promoting multilingualism for all. These orientations 'constitute the framework in which attitudes are formed' (1984: 4) and language ideologies can likewise be seen as 'largely tacit, taken-for-granted assumptions about language statuses, forms, users, and uses' which become naturalised (McCarty 2011:10). Johnson (2009, 2013) has emphasised

the need to view policy as discourse and to take account of its power to 'set discursive boundaries to what is considered educationally feasible or normal' (Johnson 2009: 143). Other scholars have noted that sometimes policy reform and intent are 'not necessarily powerful enough to overcome societal discourses' (Hornberger and Johnson 2011: 284).

In this study, concepts developed in the ethnography of language policy enable me to marry a critical understanding of the historical production of macro-level state policy frameworks with analysis of meso- and micro-level policy-making processes. Thus, in chapter 4, I introduce historical and cultural contexts for the emergence of social provisioning for the care and education of the very young, along with an overview of influential philosophies and movements from different parts of the world. Against this backdrop I highlight literature which offers critical, postcolonial and global perspectives (4.3) on dominant norms and discourses and sets a context for reading the emic perspectives revealed in this study. In chapter 5, I outline the following national policy contexts: evolving policy on education providers; the national framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008); the legislative requirement to foster 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (Education (Schools) Act 1992); a non-statutory national framework for 'Religious Education' (QCA 2004) and system of locally agreed syllabi; citizenship education. I consider the social contexts for these policy developments, and attendant educational, academic and societal discourses, which point to wider issues arising through the window of this study, e.g. how to balance state structure and local agency in shaping educational provision; how to build on the recognised role of social learning in young children's holistic nurture; how to conceive, draw on and do 'spirituality', 'culture', 'religion', 'citizenship' in superdiverse, postsecular social contexts and in the ongoing configuration of shared societal orders.

By contextualising policy-related terminology and principles, I also draw attention to their potential to be revisited and reworked over time. I discuss, for example, changing contexts for conceptualising 'Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development' (SMSC) or Religious Education (RE), following the switch from pre-war notions of diversity pertaining to religious affiliation (Church of England, Roman Catholic, Jewish) to the shift in focus on cultural diversity in a more secular Britain, following postwar migration from the Commonwealth. These can be set against newer conceptualisations (discussed in 2.1) associated with the postmodern and postsecular turn.

Because this research contextualises various policy dimensions whilst paying close attention to emic perspectives, it follows a key goal in the ethnography of language policy to 'understand the connections between micro, meso, and macro processes by critically inspecting the web of social meanings at their interface' (McCarty 2011:10). Another goal in the ethnography of language policy is to consider how local interpretations and appropriations can 'pry open implementational and ideological spaces for multilingual education' (Hornberger and Johnson (2007:511). In this study I extend this idea to include the prying open of implementational and ideological spaces for holistic early education, supported by discourses around SMSC, RE and citizenship (which also traverse debates about multilingual education). By taking an 'up close and in practice' view of policy processes, this study aims to throw light on the complexity of the policy processes at work in the envisioning and creating of the Nishkam nursery and to describe and analyse 'the marbling of those processes as they merge and diverge, constantly configuring and being (re)configured within a larger sociocultural landscape which they in turn (re)shape.' (McCarty 2011: 17).

2.3.3 Figured worlds

To understand the configuration of situated policy processes in practice, this study considers the creation of the new nursery as a social and material space and it describes and analyses the day-to-day interactions which took place within it, once norms, routines and relationships had been established. To frame this aspect of my study I draw on other work by Dorothy Holland and colleagues which is geared to the close analysis of culturally produced, socially organised 'figured worlds' (Holland et al 1998: 49-65). This approach shows how locally 'figured worlds' form contexts of meaning for the activities, roles and artefacts within them and constitute sites where agency is exercised and identities are formed. Relevant to this framing are approaches developed in critical ethnographic research into multilingual classroom interaction which highlight the use of multiple linguistic and semiotic resources in situated meaning-making, so as to open 'a window on education-based processes of social and cultural production and reproduction and on the linkages between interactional processes and institutional processes' (Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001: 5).

In their overview of the concept of 'figured worlds', Holland et al (1998: 49-65) characterise them as collectively realised 'as if' realms, where the practices that are played out gain significance because of the values and meanings attributed to them (e.g. the reading or writing of books in the world of academia, the collecting and prizing of tokens to represent periods of sobriety in the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, the importance of beautification in the world of romance). To explain this 'imaginative component' (1998: 49-51) in the social worlds we inhabit or cross between, these scholars draw an analogy with Vygotsky's (1978) analysis of the play worlds children enter. This period of child development reveals children's apprehension of conceptual worlds which differ from the everyday, their

collective assigning of new meanings to objects and uses of mediating or symbolic devices as 'pivots' to shift into the frame of a different imagined world. As children grow and become accustomed to games with more explicit rules, they still participate as actors who treat the game's events as real. These observations reflect a 'fascination with the ability of humans to manipulate their worlds and themselves by means of symbols' (1998: 49).

As long emphasised in anthropology, 'figured worlds' are made up of 'webs of meaning' (Geertz 1973), which set contexts according to which people assume that their words and behaviour will be interpreted, i.e., as Holland et al. (1998: 52) put it, 'as indexing or pointing to a culturally figured world' (1998: 52). Such a world is defined as 'a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts and particular outcomes are valued over others' (Ibid.) Insofar as it is understood as an imagined, meaning-laden realm, a figured world can also be understood as 'figurative' (1998: 53).

More concretely, figured worlds also '*happen*, as social process and in historical time' (1998: 55) and exist through practices and activities. As Holland et al. (1998: 56) explain, in Bourdieu's terms, figured worlds generate a field's symbolic capital (1998: 56). Whilst his field can be understood as 'structure-in-practice', Bourdieu's interest in institutional power and issues of status can be contrasted with the particular interest shown by Holland et al. in 'cultural figuring', i.e. the everyday construction of discourses, activities, actors and their rankings in the figured world (1998: 58-60). Links are also drawn in this body of work with idea of 'situated learning' in 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991). The motivation for this is to explore the consequences of self-development in and through activities (1998: 56) and to show 'how newcomers are inducted into socially enduring and

complex activities' (1998: 57). Holland et al. (1998) are thus proposing to theorize culture in terms of activity, following earlier moves by Goodenough (1994).

People's performances in figured worlds also involve the employment of artefacts (1998: 60-63). These can be seen as 'mediators in human action' (1998: 60). They are thus a 'pivotal' means of following Vygotsky's observations (outlined above), opening up figured worlds and serving as means to evoke and collectively develop them (1998:61). The material and conceptual aspect of artefacts means they assume an 'intentionality, whose substance is embedded in the figured world of their use', making them 'both instrument and collective remembrance' (1998: 61). As I will show in Chapters 9 - 12, this role is reflected for example, in terms of the present study, in the semiotic dimensions of the figured world(s) of 'being Sikh'. Because a figured world is also actively in flux, the conceptual and material aspects of figured worlds and their artefacts are 'constantly changing through the improvisations of the actors' (1998: 63).

Ideas of improvisation, agency and identify formation are key to Holland et al's (1998) concept of 'figured worlds'. They are based on a recognition that, over time, we may use artefacts to affect ourselves as well as others by mediating our thoughts and feelings through them. As well as serving as 'interpsychic tools' they may also function on more intimate terrain as 'meaningful for oneself' (1998: 64). They engender both 'self-control' and 'the expansion of human capabilities', so that, paradoxically, the tools shaped in figured worlds may also provide means for one's liberation from the disciplines or constraints these worlds impose (1998: 64). Such a paradox, involving 'the accumulation and mastery of a cultural tool kit and its use in overcoming the dependency on a particular culture' has been recognised as 'one of the basic contradictions of human development' (Shepel, 1995: 428).

This potential for exercising agency leads to another reading of figured worlds. This is set out in a special issue of *The Urban Review* on figured worlds in education. It is argued that the creation of such worlds enable their participants to 'figure' who they are by relating to others within and outside them (Urrieta 2007: 107; 109) because they entail 'processes or traditions of apprehension that give people shape and form as their lives intersect with them' (Urrieta 2007: 108). Studies presented in this special issue include research on how, in the figured world of one US high school, learner identities available to students constructed incompetence rather than competence (Rubin 2007) and how, in another, a locally figured world of 'success' was constructed for recently settled Spanish-speaking pupils by: valuing their linguistic and cultural resources; developing caring teacher-student relations congruent with students' notions of *educación*; encouraging the academic striving inherent in the first generation immigrant opportunity narrative (Ali, Andrade and Bartlett 2007).

As noted by Holland et al, 'people's trajectories through figured worlds neither take one path nor remain in the ambit of one culture space, one figured world' (1998: 65). This is thrown into relief as society is increasingly read as 'superdiverse' and 'postsecular' as I noted earlier. In this study, I examine the creation and ongoing configuration (through day-to-day multilingual and semiotic practice) of the new hybridising figured world of the Nishkam nursery, where other 'figured worlds' of home life, of local life in the region, of British/Punjabi cultural life, of Sikh and wider Indic religious life and of British institutionalised schooling overlapped and rose or receded in significance at given moments and spaces in the nursery. The orienting theory presented by Holland et al. (1998) also encouraged consideration of the kind of meanings, values and 'symbolic capital' which gained currency in the ideals and the practices of nursery world as it was establishing itself.

Finally, the 'figured world' concept allows this study to serve as a potential entry point into considering the children's expanding horizons of experience, as they responded to the overlapping figured worlds which the practitioners were mediating and weaving in to form new 'webs of meaning'. In the next chapter, I detail constructs I drew from the sociolinguistic tradition of research on interactional practices in multilingual classrooms (recently summarised by Martin-Jones 2015). I do this so as to show how, through analysis of moment-to-moment communicative practice, I was able to identify the ways in which these practitioners were configuring the nursery world and evoking worlds beyond it.

2.4 Chapter Summary

I began this chapter by introducing the ontological assumptions (2.1) and epistemological stances (2.2) which guided this research. I explained how the social world is seen as meaningful because it is constituted by people, whose practices produce social reality. This occurs in time as a process, involving a complex of slow- and fast-paced change as well as strong pulls towards reproduction. Meaning and process are textured by cultural diversity, produced in third spaces of engagement and located in more broadly unfolding sociohistorical contexts which are evoked in notions such as 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007) and the 'postsecular' (Beaumont & Baker, 2011) To investigate such a world involves know-how and tools to make sense of socially produced meaning, from the perspectives of social actors under study as well as from externally-derived knowledge positionings. As I have argued above, ethnography and sociolinguistics are particularly well-suited to this task.

In the third section of the chapter (2.3), I presented and discussed three orienting theories, which closely complement each other, and which provide the main theoretical framing for my study. These include: (1.) the notion of the 'cultural production of the educated person' (Levinson et al. 1996); (2.) the idea of viewing educational policymaking as 'a complex practice, an ongoing process of normative cultural production' (Sutton and Levinson, 2001), and of adopting ethnography of policy as the approach best suited to applying this vision in research practice. This value of ethnography as a 'way of looking' (McCarty 2015) is demonstrated particularly well in the ethnography of language policy (e.g. Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson 2009); (3.) the concept of 'figured worlds' which are defined by Holland et al. (1998) as forming contexts of meaning for locally situated activities, roles and artefacts and as constituting sites where agency is exercised and identities are formed. In presenting these three, complementary orienting theories I outlined the ways in which scholars have set out their arguments in support of their theoretical stances and I pointed to the relevance to my stated goals in this study.

CHAPTER 3:

LINGUISTIC ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PRACTICE

3.1   Why a single case study conducted ethnographically?

I begin this chapter by explaining my decision to undertake and describe this as a single case study, combining ethnography with linguistic analysis of interaction. I show how the significance of this decision has changed over the period of research.

By 2008, I had become familiar with the Nishkam site in Handsworth, its people, culture and activity. I was intrigued by a process which had begun to encourage self-reflection about childhood and education, drawing on Sikh heritage and wider sources of knowledge. The acquisition of a nursery site triggered further activity to plan and provide provision, drawing more strongly on mainstream frameworks and established professional expertise. The 'subject' of my case study thus evolved from a group of individuals engaged in reflective talk, interaction and informal education initiatives (see Sagoo, 2009) to a process in which people were engaging in the creation of a new nursery institution.

At a very early stage I had considered conducting comparative, multiple case studies in culturally contrasting settings where SMSC provision was a notable feature. However, I decided I was in a position, by virtue of knowledge afforded by my Sikh background, and my familiarity and access to the Nishkam community, to offer greater depth of analysis, incorporating different perspectives, by conducting a case study of the nursery as a single, new development.

The ethnographically-oriented approach enabled the building of a rich picture grounded in examining the talk, actions and interactions of people involved in the project. It involved: participating in and observing naturally occurring processes, acknowledging the broad socio-historical context and being reflexive about my role as researcher; interviewing a range of participants, from founders, to practitioners, children, parents and external visitors; recording and filming interactional events in various settings of the nursery; examining documentary data and where possible any processes involved in their production.

Ethnography enables the exploration of the uniqueness of a case, chosen for what it tells us rather than what it typifies or represents. As Erickson (2010) points out, in this kind of research, the question to ask is not 'what works?' but 'what does working mean? - and 'for whom?' - in a particular setting, at a particular time in social history. Subsequent case studies can provide a comparative perspective and can go on to highlight both distinctive and shared features, creating bodies of research which may go on to represent salient qualities, ingredients or trends (Yin, 2003). Thus, my purpose as a researcher was to describe and explain as fully as possible one single case, suggest an interpretation of the practices observed and the values guiding those practices, and finally open opportunities for comparison and sharing of ideas with academic, practitioner and community audiences.

Thomas (2011) offers two metaphors to prompt thinking about what a case study is, based on simple dictionary definitions. A physical case, such as a suitcase, is bounded, with its contents forming a single recognisable entity, as in the nursery project. However, this particular case study is centred in, but not confined to, the physical boundaries of the nursery building; it extends to the wider Nishkam campus (cf. Chapters 6 & 9) where the process of fostering visions and practices began. Although visits to family homes did not constitute

part of this study, it does, in a sense, extend to children's homes, through the perspectives and experiences brought to the table by parents. The study also incorporates the responses of external visitors who are education professionals, touching on and drawing on the wider worlds of their experience. Indeed, the Nishkam community brings together many types of life experience and understandings, thus many worlds exist within the one world of the nursery, just like the contents of a suitcase, purposefully brought together, the case of the Nishkam nursery tells of a life beyond its confines. It is the human, social, historical and symbolic dimensions of these networks and connectedness which ethnography helps to reveal.

A case can also be viewed as a situation, a state of affairs. I also wish to characterise this case study as a rich, complex and telling situation, arising from an emerging set of dynamics, mechanics and processes with immediate and further-reaching effects. Thomas' (2011) second metaphor is useful here too. It seems that, in the social sciences, a qualitative case study is often depicted as a soft or ecological system, in which interconnected and interdependent features are susceptible to modification and change in obvious and subtle ways, whilst being settled into broad patterns. This is another helpful way to view this case study, as it captures the period of the nursery's inception and early evolution.

In addition, it is important to take account of the role of the researcher. As an 'instrument' of the research, I may have shared certain 'replicable' features with others trained in the doctoral research tradition. At the same time, my own lived human experience and my own abilities and skills brought a uniqueness to my interpretation of the data and to the understandings I developed. An ethnographically-oriented case study therefore requires considerable reflexivity in research practice, as a particular case is investigated in depth.

3.2   Linking language, discourse and social life through ethnography

In examining the fostering of visions and practices to establish the nursery, in this thesis I analyse the talk and interactions of participants situated in many layers of context, some of which are observable and palpable, and others which are implicitly present or can be inferred. This includes: the participants' communicative and semiotic repertoires, their social identities, values, understandings and dispositions and their life histories. It also includes the physical, semiotic, communicative, emotional environment; the local surroundings; the broader socio-historical context; the moment-to-moment unfolding of talk and gesture - what precedes and what follows; my co-presence as researcher-participant. The complexity of these layers, ever present in any given social situation, is perhaps made more visible by the involvement of participants who bring diverse ways of 'being Sikh' as well as 'being British' to the mix.

A study of this nature brings together two definitions of discourse. The first is talk, instances or stretches of communication, verbal or non-verbal. The second refers to formalized, overarching ways of thinking and communicating which take shape over time or are associated with types of social practice or situated world views.   They have been differentiated respectively by Gee (1990) as discourse with a 'little d' (the business of communicating) and discourse with a 'big D' – the ranges of conceptual and communicative worlds, within which we operate, between which we move, upon which we draw or which we evoke – consciously or not. And we do this through everyday 'little d' discourse, with the potential to evolve as well as echo existing 'Discourses' or generate recognisably new ones. This interdependence makes way for Blommaert's (2005: 3) view of discourse as

encompassing 'all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use.'

To illuminate the links between the local and global, the immediate and historical in the everyday business of communication, Erickson (2004a) provides the helpful analogy of 'work', which is always local in its production, involving specific tools used in a specific context. In the processes of 'working', however, resources are used that are not local in origin. Prototypes of hand tools may have originated thousands of years previously; the worker's previous experience will originate in other sets of times and places. Tools through their everyday use may undergo a qualitative change – for example, the wooden handle of a hammer responding over the years to the oil and sweat from the hand of its user. I dwell on this analogy because it helps us to appreciate the multiplicity of connections and connotations emanating from what people say and do in this study, not only through interactional data, but interviews as well, and my own communicative work as a researcher.

Some of the tools for thinking which have helped me to collect and analyse data, as well as to refine my questions and conclusions, come from interdisciplinary approaches which have enabled engagement between various academic disciplines examining links between language, discourse, culture and society. In the UK, they find a place in 'linguistic ethnography' which has been described as an 'interdisciplinary region' (Rampton, 2007). Rampton's description implies an interactional zone rather than a 'school' or any self-contained 'theory'.

Linguistic ethnography builds on the tradition of 'linguistic anthropology' in the United States, advanced by the work of Hymes (1968, 1974) to create frameworks for studying

language use in context, at a time when technology began to facilitate the audiorecording of everyday speech. Other interpretive approaches with similar focal points include: the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1968, 1974) ethnomethodology/conversational analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1972; Goffman's work on interaction within the field of sociology (Goffman, 1967, 1981), micro-ethnography (Erickson & Shultz, 1981) and interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982).

However, the tradition of linguistic ethnography developed in the UK (and now in a transnational research netword) is distinctive in that it emerged within the field of applied linguistics and it is generally "topic-oriented" (Hymes, 1996; Rampton, 2007; Shaw et al., 2015). This means that it focuses in on "the institutions and practices that surround us in contemporary social life" (Shaw et al., 2015: 7) rather than aiming to build a full ethnographic account of the 'way of life' of a particular social group. Linguistic ethnography is also characterised by considerable inter-disciplinarity. As Rampton (2007: 585) has noted, "it is a site of encounter where a number of established lines of research interact". An overview of developments in linguistic ethnography is provided by a number of scholars working in this field (Creese, 2008, 2010; Copland & Creese, 2015; Maybin & Tusting, 2011; Rampton, 2007; Rampton et al. 2015; Tusting & Maybin, 2007).

Each tradition has its own life history, origins and trajectories of development and intersection, prompting new umbrella terms such as "sociolinguistic ethnography" (Heller, 1999: 14) and "sociolinguistically-informed ethnographic approaches to discourse" (Hornberger, 1995: 246). Heller (1999) foregrounds the social and structural dimension of language practices in schools and classrooms, while Hornberger (1995) chooses a 'focus on

situated discourse, or language use in context, and the recognition of multiple and alternative roles and identities' (Ibid.)

Rampton (2009: 4) highlights the contemporary relevance of linguistic ethnography in a world which is 'more fragmented, less coherent and less predictable than we used to think', suggesting shifts not only in the real world which surrounds us but also in our ways of seeing and interpreting it. Thus, this doctoral project is not a study of 'Sikhs' or of a 'nursery community' as such, neither of which are a uniform entity; it is an examination of social processes through which both contrasting and comparable ideas, identities, values, attitudes and practices get drawn upon, re-contextualised, co-constructed and circulated for a shared enterprise – in this case, to establish a Sikh-inspired nursery in a British city in the first decade of the 21st century.

Three foci deserve attention in the empirical study of social processes. These are listed by Rampton (2009: 1) as: 1) individual persons, 2) situated encounters, 3) institutions, networks and communities of practice. Each is to be viewed holistically: the personal and social elements which constitute each individual; the genres and types of activity, the material and semiotic environment in which they interact, and resonances in the detail of interaction with wider processes; the ways in which institutions are sustained, shaped, recast or evolved through everyday practice, how they exert an enabling or controlling power. In this study, individuals and their interactional encounters will be the primary focus, pointing to the workings of Nishkam as an organisation and as a nursery institution.

Historically, the roots of ethnography lie in western studies of new and unfamiliar cultures. Contemporary ethnography often involves an 'inside-out' directionality (Rampton, 2007),

creating analytic distance from what is familiar (given that a degree of familiarity – with a group, an institution, an activity, a location – often provides an impetus for researchers to undertake a study). I am familiar with both the British and Sikh dimensions of my case study subject which supports some aspects of the interpretative process. The process of analytic distancing has been helped by drawing upon some of the above sociolinguistic, and ethnographically-oriented approaches. The specific conceptual tools they have offered for analysis will be discussed in 3.4. Before that, I will turn my attention to the subject of discourse practices in educational settings, reviewing some of the thinking which has supported my analysis of data from the classroom interactions.

3.3 Researching school and classroom-based discourse practices

My study of the nursery examined how contexts for the activity of teaching and learning were interactionally co-constructed, in and through discourse, by participants who themselves draw on prior sociocultural and discursive experience within and beyond formal education. It also explores the workings of bilingual classroom interaction in the absence of an authoritative, clearly determined, institutional language policy.

In their introduction to studies on discourse and education, Martin-Jones and De Mejia (2008) describe how the 'interactional turn' in social sciences prompted new perspectives on education research, where the 'contexts for teaching and learning are not taken as a given but as being constituted in and through everyday discourse practices and interactional routines' (2008: xiii). By incorporating macro-level views of 'discourse', such studies can reveal 'links between the everyday interactions that take place in schools and classrooms and the wider social, cultural and ideological processes' (2008: xiv).

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) offered the first systematic account of the organisation of classroom discourse; their influential 'rank scale' model emerged through extensive investigation of talk in highly teacher-directed British primary schools (Coulthard, 1992). It describes a structural hierarchy for classroom discourse, where a *lesson* (rank 1) is made up of *transactions* (rank 2); these consist of *exchanges* (rank 3), segmented into *moves* (rank 4) subdivided into *acts* (rank 5). Each rank has *elements of structure* and functional *classes*.

A transaction is made up of *preliminary, medial* and *terminal* elements, to introduce, work through and close a self-standing portion of the lesson. These consist of a series of exchanges with pupils - *boundary exchanges* (through elements which *frame* and *focus*) and *teaching exchanges* (through elements which *initiate* exchange, display a *response* to the initiation and *feedback* to the response). This latter I-R-F (initiation-response-feedback) sequence was later modified to I-R-E (initiation-response-evaluation) (Mehan, 1979). Moves and acts within an exchange fulfil a wide range of functions. For example, moves which follow-up a response consist of acts which may *accept, evaluate* or *comment* on that response. While initiation and feedback are often teacher-generated, Bonacina (2013) draws attention to 'teacher-hood' as a classroom role that pupils may also take on.

However, the limitations of Sinclair & Coulthard's framework have been highlighted, for example by Hammersley (1981:49), who views it a 'reification of patterns of interaction as they exist at one sociohistorical location into universal structures fulfilling universal functions'. An ethnographically-oriented perspective would support this position. However, the global pervasiveness of teacher-fronted classrooms, historically so influenced

by the colonial education systems, means that the framework provides a useful tool for the analysis of certain aspects of classroom discourse in different contemporary contexts.

Cazden's successive introductions to two editions of *Classroom Discourse* (1988; 2001), separated by just over a decade, shed light on how the study of classroom discourse has evolved alongside changes to educational thinking and practice. The first (Cazden, 1988) introduces key functions of spoken language in school institutions, as: a) *a language of curriculum*, through which teaching and learning takes place, b) *a language of control*, managing social relationships in the typically (and traditionally) crowded conditions of classrooms, c) *a language of personal identity*, expressing the diverse identities and attitudes of speakers.

Beyond the requirements and expectations of curriculum and lesson planning, Cazden describes classroom talk as 'the result of nondeliberate, usually nonconscious, choice at the moment of use'.   Pertinent here is an observation by Barnes' (conference paper, 1974, quoted by Cazden, 2001): 'The actual (as opposed to the intended) curriculum consists in the meanings enacted or realised by a particular teacher and class.' This resonates with Rampton's (2006) stress on the value of micro-ethnographic studies of classroom discourse to reveal what constitutes the lived experiences of teaching and learning in the complex, multi-layered contexts of urban schools in late modernity. As Rampton puts it:: 'Instead of recapitulating what everyone outside thinks they know, you move closer to what a lot of teachers and students actually experience' (2006)

In 2001, Cazden notes a new emphasis in the responsibility of schools, 'to create not only individual human capital for a healthy economy, but collective social capital for healthy

communities as well' (2001). Changes to conceptions of teaching and learning over the years have meant that teachers are now encouraged to rely less heavily on constrained interactional routines (e.g. I-R-E outlined above) for transmitting knowledge as 'facts' and to add non-traditional discussions to support 'higher-order thinking' across the curriculum. Decreasing achievement gaps amongst social and class groups draws increased attention to classrooms in terms of 'who speaks and who receives thoughtful responses' and to the (potential) educational role of home and community contexts.

Cazden's summaries inform my research in two ways. They highlight how the study of classroom discourse can reveal what teachers and learners are doing *through* language and how this activity generates a 'hidden curriculum' of meanings and effects beyond the transmission of formal curriculum content. These meanings and effects can be defined as socio-cultural, following the traditional framings of sociolinguistic, sociocultural research. Drawing on other research perspectives and discourses in education (such as those I discuss in Chapter 5) they can be interpreted as spiritual and moral also. Indeed, in the wider public arena, discourses on 'healthy communities' may be framed in ways that bring together the spiritual, moral, social and cultural - through varying agendas as well as understandings. This study considers all these elements in the processes of education and socialisation.

 Also highlighted in Cazden's work are issues of diversity and inequality, in classroom and broader social contexts, and of increased valuing of the home and community contexts of learners. This latter concern is developed further by Moll et al. (1992) and González et al. (2005) through the concept of 'funds of knowledge'. This term refers to the latent resources for teaching and learning which can be harnessed from children's minority home communities – resources which are often represented stereotypically or devalorised through

the cultural and institutional practices of mainstream schools. The guiding concept of 'funds of knowledge' emerged through a US-based project encouraging ethnographically-oriented teacher research related to minority student's home lives. It documented growth in knowledge and shifts in attitudes of teachers, facilitation and enrichment of teaching and learning processes, greater equity and enthusiasm in building home-school relations. It also pointed to a wider underlying goal: 'to alter perceptions of working-class or poor communities and to view these households primarily in terms of their strengths and resources (or funds of knowledge) as their defining pedagogical characteristic' (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

In the study presented in this thesis, the concept of 'funds of knowledge' provided a useful frame for the close analysis of interactional practices observed and recorded in different spaces within the nursery. It also suggests a framing to consider wider possible implications for research. This framing is particularly well captured in a statement on the back cover of the volume edited by González, Moll & Amanti (2005).

> In a time when national educational discourses focus on system reform and wholesale replicability across school sites, this book offers a counter-perspective stating that instruction must be linked to student's lives, and that details of effective pedagogy should be linked to local histories and community contexts.

3.4 Conceptual tools for analysing multilingual interaction

3.4.1 Contextualisation

In social interaction, mutual understanding requires a set of shared communicative conventions which cannot be taken for granted in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. This idea was advanced by Gumperz (1982; 1990) who drew attention to the ways

in which interaction evokes meaning, beyond what is literally conveyed or said. He used the word 'contextualisation' to underline how talk itself contributes to producing context. He also used the word 'cues' for the verbal and non-verbal signals, which speakers employ at the 'micro-level' of interaction to indicate how their utterances are to be interpreted, and which hearers draw on in making inferences. These 'cues' take the form of lexical or syntactic choices, prosody (intonation, stress, pitch register), speech tempo, gestures, use of contrasting linguistic resources (e.g. translanguaging) or style-shifting, or the use of formulaic expressions. They are readily captured by micro-ethnographic approaches, which involve detailed, close-up analysis of audio and video-recorded data.

Gumperz noted quite rightly that: 'It is long-term exposure to similar communicative experience in institutionalised networks of relationships and not language or community membership as such that lies at the root of shared culture and shared inferential practices.' (Gumperz 1997: 15). In the study presented in this thesis, whilst most participants shared 'membership' in the Sikh, Punjabi and South Asian community in this neighbourhood of Birmingham, there was marked variation, as well as similarity, in the ways they had been socialised and educated. Interactional analysis helped me to identify the specific ways in which these participants (parents, practitioners and children) negotiated differences and indexed commonalities and shared experiences through their talk with each other. In the sections that follow, I focus on how particular kinds of contextualisation cues, applied in particular research traditions, helped me to see how participants negotiated their way through classroom interactions, for a range of purposes and intentions and with a range of outcomes and effects.

Changes in footing through the use of contextualisation cues

Goffman (1981) offered an animated approach to interactional analysis by using the metaphor of theatre to represent social actors as undertaking a series of roles on a stage, with props and audience to hand. Within a short stretch of interaction, he showed that an individual can step into different discourse roles, prompted by a change in purpose, feeling or context. This change in positioning was described by Goffman as a switch in 'footing'. Whilst Gumperz's contextualisation cues highlight what mutual understandings may be inferred in interaction, Goffman puts the spotlight on the speaker, as an actor changing hats, assuming multiple roles, identities and positionings. This view of interaction is particularly relevant in this study, where utterances functioned metaphorically 'on a theatrical stage' within the physical spaces of the school and the classroom. Of course, 'performance' in this respect refers to a socio-culturally communicative activity, rather than to an evaluation of teacher effectiveness.

Translanguaging and the use of multiple communicative resources

Shifts from one language, or one language variety or 'code' to another in conversation is traditionaly referred to in the sociolinguistics literature as 'codeswitching'. Subtle moves between languages, or particular sets of lingistic resources, can function as contextualisation cues, for example, as a means of changing footing or specifying a particular addressee. Traditionally, codeswitching research in classrooms has focused on alternations between 'languages' (for example, in this case study, between English, Punjabi, Hindi), because of the preoccupation in classrooms with the reproduction of 'codes' or highly valued language varieties. Increasingly, as concepts of language have become more fluid, other terms (e.g. translanguaging) have now come into use (e.g.Garcia and Li Wei, 2014).

Saxena and Martin-Jones (2013) provide a genealogy of three generations of research in classrooms where teachers use multilingual resources in the day to day interactional routines of classrooms. They chart the origins of this distinctive research tradition in the field of linguistic anthropology, in North America. They then document the emergence of a second generation of critical, interpretive studies that were carried out in a wider range of research sites, including post-colonial contexts. They also point to the development of a third generation of studies that is 'opening up new epistemological spaces at the interface with other fields of research' (Saxena and Martin-Jones, 2013: 285), such as the study of multimodal classroom communication.

In an earlier review, Martin-Jones (2000) summarised some of the specific insights gleaned from research into multilingual classroom communication where the focus was on the use of contextualisation cues to demarcate different kinds of discourse. She included the following uses of such cues: "to signal the transition between preparing for a lesson and the start of a lesson; to specify a particular addressee; to distinguish 'doing a lesson' from talk about it; to change footing or make an aside; to distinguish quotations from a written text from talk about them; to bring out the voices of different characters in a narrative; to distinguish classroom management utterances from talk related to the lesson content" (Martin-Jones, 2000: 2).

Nursery and primary classroom are, of course, sociolinguistic settings where the interactants (teachers and learners) have different language capabilities and communicative experiences. In settings such as these, the use of multiple language resources enables teachers to attend to the language proficiencies and preferences of learners (by providing them with

translations, reformulations, clarifications and explanations). Moving between different sets of language resources also serves as a resource for making links between the world of classroom texts and learners' life-worlds outside the classroom, as shown in research in post-colonial settings in South East Asia by Martin (1999) and by Da Costa Cabral (2015). Learners themselves also initiate moves between ways of speaking multilingually, in their 'sub-rosa' conversations with each other, and as they make sense of lesson content, in classrooms such as those described by Canagarajah, (1995).

There is now a rich body of research on multilingual classroom interaction which has built on the foundations established by Gumperz (1982) and by other researchers (e.g. Auer 1984, 1995, 1998). This includes studies in postcolonial contexts (e.g. Arthur, 1996; Martin, 1999; Lin, 2001; Ramanathan, 2005; Chimbutane, 2011; Da Costa Cabral, 2015); studies of educational provision in mainstream schools for children from linguistic minority groups (e.g. Heller, 1999; Martin-Jones and Saxena, 2003; Cincotta-Segi, 2010; Bonacina, 2013); studies based in complementary schools and heritage language classes (e.g. Martin et al. 2006; Blackledge and Creese, 2010) and studies of language revitalization contexts (e.g. Jaffe, 2003). This research has provided me with a range of conceptual tools for the analysis of the multilingual interactions I observed and recorded at the Nishkam nursery. This analysis is presented in Chapter 11.

3.4.2 *Indexicality*

Indexicality is a concept that is similar to 'contextualisation' (Gumperz, 1982) and it is a concept that now has greater currency. It is used to describe how verbal and non-verbal communicative and semiotic features point to, or 'index' elements of worlds beyond the self which are socially shaped. This includes bodies of knowledge, concepts, identities, feelings

and attitudes which constitute a shared, mutually perceptible or discernable, social matrix. Those who first put forward the idea of indexicality (e.g. Silverstein, 2003) also assume the existence of an 'indexical order', where, through micro-level interactions, individuals are accessing recognisable categories in the macro-sociological plane. As Silverstein puts it: 'Through such access their relational identities are presupposed and creatively (trans)formed in interaction.' (Silverstein, 2003).

In the study of literacy events, Rymes (2002) captures the idea of indexicality as '*Relating Word to World*', explaining that, 'generally speaking, to say that utterances are indexical is to say that their meaning, rather than being arbitrary or purely symbolic, is tied to context' (2002: 124). Likewise, Seedhouse (2004) describes how an analytical focus on indexicality reveals how individuals 'display through utterances which aspects of context they are orienting to at any given time' (2004).

My own case study involves a kaleidoscope of co-existing contextual worlds which, from moment-to-moment of interaction, shift from foreground to background, alternating and overlapping, subsuming or giving way to each other. They include the worlds of institutionalised schooling, of home, of cultural and religious communities; they also include the personal and professional life-worlds of individuals, the world shaped by overarching social institutions, such as media. They include identities, knowledge and attitudes arising from and shaped by such worlds. Contrasts and comparisons between these contexts are perhaps more sharply drawn in a study of this nature, where trajectories of British, Sikh and South Asian socio-historic experience are brought together. Two particular features of linguistic communication are examined for their indexicality in the bilingual

communicative settings of this study. They are uses of pronouns (particularly second person pronouns) and terms of reference and terms of address.

Uses of pronouns

In their pioneering comparative study of the semantic evolution of pronouns in European languages, Brown and Gilman (1960) provided a detailed analysis of the relationship between uses of pronouns, social structures and norms as well as the changing attitudes of speakers. They focused in particular on second person pronouns, referred to generically as 'T' (suggesting familiarity with the addressee) and 'V' (suggesting polite social distance). This contrast is reflected in the use of 'tu' and 'vous' in French, and the co-existence in English, in earlier centuries, of 'thou' and 'ye/you'.

In particular, Brown & Gilman's study examined links between pronoun use and the recognition and effects of power and solidarity in social relations. They noted that, historically, a clearly designated, non-reciprocal use of T and V which indexed asymmetrical power relations in a static society; whereas more fluid and reciprocal use of T forms were manifested in situations of social change (e.g. the onset of the French Revolution). In such moments of social change, use of 'vous' became derided as a feudal remnant, with extensive, reciprocal use of 'tu' encouraged in the new spirit of 'fraternité'.) Brown and Gilman (1960) also drew attention to the expressive use of pronouns, revealing an attitude or emotion of the speaker (e.g. contempt, anger, admiration or respect, maintaining social elegance.)

In this study, my focus is on the three Punjabi second person pronouns (*tu* suggesting familiarity; *tusi* suggesting respectfulness; and occasionally *aap* where deference is

extended) and their use in interactions between different participants (adults and children) in the nursery. I will also look at the use of first person plural pronouns (in English and Punjabi) which may suggest inclusivity or exclusivity, intimacy or distance.

Terms of address and terms of reference

In their review of sociolinguistic studies of personal address, Philipsen & Huspek (1985: 94) observe that in every language and society, 'every time one person speaks to another, there is created a host of options centering around whether and how persons will be addressed, named and described.' The choice of option may depend on various factors, from established cultural or institutional practice to personal preference, understanding or intention. Joseph (2004) also highlights how terms used to address or refer to people carry social meanings and connotations, which may or may not differ from their literal or lexical meanings.

Terms of address include terms of endearment. Take, for example, the term 'love'. This can be a way of addressing a person towards whom a strong emotion is felt; it is also a friendly form of address in service encounters, in some parts of England, for example by train conductors to passengers. But it can also be a resource for 'talking down' to someone or belittling addressees, as in its use in a workplace by a male colleague to a female colleague.

The use of terms of endearment is common in interactions between adults and children in primary and nursery school contexts and can be an integral part of the style of educational practitioners with backgrounds similar to those of the children with whom they are working. A study of first grade classes was carried out by Cazden et al. (1980) in a Mexican-American bilingual education programme in Chicago that had been consistently evaluated positively

by parents. The aim of the study was to identify some of the 'ingredients' of the success of this programme. The study included an element of micro-ethnographic analysis of classroom interactions. This aspect of the research revealed the use of verbal and non-verbal cues by the Spanish-speaking teaching staff which constituted a culturally-specific interactional style conveying *cariño* (affection). Their communicative style included use of gestures conveying affection, terms of address familiar to children, frequent use of diminutives, reminders to observe community norms of *respeto* (respect). Another study in an indigenous education context among the Odawa in Canada, conducted by Erickson & Mohatt (1982) also drew attention to the significance of the difference between the interactional styles of teachers of Odawa and non-Odawa backgrounds. Again, through micro-interactional analysis, these researchers showed how Odawa background teachers achieved 'cultural congruence' with the interactional conventions familiar to Odawa children from their home or community contexts.

Terms of address which carry respect are commonly used in many cultural contexts (the South Asian context being a prime example). Moreover, kinship terms are widely used to convey respect in social domains beyond that of family. Attitudes of endearment or respect towards the addressee (or a person being referred to) are indexed in discourse through markers of such dispositions. As I show in this study, the use of the South Asian particle *ji* is frequently used as a means of marking respect. The Nishkam nursery offered an interesting site in which to observe the use of terms of address and reference as the participants brought together the worlds of school, home, family and community and built working relationships with each other. My analysis of terms of address and reference sheds light on the ways in which these worlds and relationships were evoked.

3.5 **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have specified in greater detail than in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, what a linguistic ethnographic way of knowing entails, particularly in topic-related research that focuses on local educational and community settings. I show how ethnography enables us to build an in-depth understanding of the multi-layered nature of social context, and how linguistic analysis of discourse and interaction in classrooms (and also analysis of interviews conducted by the researcher) enables us to "tie ethnography down" (Rampton, 2007: 596) and take a magnifying glass to the situated processes of meaning-making at work in interaction.

In the first section of the chapter, I outlined my reasons for adopting a single case study, focusing on what it can tell us rather than what it typifies. Building on Chapter 2, I also explained my commitment to an ethnographic way of working. In the second section, I situated my approach within the specific tradition of linguistic ethnography – a field that involves considerable inter-disciplinarity rather than being a strictly bounded school of thought. I also noted that linguistic ethnography is generally "topic-oriented" – in the sense first defined by Hymes (1996). Researchers base their studies in relatively familiar settings and work "from the inside outwards" (Rampton 2007: 592).

In the third section, I introduced some of the concepts that have been employed at different stages of the study of classroom discourse and interaction, as this particular field of study has evolved. In the fourth section, I turned to key concepts that have been applied in past and present studies of multilingual classroom interaction and translanguaging (including interaction in classrooms). These included the concept of 'contextualisation' (first proposed by Gumperz, 1982) and the notion of indexicality (first proposed by Silverstein, 2003). I

also gave examples of linguistic resources that are often employed indexically in multilingual interaction. These include linguistic resources such as second person pronouns, terms of address and terms of endearment. These conceptual compasses guided my close linguistic analysis of the spoken interactions audio-recorded in the nursery classrooms included in this study.

I now move on to Part B of the thesis which delineates the historical, cultural and policy contexts for this study. It is made up of three chapters: Chapter 4, on early childhood care and education; Chapter 5, on relevant policy and curriculum contexts in England and Chapter 6, on the evolving framings and contexts for understanding the Sikh heritage alignments of the social actors in this study, from the early formation of Sikh tradition in the Indian subcontinent to ongoing formations in contemporary diasporic contexts.

PART B: HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND POLICY CONTEXTS

CHAPTER 4:

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION - THE WIDER PICTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to outline wider social processes, philosophies and movements which have influenced early childhood care and education in England. It highlights the historical circulation of ideas and practices across Europe and North America. It also presents critical research from postcolonial, global and ethical perspectives which questions the normative hold of dominant discourses and investigates cases where local, indigenous epistemologies are implicitly or explicitly recognised. The first orienting theory, introduced in Chapter 2, section 2.3.1 involved a global and historical framing for the concept of 'the cultural production of the educated person' developed by Levinson, Foley and Holland (1996). This chapter throws into relief the culturally and historically produced nature of the otherwise taken-for-granted phenomenon of the nursery, creche, kindergarten or preschool. It presents contexts and arguments for the vision which informs these authors (and which motivated the social actors in this study) to 'expand educational spaces which might accommodate diverse models of the educated person.' (1996:23). It can therefore be read in conjunction with the insights gleaned in Chapter 9 on how the Nishkam nursery was being envisioned.

4.1 Socio-historical processes giving rise to public provision

A world history of childhood across key epochs of global social change is provided by Stearns (2005, 2006). This sets a broader context for developments in the west. Here, the advent of industrialisation, two world wars and widespread urbanisation prompted social needs for childcare provision (as the workplace became firmly separated from home and as women entered the labour force) and for child welfare provision (in circumstances of social

inequality and deprivation). At the same time, emerging philosophies of childhood and theories of child development stimulated education-oriented movements. Thus childcare, welfare and educational concerns informed the development of provision in varying ways.

Nineteenth century England saw the emergence of separate Education Acts for elite public schools, 'endowed' middleclass schools and for the schooling of working class children (Gillard 2011). When the state came to partner with the church in providing mass schooling (through the 1870 Education Act), provision for those under school age was poorly addressed, save for specific initiatives by social pioneers. In 1817 Welsh-born Robert Owen opened the first 'infants' school' for children of workers at the New Lanark cotton mills in Scotland. This was part of his wider project to develop a 'model village' that showcased his vision for social change (Donnachie 2003). US-born Margaret and Rachel McMillan began the first *'nursery-school'* for working class children in London. The term '(wet) nurse' (originating in the Old French *nourrice*) and 'nursery room' were otherwise associated with home-based arrangements for those who could afford them; the McMillans saw their new institution as 'the private nursery enlarged and adapted to the average family's needs' (McMillan, 1930: 7). This was part of their wider initiatives and campaigns for improving conditions and quality of life for the most deprived, motivated by their Christian socialist convictions.

Industrialising France saw the introduction of '*crèches*' for working mothers with babies and very young children. Their role as sites for 'medicalization and moralization' is explored by LaBerge (1991). These were joined by centres for older infants known as *'salles d'aisile'*, construed as places of refuge or 'asylum' for the underprivileged. Their custodial role was reflected to the emergence of 'day care' centres in mid-nineteenth century

America as a provision for working (and often 'immigrant') mothers from low-income backgrounds. Joffe (1977) charts how social policy and social attitudes led this provision to be stigmatized and associated with the domain of welfare agencies. In contrast, America's German-influenced *kindergarten* movements and English-influenced nursery school movements (see below) became positively associated with child education and enrichment and with active (and mainly white middle class) parenting.

As Joffe (1977), Beatty (1995) and Zigler et al. (2009) successively outline, running through these historical disparities in the US were ideas about the locus of responsibility for raising children. Public provision was perceived as either: a support to mothers who were developing their primarily parental role; a support to working mothers from poorer backgrounds whose children were thus seen as neglected; or an interim support to working women from all backgrounds who were responding to wartime labour needs. Kamerman (2006) notes that the latter pattern was widely characteristic of European and Anglo-American countries and summarises various national postwar developments which brought the streams of 'care' and 'education' together. This arose from increased concerns for the early education and socialization of children to support their school readiness and from increased maternal employment (strongest initially in the Nordic countries) and resultant childcare needs.

Kamerman (2006: 14) also highlights that, in the States, prospects of strengthening government support was challenged by concerns raised about 'communalizing' childrearing. Despite the concept popularised by Hilary Clinton that 'it takes a village' (Clinton, 1996) to do so, beyond the walls of the nuclear family home, the state support for developing US childcare services is noted to lag behind systems of provision and attendant

social policies developed in Europe (Kamerman 2006). In postwar Italy, for example, local socialist values of seeing children's early education as a collective responsibility (Fraser and Gestwicki, 2002), underpinned the Reggio Emilia movement (see below). In Chapter 5 (5.2.1) I will outline more specifically how policy for early childhood care and education has developed in England.

4.2   Influential philosophies and movements from the global north and west

As public provision for early childhood evolved in the west, approaches adopted were attributed to a number of historically recognised thinkers in Europe during an age of religious, philosophical, political, industrial, scientific and technological revolution (Beatty 1995). Writing successively from the 1600s to mid-1800s, they include Comenius, Locke, Rousseau and Pestalozzi. Resisting cultures of schooling based on conformity and control, they advocated naturalistic child-centred approaches involving freedom, observation, play in home-like and nature-based environments. It was on such principles that Robert Owen founded his New Lanark infant school, with its policy of no punishment of children and 'unceasing kindness' towards them, engaging them through 'familiar conversation' instead of books, being responsive to their inclinations and allowing plenty of physical play and exercise (Donnachie 2000). These ideas were later reflected in the 'open-air nursery school' that the McMillan sisters founded for children from the London slums. Aside from their clinical, healthcare focus, they drew inspiration from the *kindergarten* movement founded in 1837 by Freiderick Froebel (a former student of Pestalozzi's) in Germany. Extrapolated from Froebel's religiously-rooted vision of human wholeness (Weston 2002; McLaughlin 1996), concepts and practices advanced by him got widely circulated and are today recognised as informing the play-centred character of contemporary provision.

In the United States, the first kindergarten was German-speaking, established in 1856 by a student of Frobel's, Margarethe Meyer Schulz, to serve new settlers from Germany (Beatty 1995). Taking inspiration from it, Elizabeth Peabody set into motion an Americanised movement through which the terminology of *kindergarten* spread and endured. Some decades later, London provided a training base for many of America's nursery school teacher administrators, as the nursery founded by the McMillan's evolved into lead training centre (New and Cochran, 2007). A growing number of American nurseries served well-to-do families, set up as 'parent cooperatives' with strong parental (usually maternal) involvement and as 'laboratory schools' affiliated to higher education institutions.

Two influential fields were the 'progressive education movement' (based around the work of Dewey from the late 1800s) and the science of child development which burgeoned in the US from the 1920s and 1930s (inspired by Piaget, Skinner and others). Dewey's wider vision lay in questions of how to foster a democratic society with citizens as full and active participants. Education for him was the means to nurture relevant aptitudes and dispositions from an early age through co-operative, process- and project-oriented learning (see Dewey 1915). This approach was echoed by Freinet in France (Legrand 1993). As Beatty (2005) charts, the role of some US nursery schools as as research sites with laboratory-like functions enabled the field of developmental psychology to gather momentum as a strong feature of early education theory.

Countering the biological focus of child development theory, Bronfenbrenner (1979: 19) saw much of developmental psychology as being 'the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time'. His theories of human development built on Vygotsky's work in the Soviet Union,

engendering a shift in focus from decontextualised, individual learning to the socio-cultural dimensions of learning. Bronfenbrenner (2005) highlighted that parent- or teacher-child interactions did not take place in a vacuum and were embedded in ever-widening and ever-evolving social contexts. Learning thus involved fluid processes of interaction within micro- to macro-level ecological systems.

This renewal of interest in social context links back to provision founded by Owen and the McMillans which looked to counter then prevalent notions that character was predetermined by birth or class or formed internally in isolation. Owen's progressive infant school was part of what he named the 'Institute for the Formation of Character' - at a time when notions of character formation was beginning to shift in Victorian discourse, from concerning the education of the poor to concerning the elite private/public school male education– see Arthur, 2006). In her foreword to *The Nursery School* (McMillan 1930: xi), New York professor, Patty Smith Hill, places the book's theme in wider developments that view one's 'disposition', not 'as a foregone issue' but as engendered, instead, by formative social experience.

There are parallels here with the widely influential work of Italian-born Maria Montessori (see New & Cochran, 2007, Rohrs 1994). As the country's first female physician, she worked initially to support children with mental disabilities and for those deemed unable to learn. This led her to devise alternative education approaches to dominant authoritarian ones, by combining her scientific background with inspiration from Froebel, Rousseau and Pestalozzi. The opening in 1907 of Montessori's first *Casa dei Bambini* in a slum redevelopment in Rome provided an opportunity to test and develop ideas, resources and practices. These included a carefully planned learning environment, with furniture and

materials suited to the small size of the children. The adult's role was de-centred to be a neutral observer who could construct educational situations with an aim to 'liberate' children's natural aptitude for independent learning, self-motivation and self-discipline and for exercising care and responsibility, based on Montessori's view of a marked sensitivity in early childhood to develop foundational character and learning traits.

Gaining international recognition, Montessori's writings got extensively translated. War in Europe led to her extended stay in India. She opened a Montessori University in Madras and published *The Absorbent Mind* (Montessori, 1949), prompted by the contrast she observed between more impersonal infant care in Europe and closer contact evident in Asian child-rearing practice (New & Cochran, 2007). In India, Montessori met with Gandhi and with progressive educationalists critical of the colonial mass schooling system. They included Krishnamurti and the Nobel Prize winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore (Bagchi et al. 2014; Day Ashley 2008).

Originating also in Italy is the widely recognised Reggio Emilia approach, named after the municipality in which it was founded in 1945. Fraser and Gestwicki (2002) introduce it as a dynamic community-led movement in a region with a strong socialist identity. It started when ordinary local people collectively constructed a school out of the devastation created by war. The area was also noted for its female social activism, where women readily self-mobilised to organise childcare and schooling provision. The witnessing of wartime destruction and extreme social conformity during Fascist rule contributed to an educational philosophy based on 'the image of the child' as 'competent, strong, inventive and full of ideas, with rights instead of needs' (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002). The approach that evolved, under the leadership of Loris Malaguzzi, drew significantly from Vygotsky's emphasis on

the social contexts of learning and from notions of the 'whole child'. Another widely influential characteristic was the practice of 'documentation' to provide a recorded trace of children's experiences and work as a basis for ongoing reflection and interpretation. The Reggio Emilia movement also created Italy's first 'secular' municipal schools not run by the Catholic Church.

Like the Montessori movement, Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship has an international network of settings offering provision alternative to the mainstream. It originates in the work Austrian-born Rudolf Steiner following a request made to him to open a school for workers at a cigarette factory in Waldorf, Germany. This was just after the first world war in 1919 and so involved hopes for social renewal. Concepts extracted from Steiner's esoteric philosophy stress nurture of the creative, physical, social and spiritual qualities which comprise the 'whole child' (see also 3.2) over learning for school-readiness. In the UK, Steiner settings have sought exemption from some of the literacy and numeracy elements of the statutory EYFS framework (see 3.1). The organisation also provides an account of how the EYFS principles are interpreted through its particular philosophy (Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship 2009).

4.3 Critical, postcolonial and global perspectives

4.3.1 Introduction

The above overview highlights how networks and systems of early childhood provision have their roots in localised initiatives and have involved transnational movements of ideas, people and practices - for the most part between Europe and North America over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As societal developments have led to an increased

systematization and global expansion of expertise and provision, this has given rise to critical perspectives which I introduce below. These critical perspectives relate to ideas about local democratic participation, resisting over-bureaucratization and commodification of services. They also respond to the legacy of colonialism and forces of globalisation by reimagining educational futures and revisiting questions of educational purpose.

4.3.2 Making and shaping provision as 'ethical and political practice'

For Dahlberg & Moss (2005) the historical emergence of an 'Anglo-American discourse' on early childhood education has come to assume a pervasive, normalising power. This entails the mass production of sites which presume objectivity and universality as they are rolled out locally and globally. As Moss (2007) summarises, a predominantly technical and consumerist rationale is reflected in associated literature, emphasising the childcare 'market' with no reference to 'democracy' that would construe individuals as citizens rather than consumers. 'Democratic practice' for Moss encourages the production of 'new thinking and new practice' by resisting any totalising power and enabling diversity to flourish. In this, Nordic countries present possibilities for developing a strong national framework of broad principles, values and goals to guide decentralised forms early childhood provision with clearly articulated statements of democratic purpose. This is contrasted with the emergence at the time of national guidance in the UK (see 3.1) which in his view serves more so as 'a manual for technicians'.

Moss (2007: 10) also lifts the term 'local cultural project for childhood' from descriptions of early childhood initiatives occurring at the level of regional municipalities in Italy (similar to the influential Reggio Emilia movement). Because they come about through a particular set of circumstances and conditions, it is difficult to legislate for such forms of

local activism. Less centralisation and more democratic practice also presents a dilemma; in an unequal society, it can disadvantage those in weak positions to participate, especially in cases of long-term national disinterest or underinvestment in early childhood provisioning and its workforce. Also highlighted (Moss 2007: 19) is the problem of non-engagement between camps espousing mainstream ('modernist') and alternative ('postmodernist') educational paradigms. A broadly agreed European approach is thus envisaged, where forms of early childhood provision can be recognised as 'forums, spaces or sites for ethical and political practice' (Moss 2007: 3; Dahlberg & Moss 2005: 1-2), where it is possible to '*vitalise'* such a purpose (Dahlberg & Moss 2005: 12).

This view of grassroots early childhood initiatives engaging with broader structures is echoed in a more general way by Gaventa (2002: 1) who refers to a 'growing crisis of legitimacy' in the relationship between citizens and institutions affecting their lives, where 'traditional forms of expertise and representation are being questioned'. In this context, the phenomenon of increased globalisation and localisation can be mutually enhancing in ways that challenge and edge forward entrenched national and corporate discourses. It involves a two-way emphasis on increased 'participation' by citizens and 'accountability and responsiveness' from institutions in ways that can be mutually transformative, creating 'new spaces and places' for citizenship participation. A lack of knowledge about what occurs in such spaces, and 'in the minds of those dealing with multiple individual and group obligations and rights' is addressed in some ways through this study. The valuing of agency has given rise to what Cornwall and Gaventa (2000) coin as 'makers and shapers' rather than 'users and choosers' of interventions and services, a notion I have used to frame the present research. Gaventa (2002: 7) also notes that active participation is problematized where people perceive their voices and sense of self are derived from identities which are

not recognised, respected or likely to be heard. In this respect the study reveals processes of knowledge and confidence-building to facilitate such participation.

4.3.3   Transcultural encounters in the global market place

Political perspectives are traversed by cultural ones in ethnographic studies of urban preschools involving different historical configurations of cultural encounter. Levinson, Foley & Holland (1996) present research on the convergences and tensions between dominant systems of schooling and local practice, highlighting notions of the 'educated person' as being culturally produced. Comparative case studies of preschool life in Japan, China and the United States (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989 and Tobin, Hseuh, & Karasawa, 2009) give insight into practices born out of the intersection between globalised, Anglo-American approaches and those rooted in each region. This sheds light on contrasting: cultural understandings of the child; prioritisations of values and; favourings of pedagogical approaches. Tobin (2005: 430-4) also points to a phenomenon of 'internal colonialism' in a heterogeneous society such as the United States, arguing that notions of quality and standards cannot presume 'a one-size-fits-all' solution to questions of practice. As summarised in his abstract, they 'should arise out of conversations in local communities among early childhood educators and parents'.

Other ethnographic studies (albeit in urban schools rather than nurseries) identify strategies to overcome the mono-cultural uniformity of communicative practices in classroom life. Discussing low school achievement of minority and working-class students in the US, Erickson (1987) demonstrates how a close-up analysis of classroom interaction can outline possibilities for 'culturally responsive pedagogy' to engender pupil success. In the UK, Martin-Jones and Saxena (2003) reveal the communicative resources and 'funds of

knowledge' (González et al 2005) which bilingual classroom assistants draw upon to facilitate the processes of children's learning in linguistically diverse classrooms (see also chapter 4).   Links between these ideas and notions of the 'whole child' are picked up later in 3.2.

4.3.4 From 'fragments' to 'frameworks' for *transformative cultural exchange*

Beyond a commitment to cultural responsiveness in the classroom, Gupta (2006) argues for greater reciprocity between culturally contrasting educational frameworks in a postcolonial, globalised world. Examining early childhood education in urban India, she reveals implicit ideas and values educators bring to their practice stemming from a broadly Vedic cultural/religious heritage. These join explicit forms of knowledge derived from the British colonial administration as well as current 'Euro-American' discourses. Gupta thus calls into question the exclusive focus on individual western theorists in the higher education training of these practitioners in India. For Gupta, the task of 'balancing Vygotsky and the Veda' has global implications. It supports processes of thinking 'through' and 'out of' historical imbalances and offers way to bring balance to ideas of what constitutes and enables learning (e.g. by foregrounding non-tangible aspects, such as children's sense of comfort or peace, or interpersonal values, such as respect and empathy or interdependence and cooperation).

May (1999) likewise highlights potentially wider social benefits arising from mobilisation around group-based identities. As he acknowledges, political and intellectual reticence towards such mobilisation involves concerns about ghettoization and essentialism (1999: 11-41) and about deepening cultural 'retrenchment, isoluationism and stasis' (1999: 26). Eclectic and cosmopolitan approaches to affirm diversity can also, he suggests, exert

constraints, by celebrating access to 'cultural fragments' over valuing any need for specific cultural frameworks (1999: 25). This point is echoed in Gupta's (2006: 10, 234) proposal that grounded explorations of culturally contrasting eductional frameworks can inform new local/global developments in a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994) of negotiation and exchange. For May (1999: 129) such developments involve taking account of Hall's (1992: 258) point 'that all speak from a particular place…without being contained by that position', along with another made by Kymlicka (1995: 103-4) that cultural change, adaptation and interaction are entirely consistent with the desire to maintain membership in and to develop a distinct culture. Given the perspectives advanced by these authors, May remarks on the postmodern tendency to prefer 'the language of critique to the language of transformation and hope' (May 1999: 27, drawing on Giroux 1997).

One working example of engaging cultural frameworks to transform curricular approaches is New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki* ('the woven mat') (see David, Powell & Goouch, 2010). Inspired by Vygotsky, it integrates Maori values of 'holistic development, empowerment, family and community relationships' and seeks to foster 'learning dispositions' (see Claxton and Carr, 2004). Its emergence reflects ideas about the 'global reimagining of schools' (Cottrell 2010), taking into account the forces of globalization and legacy of colonialism on the one hand, whilst giving increased recognition of the validity of local, indigenous epistemologies and cultures on the other (Cleghorn & Prochner 2010).

4.3.5 *The inclusive curriculum as responsive space for the* **'as-yet unimagined'**

A global view of education brings us to a 'conundrum' introduced by Osberg and Biesta (2010: 1); more inclusivity 'in practice' (i.e. by widening participation to regular

institutional systems) can entail less inclusivity 'in principle' (where educational orders are not responsive to difference and new possibility). As Osberg and Biesta (2010) and Biesta (2010) elaborate, linear concepts of curriculum (as well as social dimensions of a hidden curriculum) fulfil two necessary purposes to qualify and socialise learners, i.e. to insert them – as newcomers - into existing ways of doing and being and prepare them to participate in different kinds of social order. Thirdly, it concerns the kinds of subjectivity made possible by educational 'arrangements and configurations' which can be responsive to the 'uniqueness' each learner/newcomer brings (Biesta 2010: 21). This links back to an alternative view of curriculum as 'a space of complex responsiveness' (Osberg and Biesta 2010: 604) to allow for what Davis (2004: 184) describes as 'conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined'. To make room for such possibilities involves 'measuring what we value' beyond 'valuing what we measure' (Biesta 2010: 12). This pool of ideas is reflected in aspects of the curriculum contexts discussed in 5.2 of the next chapter and as well as in the research analysis itself.

4.4 Chapter summary

I began this chapter by outlining, in 4.1, the socio-historical processes which gave rise to public provision of early childhood care and education in Europe and North America, particularly following the advent of industrialisation. I introduced visionary moves to provide for children from working class backgrounds through an 'infants school' founded by Robert Owen (in Scotland) in the early 1800s and a 'nursery school' founded by the McMillan sisters (in England) in the early 1900s. I also introduced the custodial, welfare role ascribed to crèches for working mothers in France and 'day care' providers for working mothers (often immigrant mothers) in North America and noted that this particular form of provision often ended up being stigmatized. I contrasted conservative concerns about

'communalising' childrearing in the US (Kamerman 2006) with new socialist visions in postwar Italy which saw children's early education as a 'collective responsibility' (Fraser and Gestwicki 2002).

I then turned, in 4.2, to examine influential philosophies and movements which originated and circulated in the global north and west following the 'ferment' of religious, philosophical, political and technological revolution during the European Enlightenment (Beatty 1995: 1). Figures such as Comenius, Locke, Rousseau and Pestalozzi resisted schooling based on conformity and control and advocated naturalistic, child-centred approaches. In Germany, the kindergarten movement was founded by Freiderick Froebel, whose concepts and practices, rooted in a religious vision of human wholeness (Weston 2002; McLaughlin 1996), have widely influenced the play-centred character of contemporary provision. The transportation of kindergarten and nursery school models to the US led to two further conceptual developments, where some nurseries were conceived as 'laboratories' to develop theory and practice. The first development was based on Dewey's work in fostering aptitutdes and dispositions to prepare children to be future citizens actively participating in a democratic society. The second development was the burgeoning science of child development. The early biological focus of this science was countered by Bronfenbrenner (1979), building on work by Vygotsky (1978) to engender a shift from decontextualised, individual learning to a focus on sociocultural and ecological dimensions.

In this section, I also introduced developments in Italy, including Montessori's work to de-centre the adult's role in children's learning, begun through the opening of her first *Casa dei Bambini* in a slum redevelopment in Rome. A dynamic community-led movement then

came about in Reggio Emilia, in response to the self-mobilisation initiatives of local women to organise childcare and schooling after wartime destruction. Hopes for postwar social renewal also prompted the birth in Waldorf, Germany, of the international Steiner Schools movement. Section 4.2 therefore served to outline the influence of natural and social sciences, as well as religious and politically-inspired thought, in shaping provision in the early years. It also highlighted some grassroots beginnings of influential movements.

In the final section, 4.3, I considered how the rise of local and global demand for childcare and early educational provision has given rise to 'critical, postcolonial and global perspectives'. In 'making and shaping provision as ethical and political practice' (4.3.2), I presented discussions by Dahlberg and Moss (2005) and Moss (2007) around the potential for local people to participate as citizens rather than as 'consumers' in a 'childcare market' and contribute to shaping provision in ways that can resist the totalising power of dominant 'Anglo-American' discourses. In 'transcultural encounters in the global market place' (4.3.3) I highlighted international ethnographically-informed research which revealed contrasting cultural understandings of the child, prioritisations of values and favourings of pedagogical approaches at the intersection between globally mass-circulated approaches and those rooted in each region. Related work also highlighted 'internal colonialism' in heterogeneous societies such as the US (Tobin 2005) which calls for local provisioning 'to arise out of conversations in local communities among early childhood educators and parents'. Linked to this idea are other ethnographic studies outlining possibilities for 'culturally responsive pedagogy' to engender pupil success (Erickson 1987).

I then highlighted how, beyond a commitment to cultural responsiveness in the classroom, the establishment of greater reciprocity between specific culturally contrasting educational

frameworks is argued for (Gupta 2006; May 1999) to inform new developments in a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994) of cultural negotiation. This is exemplified in the 'learning dispositions' which underpin New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki,* which integrates Maori values into its framework (David, Powell & Goouch, 2010). I finished with perspectives around the 'inclusive curriculum' (4.3.5). This took inspiration from work by Biesta and colleagues which suggests that: (1.) notions of 'inclusivity' include those of transforming shared orders in response to difference as well as 'widening participation' to existing orders (Osberg and Biesta 2010); (2.) curricula need to aim to 'qualify' and 'socialise' learners into existing and future orders and be accompanied by 'arrangments and configurations' which can be responsive to the 'uniqueness' each learner/newcomer brings (Biesta 2010).

I will now turn to examine how issues raised in this broadly framed chapter bore upon the institutional and policy landscape in England when the Nishkam nursery project was underway. This was characterised by a complex mix of childcare and early educational providers, as well as by curriculum developments which were flagged as particularly important by the project team. I will thus outline the existing frameworks for being a provider and for shaping the curriculum which were available for the project team to work with and from. I also highlight debates and tensions in the social and political climate of the time, around participation and integration in conditions of social inequality and diversity.

CHAPTER 5:

EDUCATION IN ENGLAND:

RELEVANT POLICY AND CURRICULUM CONTEXTS

Following the global/historical framing of the last chapter, in this chapter I narrow the frame to consider policy and curriculum contexts in England that were relevant to the creation of the Nishkam nursery as an officially registered childcare and early educational institution. The contexts taken into account in this chapter relate to my second orienting theory set out in Chapter 2 (2.3.2): that is, the ethnography of language policy (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; McCarty 2011) and the notion of policy as practice (Sutton and Levinson 2001). My discussion focuses on those aspects of state policy that the nursery founders and early staff were 'interpreting' and 'appropriating' through 'frameworks of cultural meaning' (Sutton and Levinson 2001: 3) to which they oriented as a diasporic Sikh community of practice based in Birmingham. This chapter also relates to my third and final orienting theory. It also introduces state policy-guided elements of day-to-day practice (including elements of current curricula and syllabi). It was in response to such elements that the Nishkam nursery world was being constructed, as a hybridized 'figured world' (2.3.3).

I begin, in section 5.1, by outlining the broad policy landscape of childcare and early education provision in England. I also describe unfolding policy developments concerning different educational providers and I touch on recent policy developments which encouraged concerted efforts being taken in the Nishkam community of practice to plan for a nursery, as part of a longstanding ambition to set up a school. A wider discussion then follows around the various 'education provider' identity discourses and practices which the Nishkam nursery project brought into play, including those associated with community-driven 'supplementary' schools and with home education providers. In section 5.2, I move

on to discuss relevant national and local curriculum contexts, based on legislative requirements and evolving policy guidance. Here I draw attention to principles and approaches in a number of official curriculum areas that played a significant role in the nursery's formal educational planning as well as in the formulation of a broader ethos for it.

5.1 The complex policy environments in which the Nishkam nursery project emerged

In this section, I first clarify how the nursery project emerged within a wider organisational context (of visions and initiatives being fostered in the Nishkam community of practice) as well as within governmental policy contexts (including policy windows that were presenting themselves to the Nishkam community at the time).

The new nursery's creation was set against a diverse and complex, inherited and unfolding landscape of childcare and early educational provision (including school providers) in England, which makes concise explanations to an international audience a challenge (Bertram and Pascal 2000: 6). In giving a brief historical sketch of this backdrop, I highlight a number of contrasting discourses about and practices associated with 'education provider' identities, that were layered into nursery and school developments. These ranged from discourses about voluntary playgroup and childcare business identities, to state, independent and faith school identities, to home educator identities and those associated with supplementary or complementary school provision.

These provider identities were bound up with contrasting governmental, institutional, parental and community-based developments, aspirations and philosophies. Some were tied

to different phases of post-war social reconstruction and migration and some were responses to the increased pace of marketization and globalisation of education in the new millennium. I will draw attention to some of these multiple perspectives, associated discourses and ensuing debates, with reference to research literature as well as to press and policy reports. I will finish with a reflection on key threads in the discussion.

5.1.1 The organisational and policy contexts in which the nursery project developed

The project to create the Nishkam nursery had been embedded in longstanding endeavours to establish a 'Sikh ethos multifaith' school, as part of a series of local and transnational projects to form an emerging Nishkam group of organisations. As I will show in Chapter 9, key purposes being articulated were to construct visions, partnerships, conceptual frameworks and social infrastructure to promote 'shared values' and 'shared responsibility' in the 'global village'. Key aims were to harness ideas, practices and resources from the Sikh faith community positioning of the Nishkam network, to draw on its pool of migratory, professional and community-based experience and to facilitate multilevel forms of civic and interfaith engagement.

The establishment of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Education Trust (GNNET) in 2003 helped to take forward a number of education initiatives. At the time, the aims of these initiatives included: (1.) to develop an already well-established supplementary school and adult learning initiatives; (2.) to provide sponsorship in higher education to support Sikh Studies and international research on faith, civil society and the common good; (3.) to articulate a Sikh heritage-based educational philosophy and (4.) to engage with wider national policy developments around the fostering of 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (SMSC) and the teaching of Religious Education (RE) and citizenship (these policy

requirements are discussed in 5.2). This latter area of activity involved contributing towards local policy developments concerning the teaching of RE in Birmingham (see 5.2.3).

The planning for a school through existing policy routes had begun formally in the 1990s. Education policy under a New Labour government which, from 2000, was markedly favourable to the establishment of 'faith schools' (albeit pertaining to a single faith) provided further impetus, although GNNET was not at that time able to secure the necessary local authority support to take the envisaged the project forward. Policy developments in the years that followed began enabling schools to operate as state-funded 'academies' independent of traditional local authority control and new duties were also placed on local authorities to formally respond to parents who sought changes to, or new forms of, local school provision (DfES 2006: 32).

Whilst hopes remained to establish a state-funded school (since a private, fee-charging school was neither feasible nor desirable to serve an inner city locale) a smaller project was initiated to explore setting up some form of childcare and early education provision (e.g. involving childminders, crèche, playgroup or nursery). This was viewed as a stepping stone towards a school development and a next step on in developing educational provision from the longstanding supplementary school. At this time, a number of British Sikh women in the network of Nishkam *sewadars* or volunteers had formed a small circle to consider how to balance their multifaceted needs, hopes and desires at the life juncture of starting a family. The Nishkam leadership and community of practice provided means and resources for a small 'parents' cooperative' to build on their ideas, engage with community and professional networks, and trial approaches through a pilot parent-child 'playgroup'. The direction of these ideas were seen to chime with national and international policy reports on

child wellbeing which provided some external reference points to develop a project rationale.

Once a site had been acquired, the project accelerated and the Nishkam nursery opened as a private day care unit for children aged 0-5 years in 2009. This followed the significant introduction of a statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008) for registered providers in all institutional or home-based settings. In 2010, a new policy window to move forward with the school planning presented itself. This was the 'free schools' programme introduced by the new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government to create new waves of state-funded, independently run schools (Academies Act, Department for Education, 2010).

Following a successful bid, Nishkam Primary opened in 2011 at a site adjoining the nursery. The premises were acquired and renovated through substantial community investment and participation. The volunteer input for these projects was based on the Sikh *kar sewa* tradition of hands-on participation to construct, renovate or redevelop valued social institutions. This practice found a parallel framing in the 2010 government's 'Big Society' agenda, which promoted communitarianism, volunteering and the work of charities and social enterprise (in the context of major cuts in public expenditure following the global financial crisis of 2007-8) – and had also shaped the wider policy context for the free schools programme.

Since the opening of the primary school adjoining the nursery, a small network of schools has emerged under the banner of the Nishkam School Trust. To date, these include Nishkam Primary, Nishkam High School and Sixth Form in Birmingham, further primary schools in

Wolverhampton and West London, as well as a Nishkam College in Kericho, Kenya. These are joined, amongst other initiatives, by the Nishkam Healthcare Trust and the spearheading of global initiatives such as the Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation. They can be seen as reflective of a policy climate enabling partnering between state, private and third-sector organisations, including faith-based ones, and of the 'postsecular' societal condition involving new forms of 'third space' engagement discussed in Chapter 2.

5.1.2 Policy background concerning providers of childcare and early education

Post-war ambitions and constraints on childcare and early education policy developments

The twentieth century saw a long and complex evolution of childcare and early educational provision in England, resulting in a combination of state, voluntary and private sector providers operating in community-, home- and school-based settings. Free, state-funded nursery provision occurred only during wartime, when national imperatives required women to join the labour force. The ambitious thinking of this period, as noted by Palmer (2011: 139), included the vision to provide nursery schools and the 'best start in life' for all, as part of reconstructing a better future after the war. However, whilst the 1944 Education Act required local authorities to give regard to the need for provision for children under five, there was significant lack of consultation or means for policy implementation.

Reliance on kin, childminders and playgroups: provision to resemble 'mothercare'

The postwar expansion of women's (mostly part-time) employment led to different childcare arrangements, often involving one-to-one provision in the form of 'kin or childminders', on the understandings that such arrangements were preferable since they 'most closely resembled mother-care' (Lewis 2003: 222). Indeed, the Plowden report (DES 1967), which advanced child-centred approaches in primary education, discouraged the full-

time use of institutionalised day care for the very young and suggested that nursery places be made available for mothers who had 'no option but to go out to work' rather than those 'who simply wanted to' (Bertram and Pascal 2000: 10). Faced with issues of high staff turnover in such settings, care by a minder or relative was often a preferred option which tended to assure continuity, quality and trust as well as affordability (Lewis 2003: 232-3; 235). Women also self-organised to develop voluntary and community-based playgroup provision, e.g. through local churches, which gave rise to umbrella groups such as the Preschool Playgroup Association (later named the Preschool Learning Alliance). These constituted the 'most significant self-help initiatives of the 1960s and 70s' (Lewis 2003: 231) and provided limited hours of childcare.

State-led responses to social change and challenge: the rise of the childcare market

The rise of private sector provision through the 1980s and 1990s (which included former voluntary-run settings) was due to the increase in professional, full-time working mothers and also the introduction of state subsidies to encourage parents to move from 'welfare to work'. This was at a time when rising rates of family breakdown and teenage pregnancies, along with the decline of marriage, often entailed welfare dependence or low income for lone parents with very young children (Bertram and Pascal 2000: 16-17). England's first national childcare strategy (Department for Education and Employment, 1998) reflected economic concerns to remove barriers to employment, tackle poverty and promote the early education of a new generation of citizens. Because of the younger age profile of ethnic minority groups in England, another aim was to socialise ethnic minority children, as well as economically disadvantaged ones, into the mainstream (Bertram and Pascal 2000: 8).

Concerns about the trend toward day nurseries: risks to child wellbeing

Over time it became normal to talk of a 'childcare market', where private day care provision could be accessed by subsidies for low income working parents and the offer of free part-time places for 3 and 4 year olds. Bunting (2004) reports that the tendency of government policy to promote day nurseries at the exclusion of other forms of provision (e.g. nannies, childminders or policies to extend parental leave) has been paralleled by rising evidence of the need of children under two years for sensitive, responsive and engaging one-one-one style care for their social development and emotional regulation. This, she reports, puts into question the appropriateness of long hours of institutionalised day care for children under preschool age who may encounter a 'blandness' and 'flatness' of response in the performance of care duties towards them; ironically then, whilst a 'dramatic case of abuse' by a personal or home-based carer may attract media headlines, the widespread risk to child wellbeing posed by extended amounts of highly institutionalised day care, Bunting suggests, does not. Such concerns about the impact of the relational environments fostered with and around young children came to be addressed in the key principles of Early Years Foundation Stage (see 5.2.2) launched in 2008.

Reconciling contrasting paradigms and needs

In the light of the above, the 2009 opening of the Nishkam nursery had followed the not unusual route of a voluntary-based, self-help initiative developing into a formal business, within a childcare market where places are subsidised by the state. This outline also highlights enduring issues of reconciling the desire for family-like care with aims to formally educate children, of providing means to support parents, especially mothers, to reconcile work and family responsibilities, and of reconciling different paradigms (e.g. economic, child-centred or integration-oriented ones) to shape policy directions.

5.1.3 Policy background concerning institutional providers

For the most part, early education for three or four year olds has been provided by schools with nursery, preschool or reception classes. In this section, I sketch out the landscape of schooling provision in England, which formed the backdrop for Nishkam's nursery and school planning. I introduce the following influential factors: traditional divisions between state sector and independent providers; a dual system of faith and non-faith state-maintained schools; shifting models pursued by government to configure a national schooling system; policy provision for home-based education and community-driven supplementary (or complementary) schooling.

The division between state sector schooling and independent providers

State sector schooling has existed in England since the Elementary Education Act of 1870 and, until recently, it has been administered by local government authorities. Private or charitable providers have filled gaps in existing provision. The succession of models pursued by government to configure schooling controlled or supported by the state is outlined further below. Fee-charging schools, operating independently of the state-sector, include 'private' or high-profile traditional 'public' schools, along with 'preparatory' schools to prepare young children for entry into such institutions. Those with long histories are associated with the education of the elite (and the Victorian period of British colonial expansion), and hence with deeply entrenched British class divides. Traditionally, though less so today, English independent schools have tended to be selective by gender. Some are associated with distinctive educational philosophies as part of an international network of schools, e.g. the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner (see Chapter 4, 4.2).

Prior to policy changes in 2010, providers of educational alternatives to the state-governed curriculum had to operate as fee-charging institutions. An example of recent innovation in

the traditional private school sector includes the New Model School established in 2004, designed to operate on a not-for-profit basis and charge the lowest sustainable fees (Fox 2009). Also, schools set up by England's long settled minority faith communities have included those initially founded or permanently run as independent institutions, e.g. Jewish day schools extending from supplementary schooling initiatives (Miller 2010). Because of their faith character, there has also been legal provision for such schools to operate in the state-maintained sector, as I now point out below.

The dual system of faith and non-faith state-maintained schools

Alongside schools wholly set up and controlled by Local Education Authorities, the state-maintained sector in England has traditionally included schools with a religious character set up as 'voluntary aided' or 'voluntary controlled' institutions. The dual system of faith and non-faith schools has its roots in the establishment of state education in 1870 by supplementing the existing voluntary provision led by Christian bodies (Gardner, Cairns & Lawton, 2005: 7). Up until the mid-1990s, they consisted of Christian (Church of England, Roman Catholic and other denominations) schools, with a minority of Jewish state-maintained schools.

The period after the election of a New Labour government in 1997 saw the inclusion of a handful of schools affiliated to other minority faiths, including the first Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox ones (West and Pennell, 2002: 9). A White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success* (Department for Education and Skills 2001) had included incentives for the expansion of faith schools, as well as regulations for their increased inclusiveness, precipitating debate around the value or appropriateness of this expansion in a diverse and plural society (Gardener, Cairns and Lawton eds. 2005, 1; 7). The escalation of events

linked to global political extremism led to associated concerns about religious radicalism in schools. These concerns were to later culminate, for example, in highly publicised allegations of an extremist take over in (non-faith) schools in Birmingham with large intakes of Muslim children (Hills 2015) and in the publication of government guidance on '*Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools*' (Department for Education 2014).

For Cairns (2009: xiii) debates about faith schools in the context of the 'war on terror' did not touch on the issue of gaining insight into 'the real educational cultures to which particular beliefs and values give rise in a variety of plural societies'. On the back of an outcomes-based policy rationale to promote faith schools and ideologically-driven arguments for and against them, little attention has been given to the nature of 'micro-school cultures' in the context of 'macro-educational policies', and on the 'culture fit' between the two (2009: 1). An often complex 'interplay of beliefs, values, knowledge and behaviours' prompts examination of how some faith school cultures can be 'porous, flexible and responsive' (2009: 4). Theoretically reflective empirical studies may provide avenues for practice to inform policy and facilitate 'civic conversations' around the viability of growing 'a rich educational ecology, capable of sustaining a variety of school communities', be they 'distinctive yet inclusive or communal yet tolerant.' (2009: 234).

Moves from split model to single and mixed model state sector provision

Other divisions in the state-maintained system originated in the entitlement introduced in the 1944 Education act of a secondary education for all. A planned 'tripartite' system resulted effectively in a two-tier state-funded system of high-status, competitive grammar schools (which were academically selective by entrance exam) and low-status secondary

modern schools which offered few prospects for social mobility for the majority of others. Movements towards a 'comprehensive' model of non-selective secondary schooling accelerated in the mid-1960s, although some grammar schools continued to operate as state-maintained or independent institutions. The ideal of a neighbourhood comprehensive serving pupils of mixed abilities and mixed income backgrounds was challenged, for example, by variances in the socio-economic make up of local catchment areas and parents' financial in/ability to settle in those areas with the best comprehensives and away from lower-status ones; such issues of indirect financial selection fed into debates as to whether the comprehensive system worked or was ever properly introduced (Tinline 2005).

The 1980s and 1990s saw major national policy shifts prompted by evidence of comparatively poor educational achievement, by international standards, in the UK population, (Machin and Vignoles 2006: 1-2). The growing influence of neo-liberal discourses during this period of Conservative central government encouraged an economic market paradigm to be taken up as a means to raise educational standards by introducing the dynamics of competition into public sector schooling (Ball 2008: 45). The package of reforms kick-started by the 1988 Education Reform Act included increasing parental 'school choice' and school accountability, the publishing of comparable school test score information and linking school funding to pupil enrolment numbers, as well as the introduction of a National Curriculum. The risk that less advantaged families were less well positioned to work the market system and benefit from it, accentuated concerns about inequality in schools (Machin & Vignoles, 2006: 4).

Subsequent policy developments under New Labour built on this 'quasi-market' model, with attempts to emphasise social inclusion as opposed to competition (West & Pennell

2002: 2;17). Schools could bid to gain 'specialist school' status to develop facilities to specialise in a chosen curriculum area, e.g. music or sport, with a focus on co-operation with other schools and the local community. Mechanisms were introduced to remove struggling schools in disadvantaged areas from local government control and reopen them as publicly funded 'city academies' with private and voluntary sector sponsorship and management (West and Pennell 2002 9-10).

The year 2000 saw the introduction of the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), governed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The PISA process directed attention to international evidence, revealing declines in the performance of schools in England in PISA-related assessment, over the ensuing decade, provided a basis for the new 2010 Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition to push for further reforms, support school choice discourses and consider schooling systems of high performing countries (Lingard et al, eds., 2016: 55-57). Building on the 'academies' concept, a 'free schools' programme invited bids from independent groups to set up new, not-for-profit, state-funded schools. This echoed models developed in Sweden and the Netherlands and the Charter Schools in the United States, and reflected the policy strategy of learning from experience in other countries (examined for example in Green and Cackett 2005). The launch of the free schools programme gave way to media speculation and accentuated concern about the increased hold of the private sector (already a substantial service provider to public sector schools), and to fears that the private sector would be enlisted to manage such schools (Wilby 2010). Early controversies based on the hypothesised impact of free schools are addressed in recent research (arguing for their 'competitive benefit'). This research assesses their localised and systemic impact (Porter and Simons 2015).

5.1.4 Background to home education providers and associated research insights

Legal status and self-organisation of home education providers

Legal provision for home-based education has existed since the Education Act of 1944 which placed the duty on parents to ensure their school-aged children received a full-time education 'either by regular attendance at school or otherwise' – a principle reiterated in the Education Act of 1996. 'Elective home education' describes provision by parents or guardians who elect, for a varying number of reasons, not to register their child in a school institution (Department for Children Schools and Families 2007). Operating aside from the official schooling system, home educators in England have largely self-organised, e.g. through the home education charity, *Education Otherwise*.

Public perceptions, philosophical insights and the case for more research

An official and common-sense tendency to conflate home education with safeguarding risks was precipitated by a widely reported Birmingham-based case of child cruelty and death in 2008, following a mother's claim that she was home educating her child (Radford 2010). Doctoral studies by Lees (2010) and Pattison (2013), demonstrate how such factors impede more concerted inclination to examine the contribution to education research, theory and practice which the phenomenon (and very possibility or discovery) of home education presents.

The decision to home educate brings into focus, for example, the parent-child relationship which, for Suissa (2006: 65), remains occluded by the legalistic and technical language of rights, duties, entitlements, as well as functional notions of 'parenting', reduced to the performance of tasks. Beneath this kind of language, the actual nature of parent-child and

family relationships which are 'basic to identity and psychological wellbeing' remains unarticulated and largely 'written out of educational theory and history' (2006: 70). The idea of parenthood, and particularly motherhood, as occupying a 'special, almost sacred, space of its own' (2006: 68) has long been the subject of oftentimes mythical artistic or literary treatment; however, its examination through a philosophical lens, Suissa argues, can yield significant educational insights. These insights may foreground, for example: the productive role of 'being and relationships' over 'tasks and achievements' (i.e. 'what it means to *be* a parent' as opposed to performing a cluster of activities involved in 'parenting'); less tangible forms of activity (e.g. the communication of feelings of care) which, may give the appearance of 'doing nothing' with babies or young children; the call to respond creatively to the 'real presence' of a particular baby or child rather than the concept of babies and children as a 'social group' (2006: 71-75). Examination of aspects such as these can serve to illuminate 'cracks and fissures' in established educational discourse and thus yield possibilities for change (Pattison, 2013: 294).

5.1.5 Background to 'supplementary' school providers and associated *research insights*

Impetus and rationale for community-based, out-of-school-hours provision

The terminology of 'supplementary' - or 'complementary' - schools reflects intentions to extend or complement mainstream schooling through the provision of out-of-school-hours classes, rather than (as with elective home education) to replace it as an alternative. They were launched as self-help initiatives, particularly by 'ethnic minority groups' following postwar migration to England, although they arose too in earlier waves of migration. The complex and diverse realm of such community-driven enterprises is investigated in doctoral research by Simon (2013) who conceptualises them 'not merely as educational spaces but

as social and political enterprises' which sit 'at the intersection of education and culture' (Simon 2013: 8-9) and involve 'social constituencies with varying levels of power'.

The multiple and sometimes changing purposes of supplementary/complementary schools identified in current research literature are summarised by Simon (2013: 27-40) as including aims to: 1) preserve and maintain cultural and linguistic identities and serve as a 'support mechanism' for 'diasporic existence'; 2) engender a sense of belonging; 3) respond to shortcomings in mainstream schooling; 4) create space for challenging common conceptions and discourses and 'transforming structure through agency'; 5) provide 'safe spaces' where identities can be formulated, explored and managed; 6) provide a space between home and school which enables parental empowerment; 7) raise attainment levels and thus social standing and mobility.

This fluidity of purpose makes it difficult to comprehensively label such provision. The term 'supplementary' can suggest the extension of a mainstream schooling agenda which may be negatively or positively perceived; 'complementary' reflects perceptions of complementary function between such schools and the mainstream; the label of 'alternative' is problematic, due to the traditional lack of community resources to provide an adequate alternative to the mainstream (Simon 2013: 45-6).

Associated discourses on multiculturalism, social integration and minority participation
Supplementary schools emerged against a backdrop of successive discourses. These included those which: positioned ethnic minority groups as 'a problem'; favoured the speedy 'assimilation' of newcomers or; switched to a rhetoric of 'integration' with the onus still on immigrants to 'fit in' (Simon 2013: 18-20). 'Antiracist' and 'multicultural'

responses to such discourses are unpacked by Modood and May (2001). Over the 1960s, social justice arguments challenging assimilationist policies had been advanced from the local authority and minority community level. These found echoes in two later policy reports. The 'Bullock Report' recognised non-English community languages as an asset to be nurtured (Department of Education and Science 1975). A later, interim report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, known as the 'Rampton Report' (Department of Education and Science 1981), identified institutionalised racism as a factor in underachievement for Afro-Caribbean pupils. The main thrust of the committee's final 'Swann Report' (Department of Education and Science 1985) was to promote greater cultural awareness and tolerance within the mainstream education sector as a whole (2013: 22).

For Modood and May (2001: 307-8) the title of the Swann report, *Education for All*, reflected a movement away from anti-racist strategies to a policy of 'inclusive multiculturalism'. It also tended to be largely ignored by central government (in the 'heyday' of "Thatcherism") and patchily experimented with in schools. It promoted 'secular multiculturalism', rejecting the idea of 'ethnic minority schools' which might bear a religious (particularly 'Islamic') identity (Modood and May, 2001: 307) and stated that ''the role of education cannot be, and cannot be expected to be, to reinforce the values, beliefs, and cultural identity which each child brings to school'' (Department for Education and Science, 1985: 321). Significantly, the Swann report shifted the locus of responsibility for teaching community languages (or for 'mother tongue maintenance') to the communities themselves instead of mainstream schools, albeit with the expectation of 'considerable support' from the latter (Simon 2013: 23; Modood and May, 2001: 307).

A decline in focus on race and inequality issues from the late 1980s was joined by central government promotion of the English language and national values and beliefs, reflecting concerns about social cohesion (Simon 2013: 23). Conversely, increased recognition of the benefits of bilingualism led to a national languages strategy, *Languages for All, Languages for Life* (Department for Education and Skills, 2002, Simon 2013: 24-5) based on the rationale that in 'the knowledge society of the 21st century, language competence and intercultural understanding are not optional extras, they are an essential part of being a citizen' (DfES 2002: 5). Such policy 'moments' opened windows for potentially strengthening some aspects of supplementary school provision. However, the complex contemporary challenges faced by supplementary schools today - including lack of positive government interest, increased scrutiny under counter terrorism measures, meeting the changing needs of community groups, and demands for provision by newer migrant groups - are examined by Nwulu (2015).

The recognised strengths of supplementary schools in this report include their ability to provide positive role models in a culturally familiar space where children can 'let down their guard', and to demystify the education system for newly arrived parents or parents whose own prior experience of mainstream education was inadequate. An overall recommendation is that supplementary schools be positively supported to broader their institutional connections to more fully participate in the 'local ecology' (Nwulu 2015: 44) of educational, social and cultural provision for young people. Recently, the educational press (*Times Educational Supplement*) headlined supplementary schools as the 'hidden cogs in school system' in an article arguing for greater recognition by the mainstream sector of their value and contribution (Bennett 2016).

Insights for wider educational thought and practice

Research on supplementary school settings suggests that they can offer pupils opportunities to perform successful learner identities, explore their heritage identities as well as overlapping multicultural identities constructed as they grow up in a diverse society (Creese et al. 2006). Learner identity is strengthened because 'students are no longer forced to separate themselves from their home and community experience; instead, they can make the most of living in 'simultaneous worlds' (Kenner, 2004). As highlighted by Kenner et al (2016) the role of faith settings in this sector remains under-researched, as does the contribution of the faith dimension on learner identity and personal development, given their heightened focus on spiritual and moral concerns. This research stance reflects an emerging interest in how, in sites such as these, children are 'learning languages, literacies and other academic skills alongside ways of seeing, thinking, behaving and being in and through their religion' (Lytra et al. 2016: 1).

From supplementary to full-time community-based schooling

Supplementary school research has also brought into view issues of how 'minority' parents lean towards configuring the various parts that compose the sum of their children's educational experience. Discussing supplementary Jewish education in Britain, for example, Miller (2010) draws attention to postwar Jewish parental aspirations for their children to receive a full-time secular education for their integration and successful participation in British societal life - supplemented by after-school Jewish education - and discusses subsequent moves towards an integrated form of full-time, Jewish day school provision. A parallel can be drawn with the integration of mainstream and special educational needs provision, as reflected in 'The Rise' free school and its principle to

combine 'academic ambition' with one of 'gradual social integration' for its autistic pupils (Griggs 2014).

The move from community-based supplementary schooling to full-time provision is prone to be criticised for deepening social segregation, as have publicly funded but independently operating 'charter schools' in the United States (a model for free schools in England), given the country's history of civil rights struggles for racial desegregation. Barnum (2016) highlights the role of housing segregation in the make-up of some, but not all, charter school communities and notes that, for some parents, the opportunity for their child to receive a quality education, sensitised to cultural needs, proves the more pressing issue; for one parent quoted in this article, two very different premises are confused by 'conflating' government-sanctioned, forced segregation with 'the self-selection of people into affirming school environments that meet their cultural and home needs' (Barnum 2016).

5.1.6 Paradoxes and dilemmas for national configurations of provision

Mainstream education is broad and often beautiful, but something so large relies on moulds and chains, and local authorities that look to scale, similarity and emulation as the dominant model. But supplementary schools, like homeschooling, unschooling and every form of private education, reminds us that learning can take many shapes – and that the human desire to learn often exceeds the capacity of the state to provide (Bennett 2016).

This concluding quote from the article I mentioned in Chapter 3, section 3.1.4, draws attention to some threads that I have identified in my discussion above. I will consider these below. These concern the notion of diversification, the conundrum of inclusive education and issues of conflation and reconciliation. I discuss these briefly to consider the policy contexts for this study through a paradigmatic and ethical lens, more so than just descriptively. This is because they are tied in with issues of how to categorise and judge,

given the research insights offered in this study, the arrival of the Nishkam nursery in the contemporary social landscape.

Diversificaton: economic or ecological?

Whilst the quote from Bennett (2016) above mentions the potential of educational provision by diverse providers to inform visions for education, as scholars such as Ball (2008: 45) have argued, the concept of 'school diversification', in the context of neoliberal national policy-making, is based on an economic paradigm where the diversity of products or services is seen to drive up competition and standards, based on motives of self-interest. The argument for a 'meaningful diversification of schools', an ecological paradigm, is advanced by Zhongren (2014: 161-2) to suggests a complex and interdependent 'ecosystem' where diverse providers have potential to co-exist in a complementary as well as competitive relationship. Echoed here are notions of ecology and complementarity which have surfaced in my discussion of faith schools and supplementary schooling.

The risk that the dominance of free market principles entails a survival-of-the-fittest scenario prompts the need for 'intelligent policies of whole-system improvement' according to Sahlberg (2015), a prominent interpreter of the Finnish experience of pursuing academic excellence with equity. Finland's ranking as a top PISA performer has stimulated international interest in the creation of its fully comprehensive system, which includes some publicly-funded independent providers such as Steiner schools, religious schools and university teacher training schools (Sahlberg with Graham 2014). Pervading it is an emphasis on: a high degree of attentiveness to children's holistic wellbeing, valuing time spent in family and home, outdoor and other out-of-classroom learning contexts; trusting the autonomous judgment of exceptionally qualified teachers, whose profession is highly

respected; fostering social and learning dispositions conducive to an economy oriented to private sector innovation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011). For Sahlberg, more than representing 'a form of school organisation', the system 'embodies a philosophy of education as well as a deep set of societal values about what all children need and deserve.' (OECD 2011: 119). As suggested by a limited but growing body of research which I introduced on home and supplementary schooling, these providers may be construed, not only as providers of a 'boutique service' (Bennett 2016:32) in a diverse educational market, but as potential contributors to societal discourses about what children deserve and need, as well as potential sources of insight, commitment and motivation for meeting those needs.

The conundrum of inclusive education

The fact that there are both benefits and constraints on the development of a uniform mainstream school system of the type evoked in the above quote by Bennett (2016) raises a dilemma: that of how to configure an inclusive education system in social conditions of diversity (philosophical, political as well as cultural) and in social conditions of inequality (in terms of economic or other form of social capital). This links to a situation highlighted by Moss (2007), which I introduced in 4.3.2, that less centralisation and more democratic practice in the shaping of nursery provision can, in certain conditions, disadvantage those in weak positions to participate. At the same time, the phenomenon of increased globalisation and localisation is challenging entrenched national and corporate discourses and creating greater scope for citizens to be agentive 'makers and shapers' as well as simply 'users and choosers' of social provisioning (Cornwall & Gaventa 2001 - see also 4.3.2). Reflected here is the 'conundrum' of inclusive education theorised by Osberg and Biesta (2010), (4.3.5) where more inclusivity in 'practice' (i.e. widening participation to existing

orders) can entail less inclusivity 'in principle' (less responsivity to difference and new possibility). By extension, in the case of full-time schooling provision aligned to the life worlds of particular communities, the challenge is reversed, as highlighted in critiques I noted of the charter school movement in the US. Also noted in my discussion is how a benign 'inclusive multiculturalism' which concentrates on mainstream celebration and toleration of diversity can serve to shift the focus away from empowering distinctive groups to fill gaps in their own and their children's holistic self-development, as players in an uneven societal field.

Issues of conflation

Through the course of my literature review, the issue of conflation has surfaced several times: home education or personalised childcare gets conflated with child safety concerns; supplementary schooling with narrow community or extremist agendas; culturally-attuned schooling choices with policies to enforce racial segregation. As highlighted by Bennett (2016), widely reported 'disaster stories' can take centre stage in public and official perceptions. This raises the issue of the need to take account of and to extend research on providers of educational alternatives to the established mainstream, who also throw into relief a common-sense tendency to conflate the concept of 'education' with standardised 'schooling'. A similar case can be made to build research on the actual discourses and practices underpinning the formation of new schools emerging under the free schools programme and associated policy developments, given that the opportunity they secure is located within a highly controversial economic discourse of competition and choice, which was being advanced in the education sector by central government.

Issues of reconciliation

A final theme I draw out of the discussion above is that of reconciliation. Both reticence and concerted drives to expand childcare and early educational services have revolved around issues of reconciling child-centred priorities with parental (notably maternal) need or desire to work, along with societal and economic needs perceived by the state from its top-down view of national challenges. Parental preference (or practical resort to) family-like childcare arrangements has also been joined by the wish to induct children into the world of formal schooling. By outlining models of schooling provision pursued by government over the decades, I drew attention also to unresolved shortfalls in reconciling quality with equity of educational experience in the national system.

By then introducing the realms of home and supplementary provision, I highlighted issues of reconciling the perceived needs and potential of a 'particular' child with multi-layered parental and community-based aspirations, including (for minorities especially) hopes for their child's integration and achievement in mainstream society alongside the cultivation of cultural or religious identities. Finally, I highlighted research to suggest that such apparently 'niche' providers can be seen to occupy a complementary rather than polar position to the mainstream, particularly with regards to fostering successful learner identities, alongside children's holistic identities as citizens and as spiritual, moral, social and cultural beings. In societal conditions characterised by superdiversity, postsecularity and contrasting mobiliites and moorings, the question of how to draw on these different provider standpoints to configure new forms and norms of educational provision is a challenge of our time, which is played out in the particular and localised case study presented in this thesis.

5.2 The relevant curriculum contexts

Having discussed the policy contexts concerning education providers I will now outline the development of state-regulated curriculum contexts which were particularly relevant to nursery's creation. These include: the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (5.2.1); spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) (5.2.2); Religious Education (RE) (5.2.3) and citizenship education (5.2.4).

5.2.1   The 'Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS)

Background to the EYFS framework

For most of the twentieth century, early childhood provision in England remained largely informal and based on child-centred, experiential learning (Kwon 2002; Eaude 2006). After the Second World War, the closure of day nurseries gave rise to the 'playgroup' movement which the government welcomed as a low-cost substitute for nursery schools. It consisted of informal care provided by parents and volunteers and its origins are attributed to a mother in London who joined with a neighbour to lead provision in a local church hall (Kwon 2002).

Following the stalling of plans to expand and formalise nursery provision due to economic recession in the 1970s and 1980s, a National Curriculum for schools was introduced in 1988 which increased interest in fostering school-readiness and in setting 'learning goals' for the under-fives. Professional training and academic research in early childhood was stimulated over the 1990s. In 2000, *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2000) was published and the inspections for preschool settings introduced. In 2003, the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003), was prompted by a public scandal highlighting interagency failures to safeguard an at-risk child and concerns about rising social challenges. It led to the Children's Act 2004. The policy

initiate required interagency collaboration to support five wellbeing outcomes for children to: 1) stay safe; 2) be healthy; 3) enjoy and achieve; 4) make a positive contribution; 5) achieve economic well-being.

Key principles of the EYFS framework

In 2008, the *Early Years Foundation Stage* (Department for Children, Schools & Families 2008) statutory framework was introduced for all types of early childcare settings, from home-based to public provision. This consolidated previous welfare- and education-oriented initiatives and was based on four themes of '*the unique child; positive relationships; enabling environments; learning and development*' (appendix 2). These were underpinned by principles that: every child from birth is a competent learner with the potential to be '*resilient, capable and self-assured*'; the environment created around them and '*a base of loving and secure relationships*' have vital roles to play in children's development and learning; all areas of the framework are equally important and interconnected and all children learn differently. It followed that every area of '*learning and development*' was set out in the guidance as being supported in specific ways through '*positive relationships*' and '*enabling environments*'.

Associated reports and recommendations

A review of the impact of the EYFS (Tickell 2011) reported its strengths as a comprehensive framework and stressed the need to simplify the guidance. This led to its revision in 2012. Another report (Allen 2011) presented to government highlighted the long-term social benefits of strategizing to invest in 'early intervention'. Drawing on research evidence, it underlines: just how rapid and formative development is in the early years of life; the long term impacts of positive early social and emotional development and experience of a 'secure

and loving space' in which to grow; the long-term educational and economic benefits of an 'early intervention' as opposed to 'late reaction' culture to tackle cycles of persistent social problems; the benefits of building on good practice through local networks rather than overly centralised control; creative cross-sector partnering to finance programmes. Allen's (2011) report can also be read in the context of two previous reports suggestive of national failures to support child wellbeing. The first, *A Good Childhood: searching for values in a competitive age* (Layard and Dunn 2009) was based on the first national inquiry into childhood launched in 2006.   This report followed on from *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries* (United Nations Children's Fund 2007) where the UK and USA were ranked bottom of the league.

To probe the apparent failings in the UK, a qualitative study (Ipsos MORI & Nairn 2011) compared British experiences of childhood with those in Spain and Sweden (where childhood wellbeing was rated as high) uncovering stark contrasts. In Spain and Sweden, a greater degree of quality time spent with family was noted. This was attributed to an extended family culture and maternal sacrifices towards child-rearing in Spain, and to joint parental strategies to prioritise time with children in Sweden. Moreover, this research noted less tendency towards a 'disposable' consumer culture in these countries and how families were perceiving inequality differently as compared to the UK, where it was largely perceived in financial terms. In Spain, deprivation tended to be measured in terms of lack of time families could give children and, in Sweden, by lack of outdoor spaces available to families with children. Finally, in these two countries, greater resilience was noted in family relationships. This was attributed, for example, to the time given to agree and establish values, rules and roles in home life, compared to the strain which was noted in managing these in family settings in the UK (Ipsos MORI & Nairn 2011: 70-73).

Echoed in these findings is Palmer's (2007) call for national values dominated by economic discourse in the UK to be reframed so as to reclaim and reinvest focus on the art of child-rearing. Increased institutionalisation of day care has also prompted visions of alternative ways to support parents to provide care and 'love' to the very young instead of 'warehousing' (James 2001).

5.2.2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

Background to SMSC policy developments

According to the 1944 Education Act, it was the duty of all local authorities *'to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community'* (Education Act 1944, section 7). This was closely aligned to notions of nationhood and citizenship rooted in Britain's Christian heritage and, as Wright (2000: 63) suggests, to the 'moral and spiritual rejuvenation of society' after the horrors of war. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced a National Curriculum for schools in a far more secular and diverse social context. In it, '*the development of the community*' changed to that '*of pupils…and of society*' and the term '*cultural*' was inserted after '*spiritual, moral*' (Education Reform Act 1988: 1-25). The creation of an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) followed from the 1992 Education (Schools) Act. This required reporting on the '*spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils*'. This has since been retained as a criteria for assessing schools and abbreviated to SMSC. Although interpretations of it have changed over time, Eaude (2006) and more recently, Peterson et al (2014) bring together pedagogical guidance and case study research that argue for the enduring relevance of SMSC.

SMSC and 'whole child' development

Substantial discussion on SMSC is exemplified in edited collections (Best, 1996 and 2000, Erricker et al., 2001). Not only was this interest stimulated by the mandating of SMSC for school inspection and subsequent policy guidance (Ofsted 1994); it arose also from educational concerns to counterbalance a content-driven National Curriculum, as well as from political concerns to promote wellbeing and social cohesion. Eaude (2002, 2006) notes that teachers were little involved in these largely academic debates, their priorities being shaped by those of the National Curriculum. Even though the focus on holistic development in early childhood did more easily chime with the aims of SMSC, lack of overall clarity on the meaning of its component terms meant that it remained a poorly conceived and undervalued area of assessment. This led to extensive consultation to compile Ofsted guidance on *Promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development* (Ofsted, 2004) which highlighted the opportunities and challenges involved in arriving at a workable concept of SMSC.

Eaude (2006: 10) remarks that the 'standards agenda' tends to emphasise: learning content, knowledge acquisition, literacy and numeracy, pace and challenge and measurable results. SMSC, in contrast, emphasises: learning processes, relationships, values and attitudes, breadth or curriculum, space for reflection and outcomes which are hard to assess. In addition SMSC is supported through 'implicit' and 'unseen' qualities and brings into focus the personhood of the educator and the development of the 'whole child'. 'Values' form an underlying thread across each overlapping aspect of SMSC and Eaude proposes one possible framework to link 'spiritual' to questions about 'meaning'; 'moral' to those about 'action'; 'social' to those about 'interaction'; and 'cultural' to those about 'belonging' (2006: 9).

Notions of the 'whole child' promote an integrated view of children and learning. As Ungoed-Thomas (1996: 125) points out, this may be subliminally informed by inherited cultural models of a 'whole person' (e.g. qualities which make up a 'classical', 'Christian', 'rationale', 'humanist' or 'free-market' person). A view of the 'whole child' as an individual composed of different facets is reflected in both in developmental psychology (e.g. concerned with cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning domains) and in holistic educational approaches (e.g. the Steiner view of the development of the whole self). Hazareesingh et al. (1989) and Mayes et al (2007) exemplify moves to throw into relief the wider sociocultural world in which a 'whole child' or 'whole student' is centred. Mayes et al (2007: x) call for this cultural dimension to be recognised as an 'existential fact' more than just a 'political fact' - i.e. one that is 'interwoven throughout his or her entire being - physically, psychologically, cognitively, ethically and spiritually'. Beyond being perceived as 'stimulus-response mechanism' (onto whom developmental theories can be applied) or 'a member of a politically marginalized group' (i.e. bearing a deficit model of identity), the learner is recognised as someone more 'complex' for whom learning becomes 'deep and durable' when it relates to the wholeness of life experience (2007: xi). Hazareesingh et al. (1989) argue for the positive outcomes of being responsive to the home worlds children bring into the classroom and to the pre-colonial educational philosophies rooted in their home cultures, where values of interdependency, cooperation, family and community tend to be foregrounded.

More recently, Peterson et al (2014: 3) identify recent developments and new social contexts which are stimulating fresh interest in SMSC. They include: the founding of new types of school (namely academies and free schools) where school ethos and character development tend to be emphasised; legal priorities to promote community cohesion; recent focus on strengthening qualities in the young to live confidently in new global contexts, as 'active, productive, responsible and participative citizens' who are able to 'adapt and thrive' (2014: 10) in fast-paced and uncertain

modern societies. This is coupled with desires to enable 'deeper thinking ' (2014: 4) about educational purpose, at a time when attainment-related pressures prioritise short-term goals. Whilst recognition of the need to foster non-cognitive traits has increased, SMSC may come across as too 'ethereal', controversial and challenging in social contexts which are 'increasingly diverse and decreasingly deferential' (2014: 12). For the authors, SMSC serves as a catalyst for schools to 'create a clear vision about the purose and goals of education and schooling in the 21st century' and to so reclaim their 'soul' or 'spirit' (2014: 4). Echoing these perspectives, Damon (2014) suggests that, in the context of children's early nurture, ideas which may otherwise be dismissed as 'lofty', 'grand' or 'ethereal' can be educationally explored in 'concrete', 'action-oriented ways' to view the role of meaning and purpose, and attendant values, in children's lives.

Evolving connotations of the terms 'spiritual', 'moral', 'social', 'cultural'

Because of the mixed and evolving connotations of the terms that comprise SMSC, I will here summarise some of ways in which they have been talked about in educational guidance and research. A fuller disucssion is provided in appendix 3. Key ideas include views that fostering spiritual development involves: 'existential questions about our identity, place and purpose within the wider scheme of things' (Euade 2006: 15); thinking in terms of the 'whole' (Ofsted 2004: 13); 'relational consciousness' and the 'awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and values-sensing' part of being human (Hay with Nye 2006: 65, 108-9); the 'predisposition to transcend' the conditions of our experience, the cultivation of 'hopeful contexts', 'hospitable space' (Myers 1997: 61-4) and recognition of the qualities people working with children bring from their lives beyond the school (Myers 1997: 15, 28, 61-4).

Whilst there is often a reluctance to use the term 'moral development' (due to historical contexts of its use in British schooling) and to consider associated terms such as 'character' and 'virtue' as 'old-fashioned', Eaude (2006: 24-34) notes that it relates, nevertheless, to the valid principle of asking what sort of qualities are to be encouraged through education, where such development is understood to involve 'a subtle mixture of example, habituation and conscious choice' and where socio-emotional experiences from the start of life play a vital role. The underlying role of 'social development' in overall holistic nurture is extended in Ofsted (2004: 19) guidance to the idea that 'the quality of our relationships defines the kind of people we are and, ultimately, the kind of world we live in' and that social development supports the ability to participate in society and promotes social cohesion. Whilst there is reticence, especially in traditions of close-up socio-cultural analysis, to use the word 'community' because of ways in which it may assume reified individual or group identities, Smith (2001) highlights uses which relate it to: values of solidarity, mutuality, committment and trust, evoking 'a lost sense of working together to make change' and as a generator of 'social capital'. This extends the notion of 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991) foregrounding the socially situated nature of learning.

Concerns about social cohesion are underlined in Ofsted (2004) guidance, where 'cultural development'is linked to ideas of valuing diversity, preventing racism and recognising the changing nature of culture. Eaude (2006:45) encourages teachers to link 'culture' to: 1) ideas of identity, belonging, organic growth and hence 'one's roots'; 2. the broadening and enriching range of exprience children can be introduced to (e.g. where notions of 'high culture'may come into play); 3. the different kinds of social environment in which we live, understand and interpret our experiences (defined for example as 'classroom culture' or 'Western culture'). He also highlights the 'cultural capital' children bring into the

classroom from their home and community environments (2006: 47-9), echoing the concept of 'funds of knowledge' advanced by González et al. (2005), introduced in 3.3. Drawing on Bourdieu (1990), May (1999:27-30) encourages a view of culture and ethnicity as involving an 'an orientation to social action', stemming from a complex of '*embodied dispositions – or ways of viewing, and living in the world*' which we come to acquire as a result of our socialisation. This helps to explain the pervasive power of group affiliations, or of institutionalised cultures, which both allow and limit scope for change over time.

This all but brief sketch of the ways in which the component terms of SMSC can be understood reinforces their interconnected nature and introduces points where curriculum guidance and elements of social and cultural theory may intersect to consider and shape educational practice. It also lays the ground for perspectives on fostering SMSC which emerged in my data analysis.

5.2.3 *Religious Education (RE)*

Sociohistorical contexts for conceiving and providing RE

Jackson (2013) explains how RE in England has developed in response to social and political change, government directives and key developments in the academic study of religion. The 1944 Education Act legislated 'religious instruction' as compulsory and gave means to accommodate different denominational leanings. Since then, whilst schools with a 'religious character' continued elements of religious formation or nurture, processes of secularisation and pluralisation led the subject to evolve into a non-confessional study of religious traditions. This led it to be redefined as 'religious education' in the 1988 Education Act and over time it has been increasingly required to address citizenship and community cohesion agendas.

Jackson (2013: 1-3) summarises different reactions and responses to plurality in religious education. These include attempts to: nostalgically align together and propagate a British and Christian national identity; limit religious education to the semi-private space of faith schools; adopt a 'normative postmodern plurality' (see below) where pupils are supported to develop individually constructed beliefs; promote religious literacy and informed judgement of different faiths understood as discrete belief systems; encourage reflexive and collaborative study for pupils to co-interpret religious and cultural material; remove religious education from schools where society's identity is understood as secular.

The latter position is reflected in France and the United States where the historic separation of church and state – for contrasting reasons in each national context - does not permit the study of religion in publically maintained schools. A background to this is provided by Jackson (2004), who note more recent calls to include some element of religious history to engage with citizenship, diversity and cohesion issues. By contrast, policy in England has allowed for varied educational responses to the presence of religion in society, through arrangements to develop local syllabi, developments in academic research and work to produce national non-statutory guidance. This is countered by challenges to the delivery of on-the-ground RE provision (as reported in Ofsted 2010).

To date, locally agreed syllabi have been drafted by Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs) in each Local Education Authority. The Birmingham SACRE was the first, for example, to introduce a multifaith RE syllabus in 1975, whose most recent dispositions-led syllabus (Birmingham City Council 2007) relates to this present study and is discussed in 3.3.3 below. Prior to this *Living Difference* (Hampshire,

Portsmouth and Southampton Councils 2004) was another local syllabus to likewise prioritise SMSC aims.   In the absence of a national RE curriculum, guidance has been centrally provided by a national non-statutory framework and, later, non-statutory guidance (QCA 2004 and DCSF 2010 respectively).

Key developments in academic research on RE and religion

Key developments in the study of religion at universities have included the following: In Lancaster, the 'phenomenological' approach was advanced by work led by Ninian Smart, which marked a turn from mono-religious confessional stances to towards the impartial study of parallel phenomena across religious traditions and use of 'scholarly methods to generate empathy with those holding religious world views' (Jackson 2013: 3).   In Birmingham, Grimmitt (1987) identified a 'human development' approach where the study of religions was seen to play an 'instrumental' role in RE pedagogy. Rather than aiming to impart knowledge of religions as reified systems of belief, it looked to offer insights on how religious believers perceive the world so as to inform a learner's own understanding of self and the world (Teece 2010a; 2010b). This gave rise to concepts of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religions which were later used to form official attainment targets for RE. Ethnographically-informed research into the religious lives of children, conducted at the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, gave rise to an 'interpretive' approach, giving insight into the complex lived realities of religious belonging (Jackson 1997). From Chichester, research with children led to a 'postmodern' approach, which takes children's personal narratives and world views (Erricker and Erricker, 2000) as the basis for curriculum construction.

For Stolberg and Teece (2011) a persistence of undemanding descriptive teaching in RE is linked to narrow understandings what constitutes 'learning about' religions, which then constrains any potential 'learning from'. Hay with Nye (1998) critique the ways in which the 'externalized study of various dimensions of religious activity' creates a distancing and objectification then 'detaches children from the understanding that they are exploring aspects of a universal quest, in which they also are engaged by virtue of being human.' Taking stock of various ways in which the identity and purpose of RE is understood, Teece (2013: 26) asks if it is possible to develop a 'religious approach' to RE (as opposed to a sociological, historical or citizenship-based one) which keeps within the idea of a 'neutral' religious education. This he proposes can be done through an interpretive framework which views religion 'not just as a cultural phenomenon' but as one that is transformative through aspects of its underlying quality and vision (e.g. to 'transcend' the egocentric self) (2013: 28-9). Such an approach also involves engaging views which have been traditionally polarised (e.g. notions of insider/outsider perspectives, objective/subjective understandings, confessional/secular study) and valuing a 'spectrum of understanding' (2013: 24-5) which can highlight blind spots from different positionings.

Research on Religious Education links to a growing interdisciplinary field of religion in society. Studies of how religious ways of being permeate the lives of children (Lytra, Volk & Gregory (eds.), 2016) are joined by those examining the ongoing shapings of 'postsecular' cities (Beaumont & Baker (eds.) 2011). Working at the intersection of religion, culture and social theory, Hunter (e.g. 2012) considers how the 'puzzle of pluralism' challenges consensus-building on values. Whilst notions of the 'common good' require some degree of universalism, approaches involving no history, memory, tradition or telos, can risk promoting 'yawning platitudes' and 'strategies of avoidance' based on fears

of difference. Rather, the particularities of traditions and communities can be seen to provide strong sources for group ethics, involving collective rituals and narratives which give continuity over time. Of course, anthropologists and ethnographers have long drawn on categories readily associated with religious life (e.g. ritual; symbol; artefact) to magnify the everyday worlds we culturally shape into being and are shaped by, and to make the 'familiar strange', as reflected in Erickson's (1984) reflections on school ethnography to investigate the organisation of everyday life in US schools.

Key concepts in the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for RE

The view of a religious dimension permeating everyday life is reflected in thinking behind the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for RE (Birmingham City Council 2007). It responds to the concern that RE teaching tends to follow the 'spectatorial' nature of 'religious studies' rather than being 'transformative' for learners as 'religious education' (Felderhof 2004: 243). The syllabus thus foregrounds the aim of 'learning from' faith and is organised around a framework of twenty-four 'dispositions' (appendix 4). Derived from religious heritage, they are also presented as having secular identities ('being imaginative and explorative; being accountable and living with integrity'). A disposition is defined as 'a prevailing quality of character marked by an inclination, or will, to act in a particular way or by a tendency to a certain kind of action.' As well as highlighting cognitive and affective learning, the syllabus thus stresses 'conative' development, associated with intrinsic motivation, volition, agency, self-direction and self-regulation (Birmingham City Council 2007: 5, 11).

Echoing some of the ideas underpinning the Birmingham syllabus, Miedema and Biesta (2003) highlight the potential for both religion and education to be transformative, rather

than function as a technology which aims to 'possess and control the student' (2003: 94). This includes creating openings for students 'to encounter and receive the gift of personal (religious) identity formation' (2003: 81) (i.e. involving the whole identity of the student). This allows for a holistic education which educates for life and is at the same time 'humanizing' and 'spiritual' (2003: 95).

5.2.4 Citizenship in education

An overview of the term 'citizenship' as used in the UK can be found in Anderson's *Policy Primer* (2011). Firstly, it is a legal status, bringing entitlements to live in a state, to vote and to use public services. It is also associated with 'a subjective feeling of identity and social relations of reciprocity and responsibility…. described in words like 'loyalty', 'values', 'belonging' or 'shared cultural heritage''. As well as involving a felt sense of nationhood, it is accorded an 'instrumental value' through ideas of participation which bring social benefit (e.g. cohesion) in a diverse civil society. In this regard the UK is described as a country of 'civic' rather than 'ethnic' nationalism, 'where membership of the nation is defined as political rather than ethnic.'

In primary schools, citizenship education was introduced with personal, social and health education (PSHE) (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2000) and before this it existed as a cross-curricular theme. Its importance has been reinforced over the years by issues around diversity and integration, inclusion and cohesion, and of tackling extremism. This can be traced back to an upsurge of racial disturbances in northern England (Home Office, 2001a, Cantle report), and resulting concerns about communities living parallel lives. Another concern was lack of insight into the degree of openness or insularity of minority organisations established through multicultural policy funding and a need to develop new

models to generate 'shared values' (Home Office 2001b, Denham report). In the wake of the events of 9/11 in New York, 7/7 in London and more recent concerns over home-grown terrorism, a latest government response has been to publish *Promoting fundamental guidance on British values as part of SMSC in schools* (Department for Education, 2014).

Writing on citizenship in the context of critical multiculturalism, May (1999: 14-15) notes how 'pluralist conceptions of the nation-state' can be undermined by making 'inextricable interconnections between social cohesion and national homogeneity'. One view of individual and universal citizenship constructs the person '*solely* as a political being with rights and duties attached to their status as *citizens*' (1999: 17, May's emphasis). This detracts from our situatedness within wider communities which shape and influence who we are. It also ties into traditional concerns that mobilisations around minority group identities are bound to foster social and political fragmentation, along with concerns about the tension between centripetal and centrifugal tendencies (1999: 14). Pluralistic understandings of citizenship involve the recognition of an 'ensemble of different forms of belonging' (see Isin and Wood 1999: 21) and processes of 'border crossing' (Giroux 1992) and negotiation in a 'third space' of interaction (Bhabha 1994).

Charting successive educational reforms relating to citizenship in the UK, Lawy and Biesta (2006) note the stress on citizenship as an outcome or status achieved. They suggest the practical benefits of conceiving 'citizenship-as-practice' in order to enable young people's participation in the situated, day-to-day realities of their lives. This involves considering the wider 'condition of citizenship' rather than problematizing it as a deficit in the individual. In this respect, citizenship is 'not an identity, something that someone can 'have', but a practice of identification … with issues that are of a common concern'. It

involves an '*inclusive* and *relational* outlook' which works '*with* rather than *on* young people to nurture their democratic attitudes and dispositions' (Lawy and Biesta, 2006).

These ideas link back to the work of Dewey and Freinet (see Chapter 2), who sought practical ways to foster values and competencies in the young so as to renew society's democratic potential with each successive generation. Although citizenship education is not an explicit theme in the EYFS guidance, some features of the framework which are seen to clearly support it are listed in the early years press as: 'dispositions and attitudes; self-confidence and self-esteem; relationships; behaviour and self-control; sense of community; language for communication; language for thinking' (Telfer-Brunton & Thornton 2004). The focus on formative development in early childhood settings therefore throws into relief ideas about education to foster 'citizenship' conceived as a value-based practice.

5.3 Chapter summary

I began this chapter by introducing the complex policy environments in which the Nishkam nursery emerged. In 5.1.1, I provided an outline of the guiding principles, visions and approaches adopted by the umbrella organisation in which the nursery project was embedded. I also outlined the steps taken to move the nursery and school projects forward, in the context of state policy windows that were presenting themselves over the period.

In 5.1.2, I discussed the policy background concerning providers of childcare and early education. I highlighted women's initial self-organisation to find part-time childcare solutions through childminders or voluntary-run playgroups, at a time when child-centred policy recommendations (DES 1967, the Plowden report) expressed concern over full-time institutionalised care for the very young. The later expansion of childcare providers was

pushed, on the one hand, by women's increasingly full-time employment and by government drives on the other. These drives were to tackle unemployment and welfare dependence involving lone parents with young children, following rises in teenage pregnancies and family breakdown. They also included aims to integrate young children from ethnic minority, as well as disadvantaged, families into the mainstream. Such factors contributed to the growth of a childcare market, with places subsidised by government for low-income families. I noted how these developments drew attention to the challenge of reconciling contrasting aims and needs.

In 5.1.3, I discussed the policy background concerning school providers and the resulting complexity of this provider landscape. Until the Nishkam nursery's opening, it included the division into state sector and independent providers and a dual system of faith and non-faith schools maintained by the state. Since the 1944 Education Act, top-down government policy had engendered a two-tier system of state-funded 'grammar' and 'secondary modern' schools, the pursuit of a single model approach to expand 'comprehensive' schooling, followed by the support of 'school diversification' in the context of neoliberal discourses promoting an economic market-based paradigm to raise competition and internationally-assessed standards. At the same time, state policy has made provision for parents to provide their children with educational alternatives, such as home education. Minority cultural and religious groups have also self-mobilised to provide out-of-school supplementary or complementary education, aiming to fill perceived gaps in the mainstream for their children. To conclude my discussion on this, I drew attention to tensions, debates and dilemmas around the configuration of school provision which arises out of the complex contemporary landscape, particularly around the promotion of a market model which encourages agentive

action yet risks deepening social equality, and around the issue of how to respond through policy, by adopting philosophical approaches and by taking account of cultural diversity. Importantly, the context-building I provided in 5.1.3 sheds light also on the contentious climate of opinion in which the Nishkam nursery emerged and on its hybridized role as a state-regulated, privately-run, community-driven and home-like provider, bringing together a number of paradigms in its offer.

In the second half of the chapter, in section 5.2, I discussed relevant curriculum contexts for this study. I introduced in turn: the framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF 2008); the legislative requirement to foster 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (SMSC) (Education (Schools) Act 1992); a non-statutory national framework for Religious Education (RE) (QCA 2004, DCSF 2010) and the locally agreed syllabus for RE in Birmingham (Birmingham City Council 2007), along with approaches to citizenship education.

The discussion in this part of the chapter served three main purposes. Firstly, it highlighted educational orientations favoured in the nursery project which have been officially endorsed. These give value to: the role 'positive relationships' and 'enabling environments' and recognition of each child as 'unique' (following EYFS guidance); children's holistic growth as spiritual, moral, social and cultural beings (following legislation around SMSC); scope for 'learning from' as well as 'learning about' religious traditions to contribute to a person's affective and cognitive learning, as well as 'conative' development associated with agency and intrinsic motivation (as underlined in Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus for RE); the notion of 'citizenship'. I also noted that, whilst it has been variously construed in state

policy guidance, the Nishkam nursery offers scope to develop approaches around conceiving 'citizenship-as-practice' (Lawy and Biesta, 2006).

Secondly, my account highlighted how the component terminology in the curriculum areas of SMSC, RE and citizenship has travelled through processes of sociohistorical and cultural change. This loosens the fixities of meaning that may be associated with words such as 'spiritual', 'moral', 'religious' and the concept of 'citizenship', as explored in work by Eaude (2006), Peterson et al (2014) and Lawy and Biesta (2006) who consider their enduring educational relevance. This sets a context for this case study to examine how, through the discursive practices of the social actors involved, these terms were being recast, re-fragranced (to borrow a metaphor used in the project) and represented with new tones of significance.

The third purpose served by my account was to foreground the fact that this study involves social actors who can be construed in various ways: as 'minority citizens', as a 'faith group' aligned to a 'world religion' or as part of a wider landscape of contemporary 'cultural diversity'. I have shown how these curriculum contexts have given rise to various understandings (in public, official or academic arenas) to make sense of the identities and practices of these social actors. The next chapter - Chapter 6 - introduces their heritage alignments as Sikhs. It also highlights moves in contemporary Sikh scholarship to reveal the effects of different historically-produced framings for construing and doing 'being Sikh', as well as to elucidate Sikh frameworks of thought and practice to make wider social contributions, beyond the sphere of private, minority or community-based concerns.

CHAPTER 6:

DOING BEING SIKH – EVOLVING FRAMINGS AND CONTEXTS

In this chapter I introduce the Sikh heritage alignments of the social actors in this study. I start, in 6.1, by outlining historical turns and formations in ways of 'being Sikh' since the emergence of Sikh tradition five centuries ago in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. I also outline core perspectives and values underpinning the formation of its communicative and semiotic world as a distinctive faith tradition. I then move, in 6.2, to discuss migration, diaspora and transmissions of Sikh practice, in conditions of being 'at home in motion' (Ahluwalia 2011). This opens a discussion of how the Sikh legacy, which has engendered and invited different ways of being Sikh, has been 'housed' and carried forward in diasporic life, as well as being affected by issues of translation. I close, in 6.3, by outlining new directions and institutional initiatives which are occurring to re-engage with 'being Sikh'. This chapter serves to introduce readers to the 'frameworks of cultural meaning' (Sutton and Levinson eds. 2001: 3) through which the Sikh social actors in this study were interpreting and recasting elements of state-regulated policy frameworks. It therefore sets out some bearings in advance of the analysis chapters to form an understanding of how 'education policy', understood through Sikh lenses and sensibilities, was coming into play in the configuration of the nursery world.

6.1 Five centuries of 'being Sikh': historical turns and formations

6.1.1 Opening remarks

The origins of Sikh heritage go back to 15th century Punjab, a region divided today by the India-Pakistan border (the 1947 partition triggered mass migration of Sikhs out of Pakistani Punjab to become Indian nationals, averaging 2% of the population). Ranked as the fifth

largest 'world religion', the Sikh faith is not a proselytizing one, hence the world's estimated 25 million (World Religions Database) Sikhs tend to be (though are not so exclusively) those who have inherited the tradition through birth. This tradition remains closely intertwined with the Punjabi culture of its origin (Nesbitt, 2005). Sikh identity, therefore, pertains to a shared language, culture of origin and ethnicity as well as religion (Shackle *et al.*, 2001; Ahluwalia *et al.*, 2005).

The task of introducing the Sikh heritage dimension for this thesis, as highlighted by early 21st century developments in Sikh Studies (see 6.3), is not a straightforward one. This is because of attention being redirected towards broad sociohistorical processes and traditions of knowledge production which have governed how Sikh tradition has been understood and talked about, from the 'inside' as well as 'outside'. This forms the basis of a comprehensive study by Mandair (2009). It is also introduced, for example, by Nesbitt (2005: 1) who forewarns that no religious tradition or its followers can be presented as a 'neat package'. Taking account of this broader context of diversity, I will provide an outline of some key strands in the development of Sikh tradition, so as to contextualise the origin and evolution of key concepts, values and practices linked to this study.

6.1.2 The wider Punjab context: pre-and post-colonial culture and education

Grewal (1998) contextualizes the origins of Sikh tradition in the agricultural region of the Punjab, popularly referred to as the land of five (*panj*) rivers (or 'waters' - *ab*). Located in the Indus valley, it was site to one of the earliest human civilizations, in Harappa, and universities, in Taxila (a key centre of both Vedic and Buddhist learning). As a strategic entry point by land from the west into India, over the centuries, the Punjab got invaded and/or ruled by a succession of powers external to the region (e.g. Persian, Greek and

Afghan), as well as becoming absorbed into the empires of Indian rulers. During the two-and-a-half century long founding of the Sikh faith (through a line of ten consecutive Sikh Gurus, from 1469 to 1708), the Punjab came under the rule of the Islamic Mughal empire. I will turn to introducing key features of the Sikh faith in the sections which follow. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly outline political developments which impacted the social and educational landscape following the formative shaping of Sikh religious tradition.

Following almost a century of political upheaval and turmoil, the Punjab had a rare experience of indigenous rule (1799-1839), under the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Renowned for his 'secular' (i.e. pluralist and non-theocratic) reign and involvement of Muslims, Hindus and Europeans in government, he strengthened and stabilized the kingdom, introducing military as well as educational innovations (Grewal 2007). The British reported over 75% literacy amongst his subjects in Farsi (the language of the administration, inherited from the Mughal empire) achieved through grassroots dissemination of a language course written in different forms of *ma boli* ('mother tongue') (Syed 2014). The ready acceptance of multiple identities around local, regional, religious and secular loyalties in Ranjit Singh's Punjab is contrasted with the impact of the British Raj (once the Punjab became annexed to the British dominions in India). Studies by Oberoi (1994) and Mandair (2009) examine the ensuing conditions which prompted more exacting demarcations of religious affiliation in the population.

The impact of British colonialism on India's educational landscape is discussed in Sagoo (2009). The introduction of a western style education system in India to train a new class of native colonial citizens was prompted by arguments advanced by India's viceroy, Lord Macaulay, in his Minute of 1835. Nurullah and Naik (1951) highlight how attempts to

'create' provision drawing on well-developed Indian traditions of education were overtaken by pressures to 'imitate' an externally prefabricated schooling system (which, nevertheless, brought certain advantages). Surveying precolonial education in the Punjab, Leitner (1882) depicts a widespread culture of respect and support for education across social divides and concludes that the 'healthy revival and development' of successful indigenous systems of provision were 'either neglected or perverted' by the colonial administration, and that 'our system stands convicted of worse than official failure.' His writing is examined alongside other British-Indian archive material by Dharampal (1983). Langohr (2005: 168) notes how pre-existing 'inter-confessional forms of learning' which 'permeated the curriculum' through textual and literary knowledge gave way to a narrowly conceived curriculum subject of 'religion' based primarily on the observance of ritual. Examining the politics of education during this period, Kumar (2005: 72) notes an ultimate effect that 'school based knowledge became isolated from the everyday reality and cultural milieu of the child'.

When the British Raj ended in 1947, the partition line between India and Pakistan cut through the Punjab and a resultant exodus of Sikhs out of Pakistani Punjabi to become Indian nationals involved decisions that would lead to ongoing political challenges and struggles. These came to a head in the traumatic events of 1984 with Operation Blue Star in Amritsar (involving the storming of the 'Golden Temple' complex by the Indian army on a major festival day) and the Delhi 'pogroms' where Sikhs were systematically pursued and massacred (following the prime minister's assassination by Sikh bodyguards) (Tatla 1999). It was in this year that the Punjab Research Group was founded to bridge territorial and disciplinary divides, and to engage the 'three Punjabs' (East, West and diasporic). Its work is published through the *Journal of Punjab Studies*.

The interplay between the sense of being 'Punjabi' and being 'Sikh' are highlighted by Nesbitt (2005: 12) who notes how, in some respects, Sikh tradition 'converges with Punjabi cultural norms' and in others, the priorities of the Sikh Gurus 'pull in a different direction'. Social studies of Sikhs, therefore, require an attentiveness to the workings of different forces in individuals or groups and different resultant leanings or layered responses (e.g. a deep-rooted Punjabi cultural preference for male offspring versus the Sikh religious code to stress equal welcome to the birth of a boy or a girl). I will now turn to discussing distinctive features of Sikh tradition and issues around interpreting and defining it.

6.1.3 *Ways of defining and conceiving Sikh heritage: Sikhi and dharam*

The origins of Sikh heritage lie in the lives and teachings of ten consecutive Sikh Gurus. Key terminology and concepts relating to this are introduced by Nesbitt (2005). 'Sikh', meaning learner or disciple, is associated with the Punjabi verb *sikhna*, to learn. The word 'guru', long used in India to denote a revered teacher, is used specifically by Sikhs (spelt 'Guru' in English with a capital 'G') as a title for these ten founders, with the understanding that 'Guru' signifies someone who illuminates darkness, i.e. an enlightener. Guru is also the title and authoritative status given to the volume of sacred text, Guru Granth Sahib, which Sikhs describe and treat (see below) as their 'living' or 'eternal' Guru. When referring to the Gurus, Sikhs will often use additional markers of respect: '*Sri*' before the title '*Guru*', and '*Ji*' at the end of the name.

Mandair (2013) problematizes popular use (by Sikhs and non-Sikhs) of the term 'Sikhism', in that consigns Sikh life to the category of 'religion' (and, by association, of the 'other') which western historical processes have set in opposition to the 'secular'. Such a polarization, he notes, is not reflected in the development of Sikh tradition and in indigenous

terms for it, such as *Sikhi, dharam* or *gurmat.* The feminine noun *Sikhi*, he points out, suggests of a way of learning and being to be thought of in a 'qualitative' way; it is 'action-oriented', carries 'potential for self-transformation' and is suggestive of 'internal fluidity', as compared to the 'quantitative' and 'concretized' view encapsulated in the term 'Sikhism', which can be seen as reflective of the modernizing encounter with the West (2013: 13). His use of a hybridized *Sikhi(*sm) makes visible the distinction, accepts a historical condition and allows for new dynamics between the two framings. The idea of reanimating a *Sikhi* resting latent in modern/colonial constructions of 'Sikhism' is further developed by Bhogal (2014) in his discussion of postcolonial and postmodern perspectives on the tradition.

For participants in this study (notably Bhai Sahib), the alternative term *dharam* evoked a multifaceted heritage of practice which can '*orient*' the personal and social consciousness towards '*value-led*' living, and the word *gurmat* for 'Guru's wisdom' emphasized how *Sikhi* and *dharam* are '*illuminated*' by it. These definitions open up different ways of understanding the Sikh dimensions of this study, involving concepts and values as well as group identification. This distinction links to a matrix derived from work by Ballard (1994) (highlighted in Nesbitt 2011) to glean different stances or behaviours observable in Sikhs towards their faith. These include the: *dharmic* (relating to religious practice); *qaumic* (relating to membership of a religio-political community, derived from the notion of *qaum* as a cohesive people) and *panthic* (relating to membership of a body of spiritual followers, or *panth*). These reflect different leanings and overlapping points of emphasis in 'being Sikh'. It also reflects how Sikhs have framed themselves and been framed as members of a 'world religion' or 'nation'. As will be seen, the *dharmic* dimension emerged as particularly salient in this study.

6.1.4 Key values and semiotic features in the formation of the Sikh dharam

In appendix 5, I provide an overview of the formation of the Sikh *dharam* over the lives of the ten Gurus, highlighting key features outlined in various introductions by authors from contrasting standpoints (e.g. Mandair 2013; Singh, N-G.K. 2011; Nesbitt 2005; Shackle & Mandair 2005; Mann 2004; Grewal 1998; Cole & Sambhi 1998; McLeod 1991). This overview charts key historical phases and events which have shaped Sikh understandings of their heritage. Section 6.2, focuses on transmissions of Sikh values and practice within a growing diaspora. Sikh diversity is further examined in 6.3 on the understanding that aspects of religious identity, like linguistic identity, are always fluid and mutating.

Key values rooted in Sikh teachings include: that of 'oneness', as expressed in the logo pronounced *Ik Oankar*, which recognises a sacred unity interconnecting all that exists and humanity at large: a threefold motto (*naam japo, kirat karo, vand ke chhako*) encouraging a life to be lived 'meditatively, industriously and generously' (Nesbitt 2005: 28): the view that 'truthful living' (being *sachiara*) is a greater pursuit than theories or rhetoric about truth and that this involves overcoming the workings of *haumai* (the selfish ego) and 'orienting the self towards a divine imperative that is always already inscribed within the self' (Shackle & Mandair 2005: xxviii). The twin concept of '*miri*' (worldly ability and strength) and '*piri*' (strength of spiritual attributes and wisdom), signals that the former risks corruption without support of the latter and this is echoed again in the *sant-sipahi* (saint-soldier) identity associated with the creation of the Khalsa order of initiated Sikhs. Such principles reinforce the Sikh view that the 'spiritual' and 'secular' are mutually dependent and enhancing and that individual and social wellbeing are interrelated.

The Sikh theme of oneness is reflected in the respect given by the Gurus to those of different religious allegiances and personal sacrifices they made to protect religious freedom where it was threatened. It is also reflected in the transreligious nature of the Sikh sacred text, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which Sikhs have revered as a 'living' or 'eternal' Guru since the line of ten Gurus ended. This explains a principle of non-proselytisation amongst Sikhs (although the Sikh *dharam* is practiced by some non-Punjabis) and almost family-like sense of inheriting the legacy of the Gurus. This in turn explains the strong links between faith, culture and ethnicity which characterizes Sikh life by and large.

Key points of note during the ten Guru period include their mobility; each Guru was based in a different successive location and often travelled widely. They were also appointed Guru at contrasting, junior to senior, life stages. Forms of sustained local leadership and inspiration to Sikhs were also provided by their wives, mothers, daughters and grandmothers who peopled a family and community-centred tradition, not inclined towards monastic orders of monks or nuns free from such identities and commitments. The Gurus had also firmly rebuked the killing of baby girls, social practices requiring women to veil their faces or self-immolate following death of a husband ('sati'). The grassroots movement was spiritual in nature yet clearly socio-politically engaged, projecting independence and sovereignty whist building alliances and promoting hospitality. The Gurus were also known for their multilingual and musical skills as reflected in their socially adaptive and lyrical ways of teaching (see 6.2.2 on *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*).

Political upheavals meant the Gurus also had to respond to aggression and brutality. The heightening of this climate in the decade after the ten Guru period plays an indelible role the making and valuing of the Sikh *sant-sipahi* identity. Grewal (1998) outlines how, as

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Mughal power waned and the Punjab underwent waves of Afghan invasion, hunting and persecution of Khalsa Sikhs led to genocide campaigns and two historic mass killings in 1746 and 1762. Sikh resistance and the decline of the Mughal regime led to Sikh political sovereignty in the early nineteenth century and a strengthening of pan-Punjabi identities. Following indigenous rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Punjab became absorbed into the British Empire in India. Mandair (2009) presents a close examination of the domino effects of British administrative and Christian missionary activity, and of Orientalist and theological scholarly production, on further formations of Sikh (and Hindu, Muslim) identity, bringing new imperatives, paradigms and technologies (e.g. print) for self-representation into play. In the early twentieth century, attempts were made by a collective of Sikh scholars to create a standard code to define a Sikh and the Sikh way of life. This led to the publication, in 1950, of the Sikh Rehat Maryada, popularly translated as 'code of conduct' to guide personal and communal Sikh practice globally.

6.2 'At home in motion': migration, diaspora and transmissions of Sikh practice

6.2.1   Trajectories and identities of Sikhs in the UK

Patterns of migration and categories of identification

'At home in motion' is the title Ahluwalia (2011) gives to his discussion of the Sikh embrace of mobility as a value and of challenges faced in differing forgings of a Sikh diaspora in an 'age of colonization' and, now, in an 'age of globalization'. Nesbitt (2005) summarises Sikh and broader Punjabi migration to the South East Asia, East Africa, and North America from the late nineteenth century. Extensive Sikh recruitment to the British army and participation, across different continents, in the two world wars is documented by Madra et al. (2013).

Following a small earlier presence, Sikhs arrived and settled in the UK in key phases of postwar migration from: the Indian Subcontinent in the 1950s; East Africa in the late 1960s; Afghanistan in the 1990s. Initially, Sikhs faced considerable discrimination in different the different urban settings where they lived and worked. However, after a historic court case in 1983, in which a UK school's refusal to let a Sikh boy wear a turban was deemed discriminatory, Sikhs, like Jews, became defined as an ethnic group for the purposes of the Race Relations Act, 1976. But this legislation was not accompanied by census categories which provided a way of identifying Sikhs, until the 2001 National Census introduced categorization by religious identity, allowing a picture of the Sikh presence in the UK to be gleaned. It officially counted 336,000 Sikhs, amounting to 0.6% of the total population, set against 8% consisting of 'minority ethnic communities'. The 2011 Census counted 430,000 Sikhs in the UK. An overview of the Sikh experience in Britain, from the lens of minority studies, is offered by Singh and Tatla (2006) and successive editions of the British Sikh Report (2013, 2014, 2015) provides an on-going picture for policy-makers.

Sikh diversities and factors shaping Sikh diasporic life

Nesbitt (2005) outlines how the first wave of migration from India, included a majority of Sikhs from the Jat land-owning caste from rural Punjab. Many cut their hair in order be employable (e.g. in the foundries of the West Midlands) and wives later joining them also entered the workforce. A second wave of 'twice migrant' (Bhachu 1985) Sikhs, born and raised in British East Africa, was to follow as a result of increased Africanisation (and expulsion from Uganda). Accustomed to maintaining a distinct identity overseas (Nesbitt 2005) with many occupying professional posts, this second group tended to have more confidence in preserving the turban in the new British environment. In a third wave of migration, we saw the arrival of Afghani Sikhs following persecution by the Taliban, along

with sporadic Sikh migration from India and mainland Europe. Studies of the European presence of Sikhs are brought together by Jackobsen & Myrvold (2011) with a chapter on Sikh diversity in the UK offered by Nesbitt (2011). The little discussed role of key saintly figures (*sants*) to nurture the faith and to significantly shape the onward directions of Sikh diasporic life is discussed by (Tatla 1992).

Sikh diversities therefore stem from contrasting migratory trajectories and to forms of caste lineage (including Bhatras and Ravidasis with an assemblage of Hindu/Sikh-oriented practices). They also stem different patterns of affiliation to different transnational organisations or '*jathas*' emphasising different facets (e.g. *sewa* or *kirtan* - see below) of Sikh practice (Takhar 2005). An American-based organization of mainly non-Punjabi Sikhs has brought a new-age style emphasis on yoga and meditation, along with new musical styles to the wider Sikh fold. New media, technology and professional networks have further diversified forms of Sikh belonging. This has been cultivated and sustained through a number of key features of Sikh practice which played a significant role in the lives of the social actors who founded the Nishkam nursery. I will now outline these below.

6.2.2 *Housing and carrying a mobile legacy: transmissions of Sikh practice*

The gurudwara as a threshold

J. Singh (2012) has conducted extensive research on the ways in which the transmission of Sikh practice takes place and on perceptions of young British Sikhs with regard to Sikh practice. Historically, gurudwaras (often spelt *gurdwaras*) have been set up wherever Sikhs have sizably settled. They have provided key resources and, as such, they been considered 'the vital organ of community life' (Ahluwalia 2011). The gurudwara is the 'threshold' (*dwar*) to the 'Guru' and seen as a 'home' or 'abode' in which the Guru Granth Sahib

resides. In the *darbar* hall or Guru's 'court' the volume of scripture is enthroned under a canopy, wrapped in specially sewn fabrics and recited from ceremoniously. People arrive to pay their respects by bowing before it, having removed their shoes, washed hands and covered their heads at the entrance. As a gesture of equal welcome, all are offered a sweet mixture known as *parshad* and invited to have *langar*, a vegetarian meal served from the egalitarian 'Guru's kitchen'. Key practices in gurudwara life reflect those expected in Sikh daily life including: the twofold practice of *simran* (meditative practice) and *sewa* (forms of service to others); doing and listening to *paath* (recitation of *Gurbani*, the scriptural teachings) and *kirtan* (singing them to musical accompaniment); engaging with *sangat* or the (spiritually enlightened) 'company' of others (sometimes translated as 'congregation'). Whilst gurudwaras, run on community donations, are attended on weekends and special commemorations, or for weddings and funeral services, they are by tradition open whole day allowing ad hoc informal visits. Often they provide language, scriptural and music classes, educational workshops and camps. Most are run by elected committees and, in some instances, factionalism due to cultures of voting has sometimes proved problematic. A few are overseen by figures recognized, or specially appointed, for their spiritual accomplishment and leadership, sometimes addressed by the title *Sant* (Tatla 1992).

Sri Guru Granth Sahib: embodied teachings

As a threshold, the gurudwara enables one to come into the presence of the sacred volume of text, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Reflected in this notion is the Sikh practice of referring to the sacred text as one would a person (i.e. as Guru), whereas to objectify it, e.g. by using the term 'book', would jar as being out of place. As well as approaching the Guru as a sovereign (see above), Sikhs also talk about gathering to sit '*Guru di goad vich*' or 'in the Guru's lap', revealing a view of its nurturing and parent-like presence. In addition, practices

such as melodic recitation or singing, form a key means to communicate the Guru's wise speech or utterance (*Gur-bani* or *Gur-bachan*), which is seen to emanate from the body (*deh*) of the sacred text. The text itself is lyrically composed and musically organized and the implications of this to the task of interpretation are discussed by Bhogal (2001). This discussion is helpful insofar as the Guru Granth Sahib can be viewed in this study as a form of 'policy' text (holding an authoritative status and communicating guiding principles for the Sikh social actors), which was being interpreted alongside English state policy frameworks in the nursery's creation.

Bhogal (2001) draws attention to the weight of scholarly traditions which have favoured the reason-led, abstract interpretation of religious texts, prevalent just as Western studies of Sikh tradition emerged under conditions of imperialism, modernisation and Christian missionary activity (2001: 73). A view more sensitised to the indigenous uses and pedagogy of Gurbani and to the role of mood and tone in its composition and expression, recognises how 'the communication speaks of an attitude and action not only of statement and abstraction' and emphasises ongoing transformative 'participation with knowledge' rather than 'ownership' of it (2001: 88). Rather than philosophical discourse, its verses are thus better seen as 'sites' or 'locations of engagement' (2001: 94). This social role is further heightened by the tranlingual, transcultural and transreligious nature of the text (discussed by Singh 2007). Sikh teachings can thus been seen as housed or embodied in the physical volume and script (known as Gurmukhi) of the sacred text, as well as carried, shared and internalised in the nuance of spoken (and sung) word. In this study, instead of providing a text-based analysis of Gurbani, I reveal how the social actors involved were drawing on its teachings to construct notions of the 'educated person'. This builds on the introduction I provided in Sagoo 2009, in the section (2.2) entitled 'Cultural frameworks for learning'.

The amritdhari presence and ardas prayer

For some, gurudwaras have provided regular encounter with *amritdhari* or initiated Sikhs who are a minority (perhaps 10%) in the wider Sikh population. The Sikh Rehat Maryada outlines the *amritdhari* lifestyle to include a daily discipline of prayer, abstaining from intoxicants including nicotine and alcohol. Many additionally maintain a vegetarian diet. Whilst most Sikhs might use the regular greeting *Sat Sri Akal* (invoking the 'supreme, timeless truth'), the following greeting for *amritdhari* Sikhs opens and closes segments of gurudwara services: *Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa; Vaheguru ji ki fateh (*where the word *Vaheguru* invokes God – the wondrous Guru - to whom the Khalsa belongs and attributes any victory). The history of Sikh communal experience and a reminder of the faith's enduring values are condensed into the *ardas* prayer of supplication which ends religious services. As such the *ardas* 'houses' this history and associated values wherever Sikhs travel or settle. Key mottos it contains include '*man neeva, mat uchi*' and '*sarbat da bhalla*' (respectively, striving to: 'lower the mind to be humble and elevate it to be wise' and to 'support the wider welfare of all'). As the data analysis will show, these Punjabi language concepts were particularly referred to in the envisioning and creation of the Nishkam nursery.

Embodied mobile heritage: the dastar and panj kakkar

Similarly, consciousness of a Sikh legacy is housed in the visible identity that Sikhs have carried with them as a stateless diaspora. This includes the *dastar* or turban, which Ahluwalia (2011) discusses maintaining through multiple migrations in his own life, with new challenges in the post-9/11 war-on-terror climate. Well known as part of male Sikh identity, it is also worn by some women, be this based on personal choice or on membership of particular *jathas*, often in recognition of a legendary Sikh female warrior, Mai Bhago. Alternatively, some women (and men) may wear instead a simpler *keski* cloth covering and

young boys with uncut hair have it tied in a topknot and covered with a *patka* cloth. Most Sikh women will draw a *chunni* scarf over their head when embarking on religious activities, or as Punjabi cultural contexts may require.

The *panj kakkar* ('Five Ks') mandatory for initiated men and women consist of the: *kara* (iron wristlet); *kes* (uncut hair); *kangha* (small wooden comb); *kirpan* (small, sheathed 'sword', secured in a *gatra* sash); and *kachhera* (undershorts, secured with a drawstring). Many non-initiated Sikhs may maintain the *kes* and almost all will retain the *kara*. Understood as gifts that were honoured to the Khalsa by the tenth Guru, these five articles are associated with values which are variously cited to include: ethical living, clarity, integrity, dignity, devotion, courage, compassion, resilience, self-restraint and non-abuse of power.

The notion of sovereignty associated with the *dastar* is linked to scriptural concepts of 'conquering the self' and operating unfettered from *haumai* ('*Man jitai jag jeet*' – 'conquer your mind and you conquer the world' SGGS p. 6). It is also echoed in the words *Singh* (for males) and *Kaur* (for females) which Sikhs may use as middle names or surnames. The long-held Indic association of these terms with sovereignty and noble status (where Kaur meant 'prince') is often lost in their conventional English translation into 'lion' and 'princess' (as one Sikh during my research humorously remarked, this latter coinage can easily prompt 'Ken and Barbie' style interpretations of this naming tradition). When Sikhs arrived in Africa, as family history informs me, the reputation of 'Singhs' as 'lions' gained a particular significance, linked to the wildlife of the new continent.

Transmissions through translation

These semiotic dimensions of Khalsa practice, which flag Sikh figured-worlds-on-the-move, invite ongoing interpretation, as processes of historical construction and meaning-making are increasingly explored (e.g. in Singh & Barrier, 2001). For example, readings of the Khalsa identity can involve notions of 'martial race' (Singh & Tatla 2005: 15) promoted during the British colonial period, or of human spirituality that is feminized in Sikh scripture, as explored by the Sikh feminist scholar, Nikki Guninder Kaur Singh (2011: 53-4). The transmission of a legacy over time and space necessarily involves the task of translating, where meaning, as Singh points out, is 'carried (*trans*) across (*latus*)' (Singh, N-G.K. 2007: 34). This poses a challenge given the emergence of English translations of *Gurbani* in a Victorian-influenced Indian milieu involving a strong Judeo-Christian framing. This for her has obscured the 'kinship' between languages that is found in Sikh scripture, as well as its intimate, everyday quality to be felt, as well as rationally digested (2007: 33). Likewise, Bhogal (2007: 13) considers the difficulty of translating a 'multi-authored, musical and sung text' which additionally requires one to be a channel, sensitized to conveying its existential concerns.

At one time, second-generation Sikhs attempting to 'figure out' their identity, in the face of more sporadic community-based efforts, might have turned to emergent literature interpreting and presenting to wider audiences their hitherto lesser known religious tradition. Such writing was furthered in particular through educational groundwork undertaken by Owen Cole (e.g. in Cole and Sambhi, 1995). A more mobile as well as digital age brings opportunities for new networks and forms of learning, including exposure to indigenous oral exploration of the tradition (see 6.4) by esteemed contemporary *panthic* figures such as Bhai Pinderpal Singh.

Towards new readings of Sikh 'practice' and social contribution

From a 'Religious Education' perspective, the word 'practice' is usually contrasted with 'belief' to suggest categories of religious observance (rituals, festivals etc.). As this study highlights, the transmission of Sikh practice can also be understood as the less explicit (or, actually, less culturally 'strange') ways in which Sikh values inform practical participation in, and contribution to, the everyday and ever-widening contexts of societal life. This view encourages recognition of 'a hybrid conceptuality where European and Asian terms mutually affect and transform each other' (Mandair 2011: 243). Sikhs are quick to describe their tradition's values as 'universal' in order to reveal more widely accessible and widely shared meanings indexed by the otherwise very particular markers of Sikh identity and practice. A close study of how a group of social actors might talk about and mobilize such values, and relate them to approaches stemming from contrasting cultural or institutional standpoints, underlines the significance of ideas around knowledge production and civic participation in the light of increased globalization which I introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. For Bhogal this stance is echoed in the very nature of the multivocal verses of Gurbani, which prompt him to observe that: 'as universalism tends towards totalitarianism, the pluriversal… tends towards interdependent networks' (Bhogal 2014: 228).

6.3   Re-engaging with 'being Sikh': new directions and institutional initiatives

6.3.1   *New turns in Sikh Studies*

New ground to interpret and draw on Sikh 'indigenous' understanding, as a way to engage with, as well as inform advances in interdisciplinary academic research, has been provided by the emergence of the journal, *Sikh Formations*, launched in 2005. In its first editorial, Ahluwalia, Mandair & Singh (2005) summarise developments in the 1960s, where 'area

studies' became the main paradigm for organizing the study of non-western cultures and 'religious studies' grew into a secular discipline. Increased migration of Sikhs to the UK and US and a series of key events brought renewed attention to Sikhs, not seen since the colonial era, and entailed a shift in emphasis towards anthropology. This contrasted a 'normative Sikh theology' characterizing academic developments in India concerned with the self-representation of Sikhs and Sikhism (which can be understood as one means for 'wresting the mirror of representation' from the earlier hands of the colonizer and Orientalist anthropologists) (2005: 3). In the west, increased interest in diasporic identities and heritage transmission led to further developments. Cultural studies came to be recognized for its potential reinvigorate Sikh studies and create multidisciplinarity within the field. One gap identified was for Sikh Studies scholars to contribute to theoretical developments, beyond their roles as 'native informants' to existing paradigms of study. This might enable Sikh Studies to move from a peripheral to a more central area of academic interest, valued as a site of intersection with mainstream disciplines rather than being 'consigned to the space of the museum' (2005: 7). Another gap lay in the view that 'the kind of subjectivity that accrues to being a 'Sikh', or…what it means to be a Sikh, continues to be foreclosed.' (2005: 5). In this regard, the etymology of Sikh as 'learner' and Sikhi as 'the constant process of learning and becoming' (2005: 7) might lend different starting points for Sikh Studies. Rather than heralding 'a decline from secular values in order to accommodate the views of ardent traditionalists' (2005: 8), new forms of engagement might thus serve to approach the study of religious tradition as not just a feature of identity, but a *theory* of identity (Lupton and Reinhard 1999). The ethnographic approach of this present case study has allowed scope to capture theory-building perspectives and practices of its Sikh participants and can be seen to echo some of the moves in the Sikh Studies field.

6.3.2 Emerging school networks

Underlying the Nishkam nursery project, as we shall see, is the memory of earlier Sikh mobilization in Kenya, to found the 'Khalsa School' in Nairobi. The reopening of this Nairobi school in 2014, with Bhai Sahib invited to introduce new educational visions for the 21st century global village, reflects both continuity and transition from conditions of colonization to globalization (Ahluwalia 2011). The racially segregated context of schooling in former British Kenya is recollected by Gundara (2000). The long commute between his rural home environment (where he socialised with neighbouring African and European children), and the city environment of his Asian school, generated complex responses within him and a persistent sense of displacement. Disillusioned by the overly Anglicised colonial school culture and a mediocrity seemingly espoused many Asians, he also recognized how the preservation of Asian languages in Kenya brought benefits by allowing some aspects of culture to thrive (2000: 9). The hope for more culturally balanced curricula and more visionary efforts of minority and majority cultures informs Gundara's discussion on intercultural and inclusive education, as do concerns about 'separate schools' set up in reactionary ways to social problems, in contrast to 'groups working out strategies to make cohesive and stable communities.' (2000: vii).

The opening of the Nishkam nursery in Handsworth, Birmingham, in 2009 was also set in the context of the early 21st century emergence of Sikh educational institutions in India and the UK. In London, following several years of educationally successful but economically challenging independent operation, a state-funded Guru Nanak Sikh Voluntary Aided school was opened in 1999, founded by Sant Amar Singh. Now the Guru Nanak Academy, it is also a recognized centre for teacher training (www.gurunanaksikhacademy.co.uk). The opening of the state-funded Nishkam Primary (2011) and High School (2012) in

Birmingham has led to a new network of UK schools run by the Nishkam School Trust (www.nishkamschooltrust.org), as well as a training institute in Kericho, Kenya, the diasporic birthplace of the organisation.

In India, the expansion of Akal Academy schools is traced back to the vision, at the turn of the twentieth century, of Sant Attar Singh to promote 'modern' education 'duly tempered with spirituality' (akalacademybarusahib.com). He encouraged Sant Teja Singh, a renowned figure in modern Sikh educational history, to train overseas. One of my research participants - K. Kaur - recalled meeting him in Kenya. Qualifying in the US in teacher training at Columbia and with a Masters degree at Harvard, he also travelled to Europe, East Asia and Africa and set up several education institutions in India. One of these institutions, the school in Baru Sahib, describes its approach as 'combining spiritual and multicultural experiences with academic and creative opportunities', with the 'philosophy and standards' of the International Baccalaureate with the 'methodology and advantages' of the 'traditional Indian Education System', so as to foster 'world class citizens'. Its associated Kalgidhar Trust (barusahib.org) has created 129 (to date) non-selective schools in deprived rural villages, along with other centres to provide medical care, drugs rehabilitation and promote educational, academic and employment opportunities for women. Work is also underway to establish a university, as envisaged, according to Sikh tradition, by the tenth Guru.

When the Nishkam nursery was set up, these developments in India were becoming known to UK Sikhs through new digital media and gurudwara networks. Whilst little research exists on these Indian and UK-based initiatives, Ozanne (2010) discusses Sikh desires to shape educational provision in the context of both national settings. Noting that the UK's broadly liberal culture has been suited to Sikh 'openness to other groups', the aspiration,

nevertheless, to found schools with a Sikh character reflects a rationale to 'transmit the religio-cultural heritage and preserve the core of spirituality which motivates their social outreach'.

6.3.3 New media connectivity

Just as the renovation of the Nishkam nursery was underway, the first Sikh digital satellite channel, the Birmingham-based Sikh Channel, was launched. This was a milestone in the minority history of Sikhs/Punjabis, building on an earlier establishment of Sikh and Punjabi radio channels. Postwar mainstream broadcasting for South Asian migrants had earlier been limited to the national languages (Hindi/Urdu) of the Subcontinent and significant campaigning to promote Punjabi, as spoken by most South Asian migrants, was undertaken by the early Indian Workers Association. Sikh Channel is today joined by Sangat TV and Akal Channel. A variety of multilingual programming reflects Sikh intergenerational and inter-group diversity, connectivity with religiously diverse Punjabi and South Asian speakers and the social contexts of their lives in the UK, mainland Europe and further afield. They offer hitherto unavailable platforms for self-reflection in local, national and global 'community' contexts. These developments are joined by wide-ranging websites and means of cyber-connectivity which reflect diverse pathways for doing 'being Sikh', as well as pointing to core values that continue to suggest and define what being Sikh means.

6.4 Chapter Summary

I began this chapter by outlining, in 6.1, historical turns and formations in ways of 'being Sikh' over the five centuries since the emergence of Sikh tradition in the Punjab. This was during extensive phases of Mughal and later British imperial rule - separated by a short period of Sikh-led indigenous Punjabi rule - before the Punjab's partition, after

Independence, across a new India-Pakistan border. I firstly remarked, in 6.1.1, on scholarly attention being given to sociohistorical and knowledge-production processes which have shaped understandings of Sikh tradition as a 'world religion' from the outside-in as well as inside-out. This pre-empts some of the ambivalence and alternation which was evident in my data analysis as the social actors in this study went about discussing elements of Sikh tradition. In 6.1.2, I provided some historical and political background to the Punjab, indicating impacts on the culture of education in the region, which was a discussion point in the envisioning process for the Nishkam nursery (see 10.5.1). I then moved, in 6.1.3, to outline core life perspectives and values associated with the Sikh *dharam*. This introduced '*dharam*' an indigenous Punjabi term which the social actors frequently switched to instead of 'faith' or 'religion', suggesting it emphasised the everyday lived aspect of the faith and its role as a 'multifaceted, conscious practice' (see 10.3.6).

In 6.2, I moved to the theme of 'migration, diaspora and transmissions of Sikh practice', lifting the idea that these processes have engendered a condition of being 'at home in motion' (Ahluwalia 2011). I also highlighted, in 6.2.1, a useful distinction advanced by Ahluwalia (2011), to consider the different forgings of a Sikh diaspora in an 'age of colonization' and 'age of globalization'. I outlined patterns of Sikh migration to England, from the Indian subcontinent, East Africa, Afghanistan as well as more recently from mainland Europe. I noted how Sikhs, like Jews, became identified in law as an ethnic group, although it was until the National Census introduced categorization by religion that a picture of the Sikh presence in the UK could be gleaned. I highlighted how different migratory trajectories and forms of occupational or caste lineage, as well as different patterns of affiliation to transnational Sikh groups (such as the '*jatha*' or organisation behind various Nishkam endeavours in this study) account for diverse ways of being, or orienting oneself

towards being, Sikh. I also highlighted how professional, virtual and other networks have further diversified forms of Sikh belonging.

This outline served as a backdrop to consider, in 6.2.2, how Sikhs have been 'housing and carrying a mobile legacy' through: founding and developing Sikh gurudwaras which, as 'thresholds' to encounter Sikh teachings and practices, as well sites of hospitality to Sikhs and non-Sikhs, are regarded as 'the vital organ of community life' (Ahluwalia 2011); the teachings embodied in the volume of scripture known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib; the maintenance of the Khalsa identity and way of life, which flags what I described as an 'embodied mobile heritage'; the *ardas* prayer which encapsulates the history of Sikh communal experiences as well as enduring values to be cherished on the onward journey. Elements of this *ardas* prayer will feature in my data analysis, including the Khalsa salutation, the concept of serving '*sarbat da bhalla*' ('the wider welfare of all') and of '*man neeva mat uchi*' (to balance wisdom with humility). I finished this section by highlighting how transmissions of Sikh heritage over time and space involves the task of translation. Academic attention being given to the challenges involved (Singh 2007) and Bhogal (2007; 2014) will be echoed over my data analysis, as is the idea that societal conditions are engendering 'a hybrid conceptuality where European and Asian terms mutually affect and transform each other' (Mandair 2011: 243).

I finished this chapter by outlining new directions and institutional initiatives offering ways to re-engage with 'being Sikh' in contemporary contexts, in academic and educational arenas as well as through media initiatives. In 6.3.1 I noted how recent scholarship is anticipating Sikh Studies to move beyond a peripheral area of academic interest to be valued as a site of intersection with mainstream disciplines (citizenship and education being

pertinent to this study) and to stimulate interest in religion as not just a feature, but a theory, of identity (Lutpon and Reinhard 1999). Whilst in this study I consider religious elements of cultural, communicative and semiotic practice, I also observe how religious elements are drawn on by social actors in discursive practices of theory building. In this regard, elucidations of the 'Sikh *dharam*' as a site of thinking and practice (like elucidations of 'linguistic ethnography') are not to be confused, I would suggest, with essentialising 'identity'.

I ended by noting how Sikh identities continue to be forged through emergent networks of schools with a Sikh character (in India, England, as well as East Africa) as well as new forms of media connectivity, such as digital TV channels. Whilst they provide a common platform for Sikhs as a stateless minority with diasporic networks and contrasting interests and agendas, new educational (and one can add communicational) structures, according to one non-Sikh commentator, also reflect a rationale to 'transmit the religio-cultural heritage and preserve the core of spirituality which motivates their social outreach' (Ozanne 2010).

Having provided some background to the Sikh dimensions of this case study, I will now shift attention to the particular locality and particular people who constituted the research site and its participants. This involves introducing the city of Birmingham in Central England, the inner-city area of Handsworth and what was locally referred to as the Nishkam 'campus' which was the main setting for my interaction with different categories of social actor, involved with the project to set up the nursery and the new nursery institution once it opened.

PART C: CASE STUDY OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODS

CHAPTER 7:

RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

7.1   The urban context of this study

Located in the Midlands in central England, Birmingham became a city in 1889, having been at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution and English Enlightenment. Known as 'the workshop of the world' and 'city of a thousand trades', its achievements are attributed to pioneers who were both '*savants*' and '*fabricants*', i.e. knowers and thinkers who were also makers and doers (Jones 2009: 70, based on Mokyr 2002). As an emerging city, Birmingham was free from the traditional control of the established church, the aristocracy and guilds. A plural and cooperative urban environment came into being and attracted new settlers, including the city's early Jewish community, as well as many 'Non-Conformists' (e.g. Baptists, Quakers, Methodists and Unitarians) whose contributions to urban regeneration were based on the idea of a 'Civic Gospel' (Green 2008). It sent a message to central government and church that a sense of municipal belonging could be an effective lever for social change (Parsons 1988: 46). Urban development culminated in pioneering town improvements led by Joseph Chamberlain, during an era of relative autonomy for Birmingham as a 'city-state' (Ward 2005).

The postwar years brought more centralised government control in the running and shaping of the city. As part of postwar reconstruction, the city scape saw the introduction of ring roads, concrete buildings and high rise flats and a boom, (followed by its collapse in the mid-1970s) of its industrial economy led by large firms. Immigration from Ireland was

joined by new waves of migration from Commonwealth countries in response to British labour needs. Following initial intentions to stay temporarily for work, migrants from South Asia and the Caribbean eventually settled permanently. Together with their second and third-generation British-born descendants, they are now joined by more recent migrants e.g. from Eastern Europe. Following 2011 census figures, Birmingham City Council (2014) reports 42% of the city population to be 'non-white' and new research (Simpson 2013) suggests it will become the UK's second 'plural' city. Birmingham is currently the largest local authority in Europe. The prominent religious groups are Christians (46%), Muslims (22%), Sikhs (3%) and Hindu (2%) and 45% of the population is under 30. At the time of the Nishkam nursery's creation Birmingham was being officially represented by its council as 'A Global City with a Local Heart.'

An early picture of mid-1970s Handsworth, the inner city suburb in which this study is located, appears in Sir David Winkley's (2002) account of his headship (formative for his wider, influential career in education) at the Grove School in the Soho ward. Its Victorian park and redbrick houses indicate its past status as a 'respectable middle-class enclave'. But, according to Winkley (2002), by the late 1970s, it was ranked the most socially deprived ward in Birmingham with 91% youth unemployment, with the majority of local people being from ethnic minority groups. It was also the scene to the Handsworth riots in 1981 and 1985 (erupting again in 1991, 2005 and 2012). According to the 2011 Census, the languages most spoken in the Soho ward are English (70%), Punjabi (8.7%), Urdu (4.1%), Polish (2.3%) and Bengali (2%). The most prominent religious affiliations are Christian (34.8%); Muslim (29.4%); Sikh (11.3%) and Hindu (4.5%).

The busy shopping thoroughfare, where the Nishkam nursery is located, is reported to be 'the most religiously diverse road in Britain' (Harris 2011). Cultural blending in fashion, commodities and art/entertainment is evidenced in styles of dress (e.g. tunic and jeans), take-away dishes (Punjabi-spiced pizzas with *paneer* or Indian cheese) and the area's music history (e.g. the growth in the 1990s of Bhangra-Reggae fusion). Over the period of the present study, I noted a progressive increase in the complexity of diversity in the local area. This is reflected, for example, is in shop signage featuring names such as 'Europe Supermarket' and, in some instances, pictures of up to a dozen or more national flags lined up in rows. It is also reflected in the linguistic diversity of people boarding local buses, as they converse with each other or on their mobile phones. Signs of social deprivation in Handsworth are joined by others of regeneration, one of them being marked by the hub of Nishkam developments in which the Nishkam nursery sits.

7.2. The Nishkam 'campus' and 'sewadars'

Located at one corner of a crossroads, the Nishkam nursery (opened in 2009), sits opposite the drum shaped, glass-walled Nishkam Centre for civic engagement (opened in 2005), whose training and conference facilities and partnership projects attract a culturally broad range of visitors. Next to this stands a Sikh gurudwara constructed from the late 1970s, on the site of a former Polish club. It receives daily streams of Sikh and non-Sikh visitors (e.g school groups), runs a longstanding supplementary school and serves an estimated million per year free meals from its *langar*. Further along, by the gurudwara is a builders' merchant, formed as a self-help community cooperative during the 1980s economic recession. Next to the nursery is Nishkam Primary (opened in 2011) and nearby is the the Nishkam Healthcare Trust (opened in 2012). At the early stages of my research I had not anticipated this year-on-year pace of change.

These various developments - transforming a previously rundown corner of derelict buildings, a nightclub and a taxi rank - comprise the '*Nishkam campus*', a term coined around the time of the nursery's creation, as a shorthand for the linked hub of different facilities. The newness of the developments is contrasted by the conservation of local architectural heritage that was involved. Nearby also are three institutions Nishkam partners with, which form part of Handsworth's 'heritage trail': a still functioning church (with primary school), a girls' grammar school, and Soho House Museum linked to Birmingham's industrial and enlightenment pioneers.

The Nishkam group of organisations evolved out of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) (introduced in 1.4.1 and more extensively in Sagoo 2009), whose international headquarters are based in the gurudwara. Its origins lie in the revitalisation of Sikh faith practice amongst East African Sikhs by Sant Puran Singh (recognised also for his municipal contributions to the town of Kericho). After similarly guiding early Sikhs in UK, he was succeed by two consecutive spiritual leaders, known by the title of 'Bhai Sahib' ('brotherly leader'). Each one, once selected, has served in a lifelong, unremunerated role.

The organisation attributes its achievements to the principles of *sewa* ('selfless service') and *nishkamta* ('unconditional altruism'). This is reflected in an active culture of 'volunteering', as it is loosely translated, to run community services, develop social projects and physically maintain and construct buildings. Those who do *sewa* are referred to as *sewadars* (see 1.3.2) who are part of the *sangat* ('congregation') or *jatha* ('organisation', i.e. GNNSJ).

7.3   The research participants

The participants featured in this study can be split into four main groups: the 'founders'; the nursery staff; nursery parents and children; external visiting professionals. I will introduce them briefly below.

7.3.1   Nursery 'founders'

Many people directly or indirectly played a role in founding the nursery. A vision for it was reported as first being expressed by Sant Puran Singh. A group of new mothers exploring ideas and means to develop a childcare facility, and longstanding activity to plan for a school, brought together various people, including those who were able to provide key project support, according to their availability, along the way. In this study, 'founders' is used both loosely to refer to these various contributors to the project and also more specifically to indicate the first four people I interviewed in 2008.

These initial interviewees were: 1) Bhai Sahib (whom I would always address as Bhai Sahib Ji – see 7.4.2) - chairman of GNNSJ and later nursery patron, his leadership *sewa* had earnt regional to international honours from civic and religious bodies and was preceded by senior government post in housing and infrastructure development in Zambia, following his earlier professional training as a civil and structural engineer; 2) B. Kaur - who was Scottish-born and an active *sewadar* in the nursery project and who helped also to lead the pilot playgroup; 3) K. Kaur - who was approached in the project as a wise elder, with longstanding and varied professional experience as a former teacher in Kenya; 4) and R. Singh - primary schooled in India, he continued his education in Birmingham and, following careers in the construction industry and in further education, he had gone on take up full-time *sewa* involvements with Nishkam at the time planning was underway for a nursery.

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Second interviews were also carried out with B. Kaur (as a nursery staff member) in 2010 and R. Singh (as a lead in the new school trust) in 2012. Together these participants revealed intergenerational experiences of migration, of childhood and education in contrasting settings, as well as broader ideas informing the creation of the nursey. In Sagoo (2009) I provide further details of their backgrounds, at the time the nursery was being envisioned.

7.3.2   Nursery staff

Members of the early staff I interviewed included the manager, K. Singh, and his colleagues B. Kaur (see also 8.3.2), C. Kaur, D. Singh, all British-born Sikhs in their thirties. K. Singh had previously managed several nurseries in the Midlands and D. Singh had long worked in early years and in social work, with children experiencing deprivation, neglect or abuse. Following a career in finance, B. Kaur worked with the NHS to support families of children under five. Maternity leave offered her the *sewa* opportunity to develop and pilot the nursery project, encouraging her to professionally train and join the nursery team. C. Kaur had long been involved in arts and educational projects with the gurudwara and was likewise drawn to train and work at the nursery.

Others who feature in the analysis, based on notes from conversations, are G. Kaur, a nursery practitioner who had previously worked in mainstream nurseries and M. Kaur, a drama student who was a nursery helper and also helped in drafting texts to articulate the educational vision. Finally, I also interviewed the nursery chef, K.D. Kaur, who had a catering and cleaning business and was experienced in the preparation of *langar*. The nursery practitioners brought to the research the experiences of UK-educated Sikhs with established or emerging professional identities as well as Sikh community-based ones.

7.3.3 *Nursery parents and children*

Early nursery families comprised local British-born Punjabis, mainly Sikh, but some Hindu or with mixed affiliations, plus an Afghani Muslim family. A few regularly attended the gurudwara or were evidently initiated Sikhs. Reflecting a range of ways of being Punjabi, Sikh and/or South Asian, this parent base emerged despite open marketing of the nursery in the local neighbourhood (which had a marked absence of young, white English families). Nursery staff reported an assumption from enquirers that the description '*faith-based*' nursery and its proximity to the gurudwara meant it was for Sikhs or perhaps like a religious 'Sunday school' and day care fees were prohibitive for newer local settlers, especially if state support was not pursuable.   The cultural and religious leanings of the new nursery families were to a degree reflected in the nursery children's appearance (for example, in whether or not boys and girls maintained their *kes* or hair uncut).   This particular research focused more on practitioner identities as they interacted with children rather than the evolving lifeworlds and responses of children themselves.

I analysed six sets of nursery parent interviews (time and length constraints prevented me including more). They included: 1) A British-born Sikh mother acquainted with the gurudwara who had planned to raise at home a long-awaited child, but found in the nursery an extended family-like learning environment she did not have; 2) a Hindu-Punjabi mother recently migrated from Germany, who saw the nursery as rescuing her from a distressful situation concerning her child's wellbeing at a previous nursery and her inability to lose a job and income to care for him herself; 3) a British-born Sikh couple who were regular attendees at the gurudwara but had initial concerns that the nursery would '*segregate*' their child; 4) a British-born Sikh father, and mother raised in India, who saw in the nursery a happy medium between mainstream and heritage education; 5) a British-born mother who

anticipated the nursery would specialise in bilingual English-Punjabi nurture; 6) a British-born Sikh couple, otherwise wary of religiousness, but reassured by what they saw as a homely and relaxed, learner-friendly setting for their child. Together these interviews introduced shared and contrasting parental motivations to use the service provided by the new nursery and responses to it.

7.3.4 Nursery visitors

I had the opportunity to conduct three interviews with external visitors to the nursery, who agreed to be identified by their initials. The first, P.D., had extensive experience in producing educational films for early years practice. The second, S.W. had some insights into early years through her RE advisory work involving early years consultants. The third visitor, T.E. provided professional development support in education and specialism in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Together, they helped me to view nursery practice from the education policy contexts and curriculum areas introduced in Chapter 3, as well as introducing professional 'outsider' perspectives (in the case of P.D. and S.W. these were sympathetic to the dispositions-focus due to their links with the local SACRE).

7.4   My positioning as a researcher

7.4.1 *Closeness and distancing: degrees of insiderness and outsiderness*

In Chapter 1, section 1.4.1, I introduced personal starting points for the research including my family background, interdisciplinary interests, experience of parenthood, links to the Nishkam network and the nursery project. My changing tasks and role as a researcher as the nursery project unfolded are outlined in Chapter 8, section 8.2 *Phases and streams of data collection.* In this section of Chapter 7, I reflect on my positioning over the course of this case study and consider what it was able to achieve as I engaged in different degrees of

insiderness and outsiderness. I also touch on the constraints. Significantly, this research reflects the interest taken by linguistic ethnographers to foster an 'inside-outwards directionality' to get analytic distance on what's close at hand. This contrasts with an earlier research tradition of getting familiar with the strange which was associated with 'comprehensive' and 'exotic' ethnography in places far removed from the researcher's own cultural experience (Rampton 2007: 584; 590-1). In this study, I was conducting research in my 'own patch' in the inner-city area of Handsworth, Birmingham, within a social and institutional setting which was familiar to me and which was undergoing processes of change.

Nesbitt's (1999) discussion of a reflexive approach to being a Quaker ethnographer provides a helpful basis to weigh up my 'experiential closeness' as a Sikh participant and *sewadar* within the Nishkam community of practice and my role as a doctoral student observer, employing 'academic distancing' (1999: 89). This was complicated (or enlivened) by the fact that the community of practice which gave rise to the Nishkam nursery was itself drawing from and reaching out to different social worlds and employing different kinds of conceptual distancing to build a vision and a set of aims for the nursery. In addition, the nursery itself was being continuously configured as a hybridized world.   This state of affairs meant that any 'identity' categories of 'outsider' and 'insider' could not be neatly represented 'in fixed and binary terms'. This point has been made by other researchers, for example, Gregory and Ruby (2011) and Martin-Jones, Andrews & Martin (2016) who present examples from reflexive ethnographic research practice in multilingual contexts. I build on their accounts below as I reflect on what the research gained from my closeness and my moments of distancing from the field.

7.4.2 **'Experiential closeness': building and negotiating identities in the field**

In the case of this study, my 'experiential closeness' enabled me to build relationships in the field, and build on existing ones, with relative ease. From this emanated identities which ranged from being a fellow *sewadar* ('volunteer'), a daughterly figure to elders, a sisterly figure to my peers (often addressed by them as 'Gopinder *bhenji*' – *bhenji* is the Punjabi word for 'sister') or a maternal aunt-like figure to children when I joined the nursery staff team as a parent-helper (and was addressed there as 'Gopinder *masi*' – *masi* is the Punjabi word for 'aunty'). This closeness enabled me to draw on linguistic and semiotic resources in ways that helped me in the process of data creation (Erickson, 2004b), given that data is not simply 'gathered' but is co-created in this vein of research.

Whilst the main linguistic resource I employed was English, I noticed how occasional use of Punjabi linguistic resources may have helped to enhance a sense of connectivity, interest, understanding and respect within the relational space of my interactions. One example was the use of the respect marker '*ji*', when I addressed an interviewee as 'Aunty *ji*' or signalled I had registered points she had made with the affirmative '*Achha ji*' ('Yes, OK'). In writing in this thesis, however, as I took on a contemporary academic register, I noted my own Sikh sense of 'something missing' without the insertion of '*ji*' to refer to Bhai Sahib, or the female elder I interviewed, or names of other esteeemed figures I referred to in explanatory text about the Sikh heritage contexts of this study.

Style of dress was another semiotic resource I drew upon in significant ways. As a nursery-helper, my identity as a 'Masi' was signalled by the Punjabi-style female staff uniform; at other times and in other spaces on the Nishkam 'campus', I would, like many others coming and going from the site, move between eastern and western (or culturally fused e.g. tunic

and jeans) styles of dress. As per the cultural norm, when I entered the gurudwara, as a sacred space, I would draw a *chuni* over my head, as I would do also in the presence of Bhai Sahib, given the spiritual leadership role entrusted to him. However, as the Nishkam campus continued to make inroads into the wider secular world I wondered what preferred style of *chuni* use (and hence 'identity') to adopt, since the covering of heads was not a norm in the new primary school and nearby Nishkam healthcare centre when they later opened.

Because of these complex and layered processes of identification in the 'field' as it evolved, I sensed my own shifts in footing, e.g. as I related to research participants with different roles in the nursery project, such as 'project lead' or 'nursery officer'. These were people with whom I shared a family-like communal bond. I might greet them with folded hands and the Khalsa salutation, a 'Hello *ji*' or simple 'hi' according to the context at the time. Such negotiating of identities and relationships through use of different communicative resources has been explored by Giampapa (2013) through the metaphor of a dance. She shows how becoming aware of certain steps and rhythms of interaction with particular research participants can help to enrich a researcher's insights. Due to my cultural embeddedness, I did not need to allow time to acclimatise myself to the field or its complexities and the ease of communication with the research participants, across different kinds of research encounters, allowed more time for reflection on the nature of these relationships and for the generation of a rich body of data.

7.4.3   *Degrees of outsiderness: reflexive distancing to build an interpretive frame*

Here I will briefly discuss and illustrate how elements of the research process enabled the necessary temporal and conceptual distancing for me to build an interpretive frame.

Nesbitt (1999: 105) notes how a researcher, partly embedded in the research, is also 'journeying, with shifting insights and patterns of allegiance over time'. This is reflected in my own phases of involvement and distancing from the nursery project. In its early phases, I heard myself think about researching what 'we' (i.e. the group I had been invited to join) were trying to do; by the time the nursery was up and running, in the hands of its staff team, a shift had occurred to think in terms of what 'they' were trying to do. The passing of time thus enabled me to look back and view, as an outsider looking in, my own role as a participant in and interpreter of the processes which were occurring at the time.

Temporal distance also allowed me to (re)interpret events in the light of the increased contextual knowledge I was building. For example, revisiting multilingual fieldnotes allowed me to reflexively take stock of 'the nature and significance of different jottings' and move 'towards building an interpretive frame' (Creese et al., 2008; Martin-Jones, Andrews and Martin, 2016). Blommaert and Jie (2010: 37) note how this can:

> Tell us a story about an epistemic process: the way in which we tried to make new information understandable for ourselves, using our own interpretive frames, concepts and categories, and gradually shifting into new frames, making connections between earlier and current events, find our way in the local order of things.

This revisting allowed me to recognise the layered social meanings associated with certain terms that got used. For example, my jottings relating to the term 'faith school', when a conversation veered towards the wider planning behind the nursery, would be accompanied by references to government policy, or to the word *dharam* written in Punjabi (or with English transliteration). Other terms that I flagged up in this way were 'multifaith' and 'values-led'. I began to see how the uses of these terms indexed the endeavour of project

leads to find a 'fit' with existing categories of state policy as well as to think more broadly about a developing 'ethos' for the project.

Nesbitt (1999: 93-4) suggests that the Quaker emphasis on silent 'listening' can benefit 'ethnographic listening' whereas 'participant observation' stresses watching. 'Ethnographic listening' can direct attention to 'the spaces between the words' and 'layers of meaning', as well enabling researchers to be 'alert to the speakers tone'. Since I was not dealing with building an understanding of cultural 'otherness' in my fieldwork, I was able to look (and listen) beyond immediately apparent visual or linguistic particularities (e.g. style of dress or spoken accent). Likewise facets of nursery life, such as styles of music played, were not 'exotic' to my sensory palette. This helped direct my attention to less tangible factors, i.e. ideas and values being advanced by social actors, which influenced the theoretical framing I employed.

Reflecting on the experiences of Quaker ethnographers who research religious diversity, Nesbitt (1999: 100) alerts us to the ways in which we may conceptually 'filter' our fieldwork experiences, for example through 'western' or 'Indic' terms and concepts. The example referred to above, relating to my reactions to the use of terms like 'faith school' shows how I alternated my conceptual filters to capture the 'civic' and *dharmic* meanings with which this term was being associated. I share Nesbitt's views (1999: 84) about seeking to integrate – and to recognise a 'synergy' between – my professional research practice, as a social scientist, and my alignments to Sikh thought and practice. For me, both positionings encourage the ability to be an attached, yet detached, 'participant observer' in the social world and to contextualise events within a wider frame. I acknowledge too that 'interpretive practices are shaped by our individual histories, values and beliefs' (Creese and Blackledge

2015: 131). Whilst my positioning as a relative insider helped to prize open particular insights, another researcher, or a collaborative research team, would no doubt have brought alternative interpretive lenses into play (see, especially, Gregory and Lytra 2012 and Creese et al., 2008 & 2015, for reflections on team ethnography in linguistically and culturally diverse settings).

7.5 Chapter summary

I began this chapter by introducing, in 7.1, the urban context of this study, highlighting Birmingham's historical significance at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution and English Enlightenment, as an emerging and relatively autonomous city. Its plural and cooperative environment attracted many 'non-Conformist' settlers and I noted their contribution to urban regeneration based on the idea of a 'Civic Gospel' (Green 2008). As my data analysis will later show, the religiously plural origins of the city, and its history of religiously-inspired social action, were keenly acknowledged by the Nishkam leadership (see 10.4.1). I then highlighted how the postwar years for Birmingham entailed more centralised government control, urban reconstruction involving ring roads and concrete buildings and initial boom (and collapse in the mid-1970s) of an industrial economy led by large firms. This coincided with significant postwar migration from commonwealth countries, notably from the Indian subcontinent and Caribbean. This background, together with ongoing social diversification, has made Birmingham set to become the UK's second 'plural' city (Simpson 2013).

I then introduced the local inner-city area of Handsworth, ranked as the most socially deprived ward in Birmingham by the late 1970s, with high youth unemployment and a majority 'ethnic minority' population, as well as scene to riots erupting in the 1980s. I noted

that Punjabi was recorded as the second most spoken language in Handsworth after English, and that 'Sikh' was the third most prominent religious affiliation after 'Christian' and 'Muslim', according to the 2011 National Census. I highlighted how the road where the nursery was located was reported to be 'the most religiously diverse road in Britain' (Harris 2011). My remark about cultural blending being evidenced through commodities (e.g. food and entertainment) pre-empts the non-consumer oriented notions of 'fusion', concerning social and education practice, which were being advanced in the nursery project and which I will discuss in 10.3.

In 7.2, I homed in on what was locally referred to as the Nishkam 'campus', to suggest a site where different centres of activity are brought together. This usage had come about since the main gurudwara building and adjacent, cooperative timber merchants, were joined by the opening in 2006 of the Nishkam Centre and the Nishkam nursery in 2009. I highlighted the daily streams of Sikh and non-Sikh visitors on site. I touched on the background to the umbrella organisation guiding various Nishkam initiatives, with its origins in Kericho, Kenya and transnational headquarters in Birmingham. I drew attention to the terms *nishkam* (describing an attitude of unconditional altruism) and *sewa* ('selfless service'), associated with this Sikh community of practice where social projects were initiated and developed through the collective volunteer input of individual '*sewadars*' and involved a broad cross-section of skills.

Next, in 7.3, I introduced the research participants. I split them into four main groups. 'Nursery founders', in the context of this study, refers to the four participants I interviewed following the completion of the pilot-phase of the nursery project. This intergenerational group included, Bhai Sahib, whom I refer to using this leadership title given to him as

overall lead *sewadar*. I explained how, following his two predecessors, he was selected to take on this lifelong role which had earnt him significant local and international recognition, combining his faith practice with transnational experience as a civil and structural engineer. The next group was the 'nursery staff', most of whom were British-born in their thirties. Following this was the 'nursery parents and children'. Participants in the six parent interview I analysed had enrolled their children with contrasting motivations and expectations. I did not interview any children but observed practitioner interactions with them in day-to-day nursery life. 'Nursery visitors' consisted of three people from contrasting educational backgrounds who were able to relate their experience of visiting the nursery to me. I ended this chapter with a reflection on my own positioning as an ethnographer who was embedded in the community of practice I was researching. Having introduced the research site and participants, I will now outline my research methods.

CHAPTER 8:

RESEARCH METHODS

8.1 Recap on questions guiding the data collection

This section outlines the methods of data collection employed to address the research questions for this study. In my empirical work I was looking to building an account of (1) the blend of ideas and values guiding the nursery's creation; (2) day-to-day communicative and semiotic practices through which the nursery world was created and configured; and (3) parental responses to the nursery provision. My data collection methods therefore sought to identify and trace the sources of ideas and values being drawn upon to envision and generate a rationale for the nursery, to observe the ways in which meanings, ideas and identities were revealed and made through the material and social interactional co-constructions of the nursery world, and to build a picture of the factors motivating parental participation and sustaining an ongoing commitment to use of the provision.

8.2 Phases and streams of data collection

As a participant observer, I had found myself in the midst of the developmental processes of the nursery project as they unfolded in real-time, so to speak. The data was therefore collected over separate project phases as well as in ongoing streams of discursive development on the research site as a whole, encompassing the gurudwara, the civic centre and the new nursery building, all of which comprised the Nishkam '*campus*' [see Chapter 7 for an explanation of localised usage of this term].

Prior involvement in the GNNET education trust had allowed me to be party to early discussions of the educational vision to guide my input into the work of Birmingham's SACRE. Prior to my research training I had attended a few meetings of a group of women *sewadars* bringing ideas to the table for a childcare facility that was envisaged, with guidance from R. Singh, as the then lead for the education trust. The meetings were arranged in order to explore avenues and options for realising this. These two involvements generated notes, documents and insights into early ideas informing the nursery project.

In 2008 I conducted four initial interviews with Bhai Sahib, B. Kaur, K. Kaur and R. Singh, on which I based my MRes thesis (Sagoo 2009). This interviewing followed the completion of a pilot playgroup phase, in which I had participated with my two-year old daughter, for which B. Kaur had produced reports and associated documents for this phase. Shortly after these four interviews, the property for the new nursery was purchased and the period of renovation began, during which time various meetings and conversations continued to develop and plan the nursery project. A few times, I joined other volunteers working to renovate the nursery building (e.g. sanding, whitewashing, painting).

Once the nursery opened in September 2009, I became a nursery parent, with my daughter joining the small reception class. I took on the role, following the necessary CRB checks, of being a parent-helper. I provided weekly classroom support in singing and music as well as helping in other ways as required, e.g. assisting in the kitchen or serving food. Once nursery life had settled and fallen into some patterns I began interviewing staff in late 2009 and over 2010. In 2010 I began observing, audio and video recording sessions in each of the nursery rooms and conducting interviews with nursery parents. Some of this I continued into early 2011.

Whilst the nursery project was being developed, conversations and meetings were also underway to found a 'Sikh ethos multifaith' primary school, as part of a more comprehensive education initiative addressing lifelong learning. Across this period, I also attended meetings of the Nishkam Civic Association Board, of which I had become a member. This gave me greater insight into the civic engagement vision and involvements of the organisation, which were also informing and enabling the education project.

Over time, I also got the opportunity to listen first-hand to Bhai Sahib thinking 'aloud' with us and thinking through various themes, such as debt or social justice, based on his prior leadership involvements. On occasions I would be asked to bullet point or summarise key ideas or edit text for presentation and Bhai Sahib might further refine these conceptually or stylistically. This gave me insight into the ideas and phrases that recurred in this discourse, with articulations of gurbani in its original linguistic forms being woven in. The gurudwara environment, as part of the research site, provided opportunities to engage with these teachings through other modes of listening and absorbing (e.g. musical models) and through other contexts (e.g. interaction with *sangat* members).

For the above reasons, the data collection process can be seen as fairly holistic, involving a multidimensional research site and my own positioning as a Nishkam *sewadar*. I will now summarise the various types of data collected and show how I prepared for analysis.

8.3 Types of data and preparation for analysis

8.3.1 Field notes, meeting notes and headnotes

Bilingual handwritten notes of many kinds were generated through the research period, based on meetings, events and passing conversations on the research site.   Many of my personal notes concerning my own reflections served as prompts for thought, with more occasional typing of extended writing as fieldnotes conveying the immediacy of an observation or event and a providing a record from which to extract ideas while endeavouring to be as reflexing as possible.   Bringing collections of these written notes together I physically leafed through the material, circling or noting words and sentences relating to different themes.   This was aided by my own headnotes and process of recognising themes that were emerging as salient through the fieldwork period.

8.3.2 Written documentary data

I was able to collect and refer to a wide range of documentary data. This took the form of in-house papers circulated to those participating in the education project, and articles, leaflets, booklets and brochures that are referred to in the analysis which were produced for wider consumption.   Some of these I encountered as ready-made material.   In some instances I had been able to witness and be part of the processes of text production, giving me insight into how they were co-produced through conversation and review.   Other documentary data included nursery paperwork such as planning and assessment documents and newsletter communications to parents.

8.3.3 Photographic material

A wealth of photographic material was readily available for me to access from the Nishkam nursery's in-house archive of photographs. The habit of photographically documenting events and developments on the wider Nishkam site was already well established. In the life of the nursery, this joined standard practice characteristic of most nurseries of keeping photographic records and evidence of children's experiences for the portfolios kept on their learning journeys. I was also given permission to personally take photographs during my visits for research purposes. Because of everyone's familiarity with being photographed, and familiarity with me as a helper 'Masi ji' this could be done relatively unobtrusively.

8.3.4 Audio- and video- recordings of interviews and observations

I used a small digital voice recorder to record semi-structured interviews with nursery founders, staff and parents. I also had a small device to film sessions and interactions in each of the nursery rooms. In some instances I audio-recorded events rather than filmed. Sometimes I used the audio-recorded to capture nursery practitioners' reflections about and responses to events I had just filmed. I transcribed, and also got some assistance to transcribe, the interview recordings. I also transcribed the audio and film recordings of nursery interactions which are analysed in Chapter 10.

8.3.5 Data relating to the material design and geography of the environment

As will become apparent in the analysis, I became conscious of 'reading' the material location and construction and use of various facets of the Nishkam site in which the nursery

was embedded, as well as the nursery environment itself, as a form of data. Because of the accelerated pace of material development I quickly found that ideas and visions I had heard reiterated became quite literally 'fleshed out' in social and material change around me, this set out contexts for interpreting further data. This way of recognising data was further supported by my readings of Holland et al (1998) on the construction of and participation in 'figured worlds' and of Herbert (2000) on ethnography and human geography.

8.4 Ethical considerations

For this research it was decided, in consultation with Bhai Sahib as main lead for the Nishkam group of organisations, to identify the Nishkam Nursery by name. From my view as a researcher, the study involved interpreting a unique, rather than a loosely representative, social phenomenon.   Conducting the research required examining key ideas and terminology (including the very name Nishkam) and features particular to the organisation, whose early institutions had become striking and recognisable landmarks in the local area. This decision was also because of an underlying organisational desire to make a distinctive contribution to the educational landscape and to be understood, both internally and externally, as a relatively new player in the field. This was as it entered a new phase of rather ambitious, institutional envisioning and development.

One aspect of data collection had involved interviewing nursery founders, staff, parents/carers. I explained to all interviewees the purposes of the research, their voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw, my duty to keep the data securely, as well as any information they expressed as confidential. I followed up their verbal consent with a consent form summarising these terms (signed copies of which are available on request).

All of the nursery founders and staff I interviewed were Sikh. So, with their agreement, they were identified by their first initial plus the Sikh names (normally used as a middle name or surname) Singh (for male participants) and Kaur (for female participants). This trace, I felt, would allow them some future ownership of ideas around the envisioning and early creation of the nursery, without fully revealing their identities. As one interviewee highlighted to me, the desire not to be fully recognised tied in with their view of being a '*nishkam*' sewadar, i.e. being altruistic and not seeking personal gain. For nursery parents/carers who were interviewed, however, I agreed to keep their identities anonymous.

The other aspect of data collection was observing interactions between nursery practitioners and children, which would be both audio recorded and visually recorded through film and photograph. The nursery manager had obtained consent from all parents when registering their children for the nursery to authorise observations, photography and filming involving the nursery children. I obtained written consent from the manager to conduct and record research observations, take photographs and use the nursery's photographic archive, on the understanding that I would store this data securely and use it only for research purposes. All names referring to children in the analysis chapters are fictitious.

8.5 Shuttling and zooming to find resting points for the analysis

As in most ethnographic research the research questions were slightly refined over time as the field work unfolded. Then, once I had collected and shifted through the data, deciding on how I would approach the analysis chapters, especially the two opening ones, was quite challenging. I gained clarity as I shuttled between key concepts emerging in the data and those emerging in my readings of the interdisciplinary research contexts. I also had to strike

a balance between zooming close up into the day-to-day life of the nursery and stepping back to contextualise the nursery development in the life histories of those interviewed and their wider concepts and values in relation to their different life positionings (as British Sikhs or South Asians, minority group members, local residents and civic participants in the widening realms of societal life). The writing of a book chapter concerned with translocal issues of '(dis)citizenship' (Sagoo 2013) helped to bring some shape to how I approached the analysis and conceived the main thrust of the thesis as a whole.

It also helped me to visualise this ethnographically-informed case study as an iceberg. It's 'tip' formed the visible and explicit aspects of the nursery development and its underwater mass could be seen as the wider body of ideas and practices linked to the heritage and life experiences of its main founders. It existed in a wider sea, touching and touched by different currents of knowledge and practice. The research analysis presented in the chapters that follow seeks to examine and make sense of these visible, submerged and mutually responsive and influencing dimensions.

8.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I outlined the methods of collecting data and preparing it for analysis in order to address my research questions. In 8.1 I recapped on how these questions sought to build an account of: the blend of ideas and values guiding the nursery's creation; the configuration of the nursery world through day-to-day communicative and semiotic practice; parental responses to the provision.

In 8.2 1, I summarised the various phases of the nursery project over which I collected data from the early envisioning and pilot phases at the sites of the gurudwara and Nishkam centre, to the renovation and opening of the nursery, to the settling of day-to-day life at the nursery over which time I visited as a nursery helper and classroom observer, then a period of interviewing parents once they were able to reflect on some months of their child's nursery experience. I also noted my ongoing exposure to discursive practices through which a rationale and vision was revisited and refined. I added how my exposure to Sikh teachings as they were orally and musically transmitted in the world of the gurudwara provided a further basis for reflection on my translingual note-taking where articulations from Gurbani were recorded.

In 8.3, I summarised the various types of data I collected, including: fieldnotes, meeting notes and headnotes; written documentary data; photographic material; audio- and video-recordings of interviews and classroom observations; data relating to the wider material design and geography of the environment. I highlighted how audio- and video-recorded material was transcribed in preparation for analysis.

In 8.4, I discussed ethical considerations, noting the reasons for identifying the Nishkam nursery by name; the decision to use initials plus Singh or Kaur to identify nursery founders and staff and agreement to keep the identities of parents/carers anonymous and use of fictitious names for the children. I highlighted procedures I used to obtain written consent for various forms of data collection, from Bhai Sahib as organisational lead, from the nursery manager to whom parents had given consent to authorise any observations, photography and filming involving the nursery children and from individual interviewees themselves.

I finished this chapter by including a brief section, in 8.5, entitled 'shuttling and zooming to find resting points for the analysis'. Here I described how, as I collected and sifted through the data, it was quite challenging to decide how I would approach the analysis chapters. I gained clarity by shuttling between ideas emerging in the data and in my reviews of associated interdisciplinary literature, as well as zooming into and away from my recordings of day-to-day nursery life to contexualise them within this emerging frame.

I shared how it had helped me to visualise the case study as an ice-berg, its tip forming the visible and explicit formation of the nursery world and its underwater mass consisting of the wider body of ideas and motivations which were being brought together, touched by wider currents of knowledge. This image provides a visual guide for the main analysis chapters which are entitled as follows: Chapter 9, Envisioning the nursery; Chapter 10, Creating and configuring the nursery world; Chapter 11, The nursery in action – day-to-day situated practices; Chapter 12, Parental responses to the nursery initiative.

PART D: ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

CHAPTER 9:

ENVISIONING THE NURSERY

S*o now I go back, and with hindsight I say, what have we gained, what have we lost, and what should we do for the future? And you look at posterity now, what should we leave behind?*

- Interview with Bhai Sahib, August 2008

9.1 The scope of this analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the social and conceptual processes involved in envisioning the Nishkam nursery. The organisation of the chapter reflects the process of data collection over time, taking as its starting point the small set of initial interviews I carried out with key players during 2008. It goes on to incorporate data from researcher field notes, documentary data as well as transcriptions of further interviews and discussions, showing how key ideas were revisited and reworked as momentum built for the realisation of the nursery project. This reflective process continued once the nursery opened, as the nursery community and daily practices got established and further texts to communicate its vision got co-created.

Section 9.2 focuses mainly on the personal narratives of four initial participants, which are analysed individually in Sagoo (2009). I now bring them together to outline their various responses to socio-historical change. Sections 9.3 to 9.6 presents the wider picture of ideas guiding the envisioning process. It draws out threads from the four initial interviews and

entwines these with others that emerged in the fieldwork data. Because of the breadth and mix of these guiding ideas, and the contrasting linguistic, cultural and institutional contexts they inhabited, the task of organising this section proved to be particularly challenging. This was accentuated by the co-existence of a faith and civic dimension, of minority-specific and general societal concerns, and the naturally occurring interchange of Punjabi-language concepts rooted in the Sikh *dharam* and of English-language terms from more widely circulated discourses.

Four broad categories surfaced as I studied and reconfigured these ideas which are reflected in the headings. 'Ways of seeing' (9.3) sets a 'birds eye view' context outlining key philosophical, cultural, socio-political perspectives; 'ways of doing and participating' (9.4) examines concepts and practices which participants identified as motivating and enabling the collective effort to create the nursery; 'ways of nurturing' (9.5) outlines ideas about raising and educating the young; 'ways of speaking' (9.6) highlights the diverse communicative repertoires of participants and the challenges posed by contemporary multilingual realities, as well as some opportunities.

9:2   Responding to sociohistorical change: opening themes in the research

'My father and mother were very religious... but very modern as well'

- opening interview comment by K. Kaur, 2008

I collected the first interview data for this study after the pilot 'playgroup' phase had been completed and work continued to plan for a nursery. Embarking on my first collection of interview data, I selected four participants to glean some of the meanings, values and life

experiences which were informing these early endeavours. Introduced in Chapter 6, they were: Bhai Sahib and K. Kaur (both in their seventies, born and raised in Kenya); R. Singh (in his early fifties, born in India, moving in late childhood to the Midlands, UK) and B. Kaur (almost thirty, Scottish-born and settled in Birmingham). I will now present key ideas that emerged from their reflections on personal and social historical change.

9.2.1   Contrasting educational experiences in colonial and postwar settings

Valuing and accessing western-style schooling

In all four interviews, the concurrent valuing of contrasting forms of western institutional and home or community based education became apparent. K. Kaur had praise for her father's decision to send his girls to an English-medium government school in Kenya, to prepare them for '*the modern world*'. Bhai Sahib recalled one spell of study in Mombasa, at an institution reputed to be '*one of the best run schools in the Commonwealth*'.

Indian-born R. Singh noted the opportunity he had (enabled by earnings from his father's job in England) to study at a '*more westernised*', fee-paying English-medium primary school, a cycle ride to the nearest town outside his Punjabi village. This he contrasted to his UK schooling in a grim and '*unambitious*' secondary modern, which happened to be in a racist stronghold of Birmingham. Here he also felt '*immersed in a monolingual world*', following his '*trilingual*' environment in India. What he saw as persistently mundane attitudes to teaching continued into his experiences of adult education in his teaching career, where he later got involved in widening participation and working with educationally marginalised groups, supporting women into work and workers' education, for example.

Valuing family, village and rural learning environments

At the same time K. Kaur recollected with some appreciation her parents' skill and confidence in providing heritage education and holistic nurture for their children at home. She described how they taught Punjabi, Sikh history and prayers in gentle, non-imposing ways; how they encouraged sports and a lifestyle that would be '*healthy for the mind and body*' and gave them opportunities to meet distinguished Sikh spiritual figures, whom the family would welcome to their home (such the renowned Sikh educationalist, Sant Teja Singh – see 4.3.2). For R. Singh, his Punjabi village setting offered a rich rural and social environment outside of school which he valued as equally educational.

Valuing community-run, heritage-responsive schooling

Bhai Sahib observed that, whilst schooling was largely segregated in British East Africa, the founding of the community-run Sikh 'Khalsa School' near a Nairobi gurudwara offered a benefit, in that it enabled those who had migrated across continents to '*retain*' their language and culture and build a sustained sense of community over the decades. K. Kaur recounted how, after her professional training as a teacher, she decided to work at this same school, which lacked resources and trained teachers, in order to help '*bring our community school up*', whilst also going on to work in schools with large European and African populations. In many ways this is echoed a generation or two later in the aspirations of UK-raised B. Kaur, to bring some of her mainstream training, as well as learning from her Sikh/Punjabi heritage networks, to a community-based nursery initiative.

9.2.2 Attitudinal turns in dominant and minority group perspectives

Whilst all the interviewees acknowledged the long-held esteem amongst South Asians of an '*English education*', they also revealed a sense that approaches from their heritage have

something to more widely contribute, beyond ideas about 'supporting' children from minority backgrounds. Half-humourously, Bhai Sahib noted that, whilst Indians have long suffered from '*an inferiority complex*', non-Indians may have exceeded them now in their love of '*yoga*' and '*curry*'. This point was echoed in one of B. Kaur's comments about the Indian origins of baby massage which is now widely recommended to parents. In this way, both mentioned aspects of their heritage which, over time, have come to receive broad recognition in British social and cultural life, hinting at a pathway for other possible developments. Reflections on the long term impact of colonialism on attitudes towards education are discussed in 9.5.1.

9.2.3. *Parental life pressures following postwar migration*

Participants also made reference to the pressures faced by first-generation migrants to Britain as they made use of immediately available resources for raising children amidst hectic work routines. R. Singh remarked that his father, whom he joined in England at the age of nine, was never able to attend parents' evenings because of his long work shifts, despite high educational aspirations for his son. Bhai Sahib took the example of his sister, rushing daily between her teaching post, the baby-minder's and home: '*There was hardly any time… They were like clockwork.*' He reflected on the main priority of migrants as being to '*get a roof over one's head*' and become materially settled, going back on their initial intention to return to the Indian subcontinent. He then recalled a saying amongst parents that in pursuing economic prosperity ('*chandi*' or silver) they had somehow '*lost gold*', by which they had meant their children. These comments painted a picture of how, whilst educational success was clearly valued by South Asian migrants, the life pressures and priorities of settling were seen to result in less attention given to more holistic aspects

of raising children (aspects which were, however, evident in K. Kaur's accounts of her upbringing in Kenya).

9.2.4   *Taking stock, moving on and creating a legacy for the future*

The move to evaluate the past and gaze strategically into the future was summed up in a question posed by Bhai Sahib: 'S*o now I go back, and with hindsight I say, what have we gained, what have we lost, and what should we do for the future? And you look at posterity now, what should we leave behind?'* This comment was preceded by a series of reflections on personal and social historical change, extending beyond the specific narrative of Sikh migration as Bhai Sahib made reference to: the impulse in human nature to explore one's '*roots*' and ancestry; wider streams of migration to Britain from former colonies; the empire's flair for preserving heritage by collecting knowledge and acquiring artefacts; the services his father had made to the '*crown*'. This provided many contexts for conceiving personal and group identity, where the use of '*we*' indexed overlapping identities, moving from the particular to general. His own answer to the question about legacy was that '*values*' comprise the '*richest treasure humans have*'. This introduced the importance he gave to '*value-led*' education.

A shared principle emerging from the four participant accounts was that it was important to move on from preoccupations with the past and to take steps to shape out new futures.   It was echoed bilingually in the vivid conclusion of K. Kaur's transcript, as she made sense of her father's habit to greet each morning without begrudging the happenings of yesterday:

> ***Mere pita ji jerhe sige, oh jidhon svere utthde sige*** [My father, whenever he used to get up in the mornings] *he used to open the curtains and say,* **"vah, vah, vah, nava din charhiya!"** ["How wonderful, another day has dawned!"] *Forget about what happened yesterday. Think of new things, a new world, today is a new day.*

9.3 Ways of seeing: locating the particular in 'overarching' contexts

'One of those paradoxes is that, although it's very insular, it's very open…Through this

narrowness I will discover things which will help me to be more open.'

> - interview comment by R. Singh, on the focussed nature of his *sewa* role, 2008

9.3.1 Relating 'whole to part'

The ideas introduced in this section are organised around a series of phrases reiterated by Bhai Sahib in ongoing discussions and speeches, which indicated how the nursery project was being framed from his leadership perspective. He frequently stressed thinking '*from whole to part*' so as to cultivate a habit of broadening out the perceived contexts of one's endeavours whilst grounding them in immediate and local situations. He also recalled advice given to him by his predecessors, not to get consumed by 'detail' ('*bareekee*' in Punjabi) at the expense of losing sight of the bigger picture.

By extension Bhai Sahib stressed the '*interconnectivity*' and '*interdependence*' of human activity at the '*micro-level*' and '*macro-level*' and the potential to stimulate change through productive engagement between the '*grassroots*' and '*guiding institutions*'. This framing involved the balancing and interrelating of apparently polar concerns and prompting expansions in one's world-view. The '*whole to part*' principle was further unpacked through a further set of phrases which appear as subheadings below.

9.3.2   **Linking the 'infinite and finite context'**

From geographical to existential notions of migration

The idea of the '*infinite and finite context*' was conceptually introduced in Bhai Sahib's initial interview, when his opening theme of sociohistorical migration and settlement was

recast in existential terms: '*Our Gurbani is very explicit. It says, we are travellers, we are spiritual travellers. We are like gypsies*.' This view of our arrival and impermanent stay in the world raised existential or '*cardinal*' questions, as Bhai Sahib put it, about our origin, purpose and destination, which he summed up with a quote from Gurbani: *"Kitthou upjai, keh rahai, keh mahi samaavai?"* ("Where have we come from, what are we to do here, where are we heading?").

Mortality as a frame to probe questions of purpose

This philosophical framing was often used by Bhai Sahib to stimulate reflection on human potential and purposeful living (rather than to debate doctrinal truth claims about human existence). As well as exploring such ideas though Sikh scriptural imagery, Bhai Sahib would switch to poetic mode in English (as he occasionally did also in Punjabi, Urdu or Kiswahili) to evoke images of human transience and the continuity of things beyond us ('*this pebble you hold will outlive you*'), suggesting how consciousness of our mortality creates a distancing which may enlarge our vision for life.

This stance was exemplified in the following lines of Bhai Sahib's contribution to the faith-related column of a local city newspaper (marking the launch, in 2007, of Birmingham's revised syllabus for Religious Education): '*There are two facts about human life, we are born, and then we die. What kind of overarching vision of education should we have in between?*' As I read it, this introduced a tone of poignancy, solidarity and soul-searching enquiry to wider societal conversations about education, and demonstrated a keenness to participate and bring a distinctive voice to the table.

9.3.3 Linking the 'local and global context'

Movements between near and far and the collapsing of distances

Bhai Sahib's reiteration of the statement that '*local is global and global is local*' was implicit, of course, in participants' life trajectories, identities and practices and in the geographical and cultural scope of their social networks and projects. It was echoed too in patterns of travel to and from the Nishkam '*campus*', by those internal to the organisation as well as external visitors, located as it was on a key route to the nearby city centre and to nearby motorway connections to other cities and other countries via the airport. In Bhai Sahib's initial interview, his reflection on how the once 15-20 day journey from Mombasa to Mumbai was now reduced to a few hours led to ideas about responding to the accelerated pace of globalisation: '*So the whole globe has shrunk, distances have shrunk, time has shrunk, knowledge has spread and is spreading. And sooner or later you will see there will be more accountability.*'

Promoting local/global connectivity and ethics

The intention to work with this increased societal as well as Sikh diasporic connectivity, driven by a strong framework of core values, was made explicit by signage for the top floor offices of the Nishkam Centre when it opened in 2006, with labels such as the following: '*Enabling Civil Engagement and Community Renewal; Promoting Innovation and Change for Sustainable Community Development; Interfaith, Global Ethics and Globalisation for the Common Good.*' As R. Singh highlighted to me on my early visits to this building, the signage reflected a purpose different to earlier models of minority community centres supported by multicultural policies in the UK. It was here that the nursery project was initially developed and the interest that was taken in local/global dynamics to develop it

became quickly apparent in the kind of information that was initially gathered and circulated (see 9.5).

From a globalised product to a localised process: recasting notions of a 'model'

As R. Singh pointed out, the intention behind the nursery project was not to produce a globally applicable approach or teach '*a system we can sell*', but one that acknowledged coming from a particular standpoint and set of circumstances in the world. I noted that the word '*model*', when it was used at times by him and Bhai Sahib, assumed not a fixed product for circulation but a process and ethos which might inform both local and more systemic change in other contexts. In his interview, Bhai Sahib commented that the intention was not to create a '*fort within a fort*', but an example of '*quality education*' which could be considered by others: '*That's the best we can do, to set a model and say, here, look.*' On frequent occasions Bhai Sahib would talk of working at the '*grassroots*', finding '*resonance*' with other approaches, engaging with '*guiding institutions*' and adjusting existing '*paradigms*'. In this context, his often used phrase of having an '*allegiance to Handsworth*' seemed to shed associations of the local with the parochial and chime with his philosophy that to broader seek change one must first commit to '*become the change*' in one's mind and immediate environment.

Co-valuing insularity and openness

In his initial interview R. Singh made the following observation when he contrasted the present focus of his role, as part of the Nishkam '*community*', and previous mainstream career, which had involved widening participation in further education:

> *One of those paradoxes is that, although it's very insular* [his present focus with the Nishkam community], *it's very open…Through this narrowness I will discover things which will help me to be more open. Often you need it. An artist is a very*

open-minded person, but spends a lot of his or her time on their own, actually struggling with their art, if its sculpture, if its painting, and they'll discover things on their own by practising and doing. But when you meet them they're able to accept other ideas and concepts, they are not judgmental.

The idea of a continuum between the local and global was also underscored for me in the interview transcripts by participants' fluid use of '*we*' (see also 9.2.4). It ranged from signifying a diasporic or British Sikh identity (the latter being particularly evident in B. Kaur's interview, as a young mother and playgroup helper) to a broadly shared societal one and, significantly, it was occasionally ambiguous.

A 'triple allegiance' and 'concentric identities' in the local/global dynamic

Thinking through this further, Bhai Sahib suggested Sikhs' '*triple allegiance*': to the world as a whole (as '*spiritual*' or '*global citizens*' as '*humans domiciled on the planet*'); to their distinctive religious and cultural roots (as bearers of the Sikh *dharmic* heritage); and to the nations in which they reside (as '*secular citizens*'). Often referring to an individual's '*concentric identities*' shaped by various social roles, positions and affiliations, he suggested that at the centre lay a '*shared identity*' of the '*human spirit*'. Understood in the light of the kind of projects and partnerships he was nurturing as a leader, it suggested he located much of his work at this 'global' focal point while being clearly rooted in the local and particular.

9.3.4 'Fusing spirituality *with* secularity'

Varying connotations in talk about spirituality and secularity

Notions about the interfusion of local and global were extended to the idea in Bhai Sahib's initial interview that '*spirituality and secularity co-exist in life, but you should be able to fuse the two for the common good*'. This emerged as a central principle in discussions and

written texts about the Nishkam Centre's ethos. I will briefly outline how '*spirituality*' and '*secularity*' were talked about in various ways on site, before outlining how their '*fusion*' was seen to guide the nursery and associated projects.

In talk about '*secularity*', it would be variously related to: the business of general day-to-day civic life; a historic response to the abuse of royal and religious power ('*the wars... the misrepresentation, misquoting, misuse of religion*' mentioned in Bhai Sahib's interview); predominantly '*technical*' or '*mechanistic*' approaches to addressing social issues; an attitude of '*lukewarm tolerance*', scepticism or hostility towards faith; a position of relative neutrality, without overt religiousness, offering a more '*comfortable*' space to those of all backgrounds (such as the '*more secular*' environment of the Nishkam Centre adjacent to the gurudwara).

Talk of '*spirituality*', likewise, carried contrasting connotations. Whilst its increased social use lifted divides between traditions, for Bhai Sahib this also reflected a '*secular*' tendency to '*water down*' a social valuing of religion.   At the same time, '*spirituality*' was used by him like the word *dharam* (see below) to denote the '*mobilising*' and '*exercising*' of values, where they are lived '*breath-to-breath and moment-to-moment*' and are capable of '*infusing*', '*percolating through*' and adding '*fragrance*' to the day-to-day.   Similar language suggested the process of '*harnessing*', '*generating*' and '*empowering with*' values, along with '*kindling*', '*igniting*' and '*nourishing*' a '*latent divine spark*' which forms one's inner resource of virtue. From Bhai Sahib's religious viewpoint, this corresponded with '*living in God's image*'. It also saw spiritual nurture as an integral, rather than peripheral, concern of education.

Spirituality as a social practice and basis for regeneration

Spirituality as a social practice was highlighted when, at a conference on international debt, Bhai Sahib reframed values conventionally associated with personal spirituality, calling for '*social compassion*', '*social forgiveness*' alongside '*social justice*'. Conversely, he drew on the term '*social cohesion*', redirecting it towards a search for '*cohesion within the self.*' He also maintained that urban, social or economic regeneration required some form of '*spiritual regeneration*' in terms of life perspectives and lived values in order to be effective and sustainable.

Dharam, dispositions and everyday spirituality

Bhai Sahib was keen to acknowledge how these ideas were rooted in the Sikh *dharam*, preferring to use this Punjabi definition instead of the western-coined 'Sikhism'. *Dharam* for him evoked the sense of a '*multifaceted, conscious practice of faith*' involving values, ethics, teachings, practices and one's '*inward and outward identity*'. *'Illuminated*', for Sikhs, by the Guru, the role of *dharam* as Bhai Sahib described it was to '*orient*' the self towards nurturing a '*loving responsibility*' to do '*what is good and right'*. The idea of an everyday dharmic '*sensibility*' and *'consciousness'* helped to explain Bhai Sahib's positive embrace the curriculum terminology (for RE in Birmingham) of '*dispositions*'. A related Punjabi word, '*bhavana*', had been used by K. Kaur in her interview, to indicate a quality or tendency that is cultivated and embodied in the self, when she talked being guided in life by '*sewa bhavana*' (a mindset to serve).

Espousing and abandoning the terms 'religion' and 'faith'

In order to explain *dharam*, Bhai Sahib would alternatingly espouse and abandon use of the words '*religion*' and '*faith*'. As translations, they had varying connotations. At the same

time he was clearly operating in a context where social and institutional identities defined and strengthened by these terms. During his interview in 2008, R. Singh noted that to create a Sikh-inspired multi-faith school of the kind they envisaged: '*the only arena we can function is of a faith school, there's no other easy model for us to exist in*'. In his 2008 interview, Bhai Sahib suggested public opinion would more readily accept the educational vision if the term '*faith*' was replaced by '*value-led*'. At the close of his interview, however, he argued for a shift in perception, moving from a reluctance to mention religion to giving clearer recognition to its role in the spiritual/secular dynamic: '*You have to cross that barrier, where there is this concept of* [people saying] *"This label of 'faith', 'religion' - oh, take it out."*'

9.3.5 **'Fusing heritage with modernity'**

Heritage as a 'mooring' or 'anchor' in currents of the 'modern' world

At the start of K. Kaur's interview, her immediate comment about her childhood in British Kenya was that: '*My father and mother were very religious... but very modern as well*.' In 9.2.1 we saw how forms of home-based and heritage-based education were co-valued by her and her family alongside institutionalised ones associated with wider social participation and advancement in the 'modern' world. Her interest in working at Nairobi's Khalsa school, as well as in schools with African and European populations, gave scope for both forms of learning to be mutually enhancing.

This general principle was summarised in a further twin concept used by Bhai Sahib about '*fusing heritage with modernity*' (the latter being understood in the non-academic sense to mean the new and contemporary social world). At one level, his use of the word '*heritage*' echoed wider discourses about minority or migrant identity. Contrasting the preservation

of '*indigenous heritage*' through libraries, museums and monuments in his initial interview (see 9.2.4), his stressed his interest in enabling people to '*retain their cultural identity*' in more practical, everyday ways. Whilst he referred here to a '*cultural identity*' in the singular, on other occasions he commented on the fluid nature of culture, in half-humorous remarks about evolving uses of the cup and saucer, or shifting preferences for curries or pasta. These were drawn from his life exposure to changing cultural practices over time, across continents and amongst Sikhs themselves. Given this, he conceptualised heritage in his interview in terms of one's '*mooring*' or '*anchor*' in the shifting currents of life at large.

Global values heritage and 'values transfer'

Bhai Sahib also talked of a global '*heritage of values*' found in traditions that offer '*repositories of spiritual wisdom*'. In line with customary narratives to explain Sikh tradition, he talked of its '*universal values*'. Thus he noted the Sikh '*national anthem*' (as it is popularly referred to) paid tribute to the human will to do good, rather than saluting any king or queen. Likewise he pointed to historical recognition given to Sikh '*values and concepts*' by the English philosopher, Bertrand Russell, and the Punjabi Muslim poet, Mohammed Iqbal. Through this he was indicating accessible and transferable aspects of Sikh heritage, highlighting values which, in words to the effect he attributed to Russell, Sikhs themselves would '*never be forgiven for not perpetuating*'.

This helped explain a later remark of his, describing Nishkam's vision- and partnership-building role as going beyond the important work of '*knowledge transfer*' to creating conditions for '*values transfer*' as well. Thus, he was generating ideas of locating values in heritage and transporting them to new social arenas, as notions of '*adapting*' and '*innovating*' emerged in his interview. Such creative change was for him, I noted, clearly

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based on the fostering of a '*strong*' rather than '*weak*', or less rooted, alignment with heritage. As new contexts for analysis unfolded for me over time, I re-read this broadbrush distinction as indicating a need to build depth of understanding from and about one's heritage and a more confident sense of its personal and social relevance.

Retaining and reconciling cultural identities

I also recall being unnerved in my initial reading of Bhai Sahib's interview, because the opening reminiscence of Nairobi's Khalsa School was set, as he pointed out, in the context of racially segregated schools in British Kenya. A benefit of the school's creation, he observed, was that it facilitated some degree of cultural retention, in a major early wave of Sikh migration far away from India and the resultant sense of community, for its now dispersed former staff and pupils, can still be felt decades on. I then wondered if his next comment on the difficulties second-generation Asians in Britain faced as they endeavoured to '*reconcile*' the two respective cultural heritages was in effect rationalising a reactive retreat into heritage identity. Closer reading of the interview revealed a more integrative and, as he insisted, '*inclusive*' vision. Here greater self-knowledge of heritage was seen to enable more meaningful and egalitarian (rather than superficial or asymmetrical) '*intercultural*, *interfaith and inter-human*' dialogue. This could then support processes of '*reconciliation*' and the taking of '*shared responsibility*' across local and global contexts.

'Heritage conservation' and 'social innovation'

As the nursery was being renovated, Bhai Sahib began to twin the terms '*heritage conservation*' with '*social innovation*'. This terminology of '*heritage conservation*' stemmed from requirements to preserve the heritage features of the nursery as a listed building, as well as the organisation's overseas work to conserve Sikh heritage sites in India.

As we have seen Bhai Sahib extended this to include the idea of conserving values. '*Social innovation*' stemmed from the promotion of an outward-facing, forward-looking vision, as reflected in the creation of a Centre for Social Innovation (as outlined in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan for the Nishkam Centre). Bhai Sahib reflected this in his interview as he he stressed the need '*to look ahead, maybe fifty, a hundred years*', echoing a remark he made on another occasion, that to have '*the wisdom of foresight*' was better than relying on '*hindsight*' alone.

9.3.6 'Whole to part' principles in the semiotic dimensions of faith and place

Here I outline ways in which the '*whole to part*' series of principles was seen as being communicated in the religious and spatial dimensions of the Nishkam campus. This is significant because of the close proximity to the gurudwara of the buildings where the nursery was conceived and created and because of the intent of the project to incorporate ideas from the Sikh *dharam.*

The key source for ideas of wholeness was identified as the '*spiritual logo*', as Bhai Sahib put it, of '*Ik Oankar*', found in the gurudwara *darbar* halls and occasionally in signage for the faith organisation (and later at the nursery). Stressing its '*untranslatable*' nature, he stressed how the Punjabi numeral '*ik*' underlined both spiritual and social ideas of oneness. When Bhai Sahib did offer English-language explanations, such as '*God is one, all is God*', his emphasis, I noted, was on a dynamic view of the '*interconnected*' and '*interrelated*' nature of existence, linking finite to infinite, secular to sacred, local to global and past to future. By extension this indicated for him a vision of human '*solidarity*' and (what he pointed out was the third and much less talked about element of the French enlightenment ideal) - that of '*fraternity*'. He re-expressed this as '*kinship*', linking it to the Sikh concept

of striving for '*sarbat da bhalla*', or '*wellbeing of all*' which he also occasionally referred to as the '*common good*'.

Bhai Sahib's unpacking of Sikh identity was also significant, as I saw it, in a social setting where the intergenerational presence of initiated men and women was unusually prominent (amidst other ways of being affiliated, nominally or otherwise, to the faith). Echoing the dispositions-oriented approach, his narrations of the creation of the Khalsa order presented it as a culmination in the process, across the ten Guruships, of seeking to '*envision*' and '*exercise*' the spiritual traits of '*an ideal human being*'. Such uses of the word '*ideal*', as with '*model*' examined earlier, assumed an ethos working with and through cultural difference, rather than uniformly distributed or exclusively owned. These reflections suggested he viewed facets of Sikh identity as serving to signpost an ethos seen as ever-relevant to changing times. This was evident in Bhai Sahib's comment that the '*dastar*' or turban was a Sikh way of '*adorning the seat of wisdom in a human*', and so valuing the capacity to be wise, and of calling on every ordinary person to live as a '*sovereign and responsible being*' as reflected in the Sikh names '*Singh*' and '*Kaur*'.   Likewise, R. Singh, in a discussion with a non-Sikh visitor to the nursery, talked of the need to '*transport*' these meanings into the '*modern era*', beyond '*reminiscing*' about them alone (see also 9.3.5).

9.4   Ways of doing and participating: drawing on dharmic and civic values

As a minority, we cannot demand respect, we will have to earn our respect, and we will earn our respect if we excel, and we can excel with the rich legacy we have.

-   Interview with Bhai Sahib 2008

This section examines aspects of the existing culture of participation which facilitated the nursery's creation. Bhai Sahib's above comment implied that practical work to *'excel'* and thus *'earn'* respect as a minority was more effective that expending energy to *'demand'* it and, for this, Sikhs could look to their heritage as a valuable resource. Talking at one time about moves to seek social justice, he had suggested this first step: '*Become a role model for the change that you are seeking, not a mouth-piece for hollow rhetoric. First put your vision and ethos into practice, and then engage others.*' When describing this approach to internal and external audiences (where the nursery was projected as a fledgling example) terminology from governmental discourse was joined by use of Punjabi language concepts to mark the bearings of a Sikh values framework. This served to recast and imbue new meanings into the concepts I will now examine below.

9.4.1   Ideas of active participation and volunteering

Civic and dharmic responsibility

In a second interview on the theme of citizenship,, R. Singh recounted his experience as someone '*affected by the campaigns, the agenda, the social conversations that were going on*' when migrants were settling in the UK, where prevailing ideas of citizenship were about acquiring knowledge about the nation, about one's rights and '*expected responsibilities*'. '*Being different*' involved being able to '*accept*' and '*negotiate through that, without losing out*'. He then highlighted his growing awareness of a Sikh perspective where:

> *The starting point should be our responsibilities, not what we are owed by institutions or other people, but what we can do for ourselves and for other people, and for society as well. It's the additional thing we'd bring to this agenda. That you have this* [citizenship] *curriculum that you follow, that you have this possibility of not being treated equally, and you have to live with that, or cope with that, but also that you have responsibilities as well. And that comes from our very essence if you like, of describing our religion, our faith as dharam* [which] *very much means our responsibility to others, and our responsibility to the whole of earth and whole of creation.* [interview with R. Singh 24-01-12]

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It was this dharmic view of citizenship, rooted in questions of '*What do we need as human beings?*' and '*what is our responsibility as human beings?*', that he was now trying '*to understand and enunciate*'. The re-probing of socially established ideas and use of basic philosophical questions to pare down and rebuild understandings had been mirrored the envisioning of children's nurture (see 9.5).

'Pray, work, share'

'Pray, work, share' is Bhai Sahib's short explanation of the Sikh threefold ethic of '*naam japo, kirat karo, vand ke chhako*', described by him as a '*charter*' which was '*action-oriented*', rather than a theoretical statement of belief. Intertwining spiritual practice with a strong work ethic and collective spirit, he saw it promoting '*the dignity of labour*', '*the power of sharing*', and the concept (evidently much valued by him for its antiquity) that '*work is worship*'. By extension, whenever Nishkam's driving principles were presented to others, the terms '*self-help and self-reliance*' cropped up regularly alongside '*selflessness*'. In language characteristic of Bhai Sahib, these were seen to counter an alternative tendency to sink into attitudes of '*despondency*' and '*doom and gloom*', or to become '*exploitative*' or a '*parasite*'.

'Nishkam sewa' and volunteering

Embedded in the name of the umbrella organisation, GNNSJ, the term '*nishkam sewa*' got explained as serving in an '*altruistic*' way, '*without motive for personal gain*'. '*Kar sewa*', denoting the Sikh tradition of collective construction, renovation or cleaning of historic buildings in India with religious or social value ('*kar*' suggesting physical work done with the '*hands*'), got applied to local UK projects like the nursery renovation. '*Volunteering*' was a frequently used translation for *sewa* which, as the director of the Nishkam Centre

remarked, came with a slightly different '*trapping*'. It was often construed as involving an individual coming to give or gain some skills, or reaching an economic or life stage which afforded time or money to volunteer.

The term '*nishkam sewa*' highlighted a person's '*non-transactional*' inclination to be selflessness over all stages and conditions of life. As Bhai Sahib had remarked it went beyond a '*lukewarm*' notion of '*charity*', which suggested a status quo of providers giving to the needy rather than possibilities for '*empowerment through values*'. In addition, the word '*barkat*' (plural of the Semetic *barak*, denoting blessing or boon) suggested a latent richness in rightly placed thoughts and actions which could '*generate abundance*', from the religious point of view, by '*attracting kirpa*' or 'divine grace'. This, with ideas about the social momentum and social power of sewa added to notions of going '*beyond the self*' and seeking '*sarbat da bhalla*' or the 'wider wellbeing' in which, as R. Singh pointed out, the wellbeing of one's self is embedded.

Social/spiritual capital and kinship/interdependence

These dharmic ideas lent a different hue, as I saw it, to established terminology of '*active citizenship*', '*active volunteering*' and '*social capital*' which gained new prominence with the launch of the government's '*Big Society*' policy idea in 2010, the same year that the Nishkam Centre received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. In response to these developments, Bhai Sahib brought into the mix of secular citizenship terminology references to '*spiritual capital*' linked to the Punjabi concept of *kamai,* 'earnings' or 'assets' understood in a spiritual as well as financial sense. Bhai Sahib also suggested reading '*Big Society*' as '*family*', to foreground attitudes of '*kinship*', '*belonging*' and grassroots

'interdependence'. On ocassions he recounted Birmingham's own history of local visions and committments to social action, making reference to its 'Civic Gospel' (introduced 6.1)

9.4.2   *Ideas of quality, standards, innovation and excellence*

Quality and standards

Concluding her interview, B. Kaur was clearly enthused by the dedication, ambition and breath of experience which were being poured into creating a nursery '*in the best way possible*'. Likewise she stressed the need to work with established '*guidelines and regulations'* and ensure continued progress '*by having links and by speaking to other professionals'*. She also talked about parental and grandparental expectations of care, and how, for her, the embedding of values in day to day nursery practice would be a key marker of its success.

B. Kaur's appreciation of standards defined through different viewpoints had been echoed by Bhai Sahib when, during his interview, he picked up a bunch of keys and commented on how the saying that they are *'to British standards'* gave them a measure of *'quality'*, as did concepts of professional *'good practice'* he had long admired in his dealings with the British. His own former training as a civil and structural engineer and his subsequent government career also, no doubt, brought into play the management terminology of '*quality*', '*standards*', '*innovation'* and '*excellence*' which he was now infusing with ideas and nuances from the Sikh faith.

The word '*quality*' surfaced in discussions about the calibre of construction work to those about fostering '*qualities*' and '*virtues*'. Bhai Sahib also suggested that, in the wider landscape of Sikh organisations, Nishkam was endeavouring to further a '*qualitative*'

understanding of a '*lived out*' Sikh ethos, rather than be '*representative*' of Sikhs as such. During the process of revising Birmingham's RE syllabus, Bhai Sahib had talked of extending conventional understandings of '*educational standards*' with some agreed vision of '*standards of being a good human*' (see 9.3).

Innovation and excellence

Describing to me the nature of initiatives, such as the nursery project, which were facilitated by the Nishkam Centre, its director A. Singh, suggested they were '*precursored by innovation*'. A role given to him was to find creative ways to demonstrate how different perspectives (e.g. spiritual/secular, neighbourhood/national, third sector/private/public) could be better engaged to address social challenges. In mentioning this he referred to the '*rich picture*' approach in problem-solving methodology developed Peter Checkland (Checkland and Poulter 2006), to bring into vision contrasting viewpoints and concerns in complex real-world situations.

Bhai Sahib stressed that in order to be a player in such processes, Sikhs and those of other faiths had to do their own '*internal regeneration*' and '*a lot of homework*'. As I saw it, the nursery project offered an example of such an exercise. Innovation for Bhai Sahib involved finding ways to '*circumvent*' a '*culture of blame*' and to be '*ingenious*' in tackling social challenge. Professional experience in working with the British had showed him that they would be responsive to '*logic in your argument*' rather than '*going by the book*'. He seemed to be carrying this confidence from the past into present contexts.

The nursery had been part of a plan to develop '*five centres for excellence*'. The concept of excelling resurfaced in Bhai Sahib's evocation of an educational ethos where: '*You must

aim for the stars and the moon, in other words, you must excel, but you should also be utterly humble, like the dust' (the word *'dust'* emanating from scriptural imagery associated with humility). This elaborated the Punjabi maxim contained in the daily *ardas* prayer (see 4.2), *'man neeva, mat uchi'*, about 'lowering' the mind to be humble and 'elevating' it to excel or be wise.   A Romanised version of this phrase later got designed into an official Nishkam School Trust crest, replacing conventional mottos in Latin or English (see appendix 6). It drove home for me an early remark by R. Singh about envisioning an ambitious alternative to any assumed *'deficit model'* of a minority run or inner-city school.

9.4.3 *Leadership and capacity-building to influence change*

Mobilising people and values in a language of practical action

When I asked Bhai Sahib in his interview to describe his role in the new educational developments, he commented: *'I feel very humbled and honoured that I should have such a resource of varied people, of varied skills, of varied backgrounds. So my role is to mobilise this resource, in a way, for the common good.'*   It reflected how the nursery's founding involved grassroots participation and community investment, professional guidance and partnerships and an underlying, long term 'faith-inspired' social vision. Bhai Sahib was also referring to an on-the-ground diversity of social and educational experience and expertise easily obscured by outside-in perceptions of the uniformity of a given faith or cultural group. His interest lay in *'mobilising people'* and *'mobilising values'* so as to activate a language based on doing. Such as language, as he saw it, had potential to communicate and be understood beyond the boundaries of linguistic and cultural difference.

Similarly, R. Singh made the following comment to a visiting non-Sikh educator (T.E. – see section 9.5.1) about retrieving lost *'pearls'* of knowledge from Sikh heritage: *'While it's*

very vital to have conversation, the conversation has to move on… It can just be reminiscing, if you're not careful, and that is kind of candyfloss then; it gives you something to feel good about but it doesn't help you transport that into the modern era or to use that discussion.' Explaining the nursery project phases he suggested it benefitted from a *'very wise chairman'* who has *'always helped us to move on and become practical.'* On another occasion he suggested the aims were *'not vague and utopian but workable and practical'*, involving regeneration which Bhai Sahib had described as *'people-led and value-centred'*.

Selection and continuity in the leadership role

Bhai Sahib's presence was also seen as key in galvanising community participation. Individual participants such as K. Kaur (who had associated with the organisation's founder *'our beloved Baba Ji, Baba Puran Singh Ji'*) were keenly aware of the legacy entrusted to him. Following a highly testing period of practical training, which Bhai Sahib described as his '*spiritual apprenticeship'*, he was '*selected*' into the lifelong role. This arrangement allowed for a *'continuity and consistency'* of vision, as he put it. As I saw it, this also allowed a nurturing of human relations internal and external to the organisation which may at times be less easily sustained in election-driven cultures of running gurudwaras.

Capacity-building and partnering

The beginnings of the nursery project had involved small-scale group work to personally '*soul search*', as Bhai Sahib had directed, so as to establish broad purposes and principles before further involving professional expertise to plan and staff a new institution. Mothers like B. Kaur, got involved, rechanneling their focus and energy at a new life juncture of starting a family.

The renovation process involved young people working alongside elders and experts offering chances to develop construction skills as well as broader life skills. The increased female input in the renovation of the nursery and subsequent schools was noted, as compared to construction *sewa* in earlier decades. For reasons such as these the term '*capacity-building*' often got used in accounts of the aims of the organisation. Partnering, involving an ever-increasing circle of Sikhs and non-Sikhs, was also seen as a way to build the capacity of the Nishkam community to influence both internal and external change

A 'live culture' for practical transformation

Reflecting on the ingredients enabling the nursery's creation, A. Singh used the word '*mahaul*' which in Punjabi suggests the prevailing attitudes or atmosphere which characterise a given social space, describing it as a '*conducive ambiance*' to generate self-motivated participation. As Bhai Sahib had earlier done, he linked the word *'culture'* to the Punjabi term '*jaag*' (which more abstractly means 'awakening') when it refers to the live cultures used to make yogurt. This was so as to the organisational focus on practically stimulating and building momentum for personal and social transformation.

9.5   Ways of nurturing: ideas informing the educational vision

'Hasandia, khelandia, painandia, khavandia, viche hovai mukat.'

In the midst of laughter, playing, dressing up and eating,

The self can be spiritually liberated and flourish.

-    Quote from Gurbani (SGGS p. 522) shared by a gurudwara elder

Following from the earlier examination of historical experiences in education, I will now build a picture of discursive and social processes through which an educational '*ethos*' and '*vision*' were generated. Possibilities explored to partner with higher education institutions to develop training modules indicated to me that the project aspirations went further than intentions to set up a childcare business or local service. It was also understood that qualified or trainee nursery staff would come on board with different personal and professional starting points, hence the importance of establishing the nursery's own starting points. The analysis of data associated with these processes gave rise to four guiding principles which emerged as salient, which I discuss under the following subheadings: *Fostering a global and historical awareness* (9.5.1); *Fostering a keen sense of purpose* (9.5.2); *Fostering an 'image of the child' and of adult and societal roles* (9.5.3) and; *Fostering a keen sense of place* (9.5.4).

9.5.1   *Fostering a global and historical awareness*

From when I first became aware of the nursery project, information shared included reports (see Chapters 2 and 3) about the social condition of childhood. '*Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries*' (UNICEF 2007) ranked the UK at the bottom of twenty one industrialised nations for child wellbeing. '*A good childhood: searching for values in a competitive age*' (Layard & Dunn 2009), reported on a large-scale national enquiry on the conditions leading to a good childhood. It found that social trends towards individualism, consumerism and lack of positive family-based experiences due to parental pressures or family breakdown, were failing children despite increased material comfort and physical health. A later report presented to government made a case for the long term financial, welfare and educational benefits to society by a sound investment in '*Early Intervention*' (Allen 2011). There was also awareness of the

Millennium Development Goals listed in the *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, with targets for achieving 'universal primary education' and addressing maternal health and women's empowerment.

Global historical perspectives were also introduced by the four initial interviewees.   R. Singh noted the belief amongst South Asians that English education '*always, always was the best system*', tracing this back to the impact of colonialism in India. Amongst his papers was a quote widely attributed to Lord Macaulay (also referred to by Bhai Sahib in his interview) who influenced the legislation of western-style, English-medium education in India. Admitting the richness of India's spiritual and cultural heritage and ancient systems of education, it proposes the British replace it to break India's 'very backbone' and make her a 'truly dominated nation.' Whilst there is conjecture about the origins of this emotive extract and its possible misattribution to Macaulay, other survey work R. Singh referred to by Leitner (1882) provided a carefully researched picture of precolonial education in the Punjab which affirmed for him the existence of a vibrant and widespread pre-British system of education.

R. Singh saw the difficulty of conveying to Sikhs and South Asians that educational models based on their heritage actually existed: '*It's almost like trying to sell something to somebody that they don't know exists.*' In a later discussion with T.E., he elaborated on the need to better explore indigenous concepts and practices, '*not to relive a bygone age, but actually to know what was conceptually important and what needs to be retained and adapted and used in the modern way.*' He added that early Sikh settlers '*didn't bring their heritage with them consciously and it was sort of hit and miss what you retained in the family or what you lost*'.

The wider context of colonialism's global impacts on education became more apparent to me when I attended an interreligious conference in Melbourne convened by the *Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR)* in December 2009. This gave voice to the experiences of indigenous traditions across all continents. Themes included the after-effects of linguistic erosion, as well as the erosion of family and community contexts for learning, often associated with spiritual, cultural and emotional nurture as well as knowledge transmitted through oral tradition, practical engagement and observation. As I listened to these perspectives they seemed to chime with thinking for the nursery which had, by then, just opened. This helped me to step back and view this small neighbourhood initiative in Birmingham from a wider global/historical standpoint.

This perspective was also reinforced for me when an educational film-maker (P.D., whom I refer to in 10.3.3) combined footage about Nishkam's pilot playgroup with footage from Dr Amita Gupta's participation in the European Early Childhood Research Association Conference at the University of Birmingham in 2010. There she drew attention to eastern perspectives on the '*intangible*' and '*non-quantifiable*' aspects of learning e.g. children's sense of happiness, wellbeing, comfort and peace, based on her own transnational research between India and the US. This notably similar focus in the nursery project was balanced by B. Kaur's and Bhai Sahib's appreciation of a British cultural emphasis, as they saw it, on '*standards*', '*regulations*' and '*professional practice*'.

9.5.2   Fostering a keen sense of purpose

From 'social justice' issues to seeking 'qualitative' change

Whilst the balancing of global/historical asymmetries was of particular interest to me, it became clearer from wider data that this was secondary to wider purposes. Bhai Sahib's

reflections on '*social justice*' highlighted the need to resist an '*eye for an eye*' mentality based on settling historic scores, and be mindful to '*respond to injustice in a way that builds peace.*' This formed part of a view that global social challenges required a '*qualitative change deep in the human psyche*' so to be addressed in sustainable ways. This terminology was echoed in an early document setting out the educational vision for the nursery and anticipated school, which rested on '*creating a nexus for 'qualitative' learning experience (rather than a demand for proportional representation) and a model for all communities to emulate*'. This wording again tempered the social justice argument and suggested a broader, outward-facing rationale for the nursery.

Clarifying the purposes of the nursery project

After the flurry of activity to set up the nursery was over and it had begun to operate, I made notes from a conversation with R. Singh and M. Kaur, across the road in the Nishkam Centre offices, to try and summarise the underlying purposes of the nursery (and ongoing school) project. The following descriptions emerged of how it sought to encourage those involved to: '*a) recognise afresh the wondrous nature of childhood and of human potential; b) acknowledge their personal responsibilities to provide love and nurture to children; c) reflect on what the overarching purposes of education might be; d) imagine and explore what an 'ideal' education might consist of; e) think innovatively to identify strategies and to harness resources, within the spheres of home, school and community, to help fulfil this ideal, given the inevitable constraints of everyday life* (e.g. the constraints that were talked about involved factors such as work routines or family set up which might compromise attending to basic things that children needed and deserved).

From another discussion I noted the following project aims to: *1) provide service delivery; 2) articulate an educational philosophy; 3) organise provision and develop training in line with wider educational structures and regulations; and 4) affect the children's home, neighbourhood and widening environment.* This reinforced the idea that the underlying thinking went beyond the confines of delivering provision within one nursery school.

Towards a Sikh-inspired model of educational purpose

In his initial interview, R. Singh recounted various '*models*' of an educated person he was familiar with. An '*economic*' one, as he saw it, risked '*producing*' people to be '*functionaries*'. Education focussed on '*talk about the meaning of life*', whilst valuable, also risked producing '*functionaries*' who were able to have '*philosophical discussions*'. Another notion of a '*well educated*' person was someone who '*maybe appreciates art, maybe appreciates music, maybe appreciates good food and so on*'. R. Singh also mentioned how ideas of a '*rounded person*' and of '*reaching your potential*' were ones he had certainly '*applauded*'. The view he build up to was that Sikh teaching encouraged one to think further of every individual being '*a person with immense responsibilities*' to live '*a worthy life*' and as having '*infinite potential*' rather than '*a potential*' that one might reach. Describing this overall view first as '*holistic*', he paused to suggest that '*wholesome*' might be a better definition. Whilst he did not use its Punjabi terminology, the threefold motto governing Sikh ideas of purposeful living, was echoed in his explanation that education needed to enable you to '*earn your living*' and '*be self-sufficient*'; it also had to strengthen people's ability to '*serve others*' and '*contribute to society*' and be more '*spiritually aware of themselves*'.

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As I noted in 9.3.2, Bhai Sahib drew on an existential framing of human life to stimulate thinking about the '*overarching purpose of education*'. Following the 2007 launch of Birmingham's RE syllabus, he offered thoughts that a good education would: shed light on and improve the '*human condition*'; encourage the '*pursuit of wisdom*' over intellectual knowledge alone (involving a thread of knowledge that is '*thir*' or 'constant' to humans); raise, not only literacy or numeracy standards, but '*standards* of *being human*', and; help to '*combat ignorance and hearsay*', raising (through good RE) interfaith understanding and fostering cohesion in local and global contexts. Bhai Sahib also underlined that, in the context of the war on terror, the '*invisible enemy*' lies elusively in the '*mind*' – hence the focus he was giving to '*value-led*' nurture. With regard to the '*pursuit of wisdom*', he recollected a couple of Urdu poems from his school days, remarking on how their themes of caring for one's environment and not belittling or underestimating people or things had left a lifelong impression him. This underlined for him the value of exposing young children to inspiring literature, which might guide their personal development from an early age.

From 2008 I got some chances to speak with an elder 'Uncle Ji' in the gurudwara *sangat*, who was adept at conveying the colloquial style of Gurbani and unpacking its practical analogies. Reluctant to be formally interviewed (and, in this sense, put on stage), he preferred informal, personal exchanges in Punjabi and was happy for me to take notes. These conversations shed light for me on further Sikh heritage-based ideas about educational purpose.

Quoting one verse, he observed it was rare for a person to be fully 'awake' (*jagat*) in the 'house' (*greh*) of the self, prone as it is to be in slumber ('*is greh meh koi jagat rehai*'- *SGGS p. 182*). From another verse, describing a lamp lighting the temple of the mind ('*man*

mandir mai dipak jalio'- SGGS p. 235), he remarked that, when we fumble around in darkness, we are bound to get things wrong, and can better see and understand things in the light. Darkness (and slumber) assumed a mind overcast with *haumai* or egocentricity, which can persist no matter how learned (*parrhia*) a person is. The point this elder was making was that education involves not just the acquisition of knowledge but the ability to apply it, by operating from the base of an illuminated or awakened self. For Bhai Sahib, who on another occassion referred to these same scriptural analogies, this summed up the purpose of being a 'Sikh' or 'a learner'. It involved humility, because it assumed one to be a '*lifelong learner*', where learning '*never ceases*'.

Amongst my notes of the retrospective discussion with R. Singh and M. Kaur highlighted above, there was also an outline of educational purposes underlying the nursery and school projects. This was to: 'a) *to create a society which uplifts individuals – and individuals who uplift society; b) to foster qualities, values, skills and knowledge to live well and prosper in the spiritual as well as material sense; c) to be capable of learning from heritage and of leaving a legacy.*' As a recurring theme, notion of legacy was elaborated in a further question Bhai Sahib described as posing to himself: '*What have we gained, what have we lost, what should be perpetuated, and what is important in life?*' I saw this as underscoring a spiritual/ethical purpose in education, beyond aims of heritage preservation, or of acquiring knowledge for life in the 'modern' world . It once more reflected emphasis early in the nursery project on asking questions to stimulate new thinking before packaging key ideas. When the state primary school was set up in 2011, the broader thinking about educational purpose was condensed down to three promotional statements: '*More than academic excellence; More than a school; More than 'self'*'.

Sociocultural and parental/maternal perspectives

B. Kaur introduced to the '*overarching*' framings a more practical view of the purposes of the nursery project to respond to the multifaceted needs of British Sikh children and their families, of parents juggling different demands and aspirations, and of mothers in particular during the pivotal life transition of starting a family. In her interview, she highlighted her interest in parent liaison and family support work. This stemmed from the professional knowledge she was building following her career change to support the needs of mothers and families of children under five, as well as knowledge she gained from her *sewadar* role within an intergenerational gurudwara *sangat,* allowing her to absorb knowledge from '*elders*'. She was also raising a family in an extended family home setting, which supported her interest in promoting holistic wellbeing. This interest also parallelled the emergence and development of wellbeing services provided at the Nishkam Centre.

B. Kaur was interested to create a support base sensitised to the everyday cultural norms and '*hurdles*' of Sikh/Punjabi parents, related to managing relationships and pressures in extended family life, or to finding oneself strapped for support because of nuclear family or single-parent home contexts. In her review of the pilot phase, B. Kaur listed some of the general life problems she had identified talking to participating mothers. The first was '*language barriers*'. This, she explained, was because Punjabi-dominant speaking mothers, whilst they could access mainstream provision, found it a problem to share conversation and ideas with others in English. Conversely, the English-dominant speaking mothers found it difficult to do the same on their visits to the gurudwara, with Punjabi speaking elders.

Other problems she noted were: the burdens of housework and family care roles; feeling vulnerable to criticisms from family members or feeling pressures from other mothers on

matters of child development; being unsure of how to wean children on Indian/vegetarian diets; lack of support to breastfeed children (linked to patterns of bottle-feeding amongst first-generation migrants, involving preferences for '*chubby*', as B. Kaur put it, '*formula-fed*' children and the view that it could fast-track mothers to '*return to the cycle of household chores*'); lack of anticipated support from extended family members; the need for '*time out*' to relax. She felt that the playgroup initiative was a first step to supportively address these issues in culturally attuned ways. Following from her interest in health and family support, B. Kaur drafted documents about the prenatal and postnatal period, linking 'expert' professional advice to Sikh/Punjabi traditions to support maternal wellbeing (through diet, massage, hands-on help to allow early mother/child bonding time, for example). She also offered tips on how families could better attune their routines and mindsets to give quality time and attention to children, whether they were running shops or businesses, working unusual shifts or conventional hours.

9.5.3 Fostering an 'image of the child' and of adult and societal roles

R. Singh had introduced early into nursery project discussions the idea that one's vision of the purposes of education depends on one's vision of the purposes of childhood, life and society. This led to developing an 'image of the child' (a term not directly used in the project, which I borrow here from Reggio Emilia to sum up a project focus) and of adult and societal roles in responding to it. This was done through processes of personal, inward reflection on the one hand, and reflection on Sikh teachings on the other, from which concepts and values could be extrapolated. This would serve, it was hoped, to not only help shape nursery practice and '*enrich*' the officially required curriculum but to also encourage new levels of awareness, motivation and solidarity to positively nurture children in families, communities and broader societal contexts, as reflected in Bhai Sahib's stress, in his

interview, on '*shared responsibility*' and a '*fusion*' of people, from '*laymen*', '*parents*' and '*academics*' to '*faith practitioners*' and '*sceptics*'. This also echoed B. Kaur's stress on engaging contrasting community and institutional networks of knowledge and support

Ideas from the personal, inward reflection of mothers

Input from the group of mothers early in the nursery project had enabled (as R. Singh explained to an external visitor to the nursery) '*simple, deep conversations*' where '*you feel you are amongst friends, that we are not talking about a school, but we are talking about your child.*' This process underlined the sentiment that each child is '*precious*'. In one brainstorming session, R. Singh asked them to single out, through a process of elimination, the most vital ingredients to provide for a child. This brought to the fore children's need to be loved and to be healthy and well. This then indicated elements in home or school environments which could not be compromised or overlooked. I am unsure how the connection arose between conclusions arrived at by this project group and Bhai Sahib's reiterations - that the focus of any provision for children under five should be simply '*an abundance of love and good nourishment*' - but there evidently was one.

A quote from Gurbani which Bhai Sahib frequently articulated in relation to early and lifelong education was: '*man tu jyot saroop hai, apna mul pachan*' (SGGS p. 441). This addresses the mind (*man*), calling it to recognise (*pachan*) its root or essence (*mul*) as an embodiment of the '*divine flame*' (*jyot).* In an early prospectus for the new Nishkam Primary, this line was presented as a Sikh-inspired motivation to '*realise your potential*' (adding a new layer of understanding to a commonly used educational statement). A '*wholesome*' education, Bhai Sahib suggested, could energise and '*kindle*' the inner '*jyot*'. The idea that this inner '*jyot*' is particularly receptive to nurture during the formative years

of human life is was linked to the Sikh view that, when in the womb, the child has a direct and intimate connection with 'the Creator'. When this link is broken at birth, on entry into the material world, the child's early social environment can serve to strengthen or to neglect the innate spiritual self. Where it is neglected, as R. Singh described it, there is a tendency for adults to '*reduce the child to function within worldly spheres*' and, again, '*unknowingly reduce the child's capacity, by simply expecting the child to reflect their own norms*'. His use here of '*worldly*' and '*norms*', as I understood it, assumed lack of receptivity to the values of the spirit.

Bhai Sahib understood the spiritual self as having '*infinite capacity*', '*originality*' and '*quality*'. He regularly emphasised the Sikh understanding that it comprised a human being's latent inner reserve of '*God-given values and virtues*'. That this reserve was particularly evident and unencumbered in childhood was pointed out as being reflected in Sikh history. Accounts of the wisdom of children (e.g. some of the Gurus as children) were referred to, that shed light on the delusions and foolishness of adults. When he was invited to offer a Sikh reflection on regional radio, following the nursery's opening, R. Singh talked about the capability of very young children to demonstrate forgiveness, to make up and not harbour grudges towards friends or parents who may have wronged them. Such ideas contributed to building a strong and capable image of the child, deserving the respect and loving support of adults.

9.5.4. *Fostering a keen sense of place*

An idea that kept surfacing in the envisioning process was that of place, and of the kind of atmosphere it held. Bhai Sahib talked figuratively of '*fragrance*' and '*ambiance*' impacting on a person's learning, growth and inclinations, which A. Singh had expressed in Punjabi

as '*mahaul*'. Bhai Sahib also reiterated the role of '*exposure*', '*conditions*' and '*conditioning*', in embedding knowledge and engendering dispositions. This was later echoed in a remark by the nursery manager, K. Singh, as he imagined a diffusion of dispositions across the nursery. The ingredients of an 'ideal' educational environment as it was being envisaged would include (according to one set of notes I took from a project discussion): *a) a mindset where childhood is enjoyed and valued; b) the personal wellbeing of parents/practitioners; c) intergenerational contact; d) opportunities to learn alongside children of other ages; d) a love of nature and the outdoors; e) nurturing through love and awakening the desire to learn; e) an emphasis on multilingualism; f) an interfaith ethos; g) opportunities for curriculum enrichment; h) exposure to people highly accomplished in their fields, e.g. musicians, artists, artisans i) good nourishment.*

Places of warmth and security: from the womb, to the home and nursery

The nursery project involved thinking about the progression and scope of environments in which early growth and learning happen. This was particularly underlined in one meeting I attended, inside the glass-walled seminar room of the Nishkam Centre, offering a clear view onto the nursery building as it was being renovated. Amongst the few *sewadars,* there was a visiting Sikh early years specialist. As the conversation swayed into detailing terminology from the EYFS framework, R. Singh suggested stepping back to think how the nursery fitted into the progressive experiences of a child after his or her arrival in the world. To the backdrop of the view onto the nursery, he drew a few concentric rings to reflect the womb, the family home, and then the nursery, as a series of environments experienced by the growing child.

Because early experience should be characterised ideally, it was agreed, by feelings of warmth, being loved and feeling secure, this highlighted the nursery's role in the continuum and indicated how its world and its curriculum should be shaped. This echoed a remark made by K. Kaur, recounting her teaching experience from earlier decades, about welcoming very young children to a nursery environment: '*They are so used to their mother's love. And the child comes to nursery... He has lost his environment. And there's a teacher, who should be full of love to embrace them, so that* [they feel that] *the love which I'm losing with my mother, you are providing.*'

Building on the sphere of the mother-child and family bond

The period of early life inside the womb was regularly underlined as the vital beginning of education. The '*ambiance*' of this environment was seen to be influenced by the mother's holistic wellbeing, dependent in turn on the environments co-fostered by the father, family members or others around her. The nursery was being planned to provide a service to working parents where maternal employment was a norm. However, the meanings and sentiments associated with the mother-child bond retained a strong significance that was reflected in facets of nursery life (e.g. addressing nursery practitioner's as one's mother's siblings; artwork based on a verse about a mother's hopes and blessings for her child – see appendix 14). Bhai Sahib had remarked that the name of the first Sikh Guru, 'Nanak', like his sister 'Nanaki', suggested an early close bond with maternal relatives, who are referred to in Punjabi as *nanakay*. This followed a tradition that the mother returns to live with her own family for a period after childbirth, in an environment where she can feel at home and which can be emotionally as well as practically restorative.

The idea that the body and mind of the mother, and bond with the mother, comprises the first site of learning for a child was also reflected in references made to the verse '*Gurdev mata, gurdev pita*' (SGGS p. 250). Presenting God as both mother (*mata*) and father (*pita*), it was also seen to indicate that a child's first 'guru' is the mother, then father, before the wider circle of family and community. The nursery was thus construed, not as state intervention to educate one's child but as part of a family support system, akin to an extended family, which also provided an educational stepping stone for the child into the wider society.

From descriptions of educational 'goals' to educational 'space'

The other occasion where a sense of place in the educational theorising was heightened for me was in a conversation (between R. Singh, M. Kaur and myself) to review a draft text to summarise and communicate the educational vision. It began with the line '*An approach which:*' followed by six short phrases to identify starting principles, with sub-phrases to describe an associated activity and outcome. It was suggested the sub-phrases to begin instead with the word '*where*', followed by a description of the enabling ingredients of the envisioned environment. This served to emphasise, as R. Singh put it, '*space*' rather than '*goals*'. Rather than defining a predetermined outcome, one could describe, instead, '*what you might see in children*'. In his second interview he explained that by providing children with the '*right environment…right atmosphere…right support*', the kind of citizenship values which they '*innately know*' could '*actually blossom in a way, without having to be taught*'. Similarly, B. Kaur, in a momentary code-switch to Punjabi used the word '*apay*' (like the French *soi-même*) to explain an intention to motivate children attending the pilot playgroup to learn 'of their own accord'.

Changing habits around children, rather than 'changing children'

In the conversation to revise draft text, M. Kaur suggested that the aim lay in '*not changing children, but changing yourself*'. This linked to a strong thread in the educational vision. In other notes I collected, the idea that education '*develops individuals in order to develop society*' was being partly turned on its head by the idea that '*in order to bring the best out of individuals, we must first learn to become the kind of society we'd like to see*'. It was accompanied by the view that '*values*' are not taught as such, but are '*awakened and strengthened when they are practiced in front of us every day.*' This came to be reinforced and, in a way validated, at an early stage for the project team, when the Nishkam Centre hosted a regional conference led by an external educational organisation on the theme than 'More is caught than taught'.

B. Kaur revealed ways in which she, in running the pilot playgroup, gave focus to '*just the little things, just about being thankful, being happy, loving one another*', through Sikh practices such as singing, sharing food, building a sense of family, doing *simran* and *sewa*, and by fostering '*habits and love*'. She found herself sometimes explaining to parents that learning content was at this stage secondary to the environment created around children out of relationships, habits, feelings and attitudes. This led her to comment: '*If you give them all the knowledge and no love, what good is knowledge without a passion to learn about it?*' Echoed here were K. Kaur's own recollections of her teaching experience in Africa, where she resisted the imposition of a '*strict curriculum*' until very young children were given time and space for self-discovery and then '*settled down*' to begin more formal learning.

From 'text book' heritage, to heritage as a resource for 'nurture'

B. Kaur had described how she herself had moved from a '*text book*' approach to heritage education (which summed up her prior involvement in gurudwara classes and camps) to one that involved '*living the heritage*' and the '*nurturing part*' of her which she became more conscious of after motherhood. She now saw her Sikh faith as offering her children '*tools for life*', which, alongside their mainstream education, could help them '*enrich their lives*'. Once more this echoed K. Kaur's recollections of her father's understated way of encouraging daily habits and the learning of Sikh prayers in the context of their wider holistic development and formal schooling experience.

B. Kaur also emphasised the need to bring on board aspects of mainstream educational practice she saw as missing in the experiences of some Sikh children. She noted meeting teenagers at Sikh summer schemes '*who'd never played in their life... never actually just run free.*', adding '*that was the biggest indicator that we actually have to do something for these children*'. I contrasted this with R. Singh's recollections of his rural childhood that was '*filled with playing, with real life*', '*a sense of adventure*', a strong '*connection with nature*', and the company of many adults, which he underlined as vital ingredients in the learning environment. K. Kaur had also talked positively about how her parents had encouraged their girls to be sportive during their childhood in Kenya (mentioning, with a touch of humour, how they let their daughters go against South Asian norms to '*wear shorts!*'). These various comments which surfaced in the interviews suggested a view that moves in mainstream education could help to recover a lost heritage where regular physical activity and closeness to nature was the norm.

Drawing attention to the social environment in fostering SMSC

The legal requirement for education to foster 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' was seen as official endorsement of the underlying vision for nursery project. Early project documents provided extracts from OFSTED papers on SMSC provision. Over time I noted how ideas about SMSC expressed along the way gave emphasis to the role of social environment. For example, the term '*sangat*' (meaning 'company') got used not just in a text-book sense to mean a static gurudwara 'congregation', but also to suggest the social, intergenerational environment where learning might happen imperceptibly and bring '*intangible*' benefits and '*blessings*'.

Both Bhai Sahib and R. Singh suggested the notion of 'development' in 'spiritual development' did not quite chime with Sikh thought. Because the spiritual self was seen as particularly evident or resilient in childhood, it needed '*conducive*' environments to be '*kindled*' rather than be 'developed' as such through stages. On several occasions, Bhai Sahib remarked that the starting point for moral development was not '*police action*' but the fostering of '*internal checks and balances*' and '*good governance*'. This depended in turn on one's life '*exposure*' and the '*accumulative effects*' of personal and societal '*conditioning*'. Whilst the word 'culture' occasionally got used to talk about '*Sikh culture*' or '*Punjabi culture*' (and was used as such especially by non-Sikh visitors), it was also used to depict a general social climate involving habits or values (e.g. Bhai Sahib's comments about '*not subscribing to a culture of blame*' or promoting a '*culture of forgiveness*').

The notion of 'dispositions' gave focus to practices one might see in action rather than an abstract set of values. Project work began to develop a framework of Punjabi-language values that reflected Sikh teaching, such as *chardi kala* (optimism), *nimarta* (humility),

himmat (courage, initiative) and *nishkamta* (altruism). Just as my fieldwork period was ending, those involved in the new school trust began to create support materials to unpack each of the RE syllabus dispositions, providing a basic '*description*' and also ideas about their '*practical application*', i.e. '*the skill of doing/embodying*' it. Nishkam's partnership work to develop ideas and perspectives on SMSC in education can be found in Gill & Thomson (2014) and Felderhof & Thompson (2014).

When I first introduced the topic of nursery education to the sangat elder mentioned earlier in this section, his instant response was to share the following verse from Gurbani (as did the nursery manager, K. Singh, at a later stage): '*hasandia, khelandia, painandia, khavandia, viche hovai mukat*'. Roughly translated, it meant that, in the midst of laughing, playing, dressing up and eating, the self could be spiritually liberated and flourish. As well as bringing to life the experiences of childhood, it summed up for me the everyday notion of the 'spiritual' that seemed to be inspiring the educational vision as a whole.

9.6 Ways of speaking: communicative resources and situated meanings

Jab lag dunia rehiai Nanak, kichh suniai, kichh kehiai.

For as long as we remain in this world (O Nanak),

Let us engage in listening, and in speaking, in ways that will make our time here worthwhile.

-   Gurbani verse (SGGS p. 661) as quoted and explained by Bhai Sahib, 2013

In my study of the four initial interviews in Sagoo (2009), I included short sections to contrast how each participant talked. Here I briefly build on this to provide an outline of the range of communicative repertoires reflecting the participants' different trajectories of socialisation as well as focal points and horizons of their interests and commitments.

Throughout the processes of data collection and analysis I was therefore conscious of how, beyond bilingual code switching there were other differences in language usage suggesting that ideas expressed to me also needed to be contextualised in the historical experiences which influenced their articulation.

This was more evident in the elder participants (Bhai Sahib and K. Kaur) who had grown up overseas, acquired their skills in English through a colonial education and translingual ability in the intercultural contexts of daily life in East Africa. This explained Bhai Sahib's occasional references to Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde and to Urdu poetry, as well as occasional switches to Kiswahili. His talk also reflected English usage of a particular British colonial milieu which for him had involved working in close contact with government officials (whilst K Kaur had undergone government training to qualify as a teacher). It also involved using a currency of terms associated with new global contexts.

Bhai Sahib's drawing upon Gurbani's poetic imagery and musical quality introduced new tones to the flow of thought. This is reflected in the quote which opens this section, which he referred to in a talk about intergenerational dialogue for creative leadership. Speaking as a 'faith leader' in English, Bhai Sahib also often employed approximate translations from Anglo-Christian tradition, referring to 'God Almighty' for example. As already highlighted, he would at times pause, however, to reflect on uses of terminology, such as '*religion*' or '*faith*' as contrasted with '*dharam*'. Partly because of his awareness of the historical and cultural life of words, he would talk about the need to stop and '*unravel*' or '*unwrap*' various forms of Punjabi or English terminology to probe the '*universe*' of meanings and the '*sentiments*' that may lie behind them. He would also draw attention to the role and effects of non-verbal communication, as I will touch on in 10.2.3.

In odd moments, historical change in language usage became starkly clear, for example, when Bhai Sahib talked in his interview of the need to '*groom teachers, not brainwash them*'. On a separate occasion he remarked how the word '*groom*' had taken on a very different connotation in the public realm, as compared to meanings of gradual nurture or training he linked to it. This alerted me to not always take utterances at face value from my perspective and to try to grasp the wider set of ideas underpinning them – which the ethnographic work of 'hanging around' and working out through listening assists one to do.

For me these observations shed light on a feature of this thesis, in that it involves terminology (such as 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural') whose usage remains in flux. Through the research process I was aware that references to terms such as '*faith*', '*family*' and even '*mother*' could carry both positive and negative connotations and assumptions. The research allowed me to 'stay with' these terms and unpack some of the less apparent thinking behind their usage as I encountered it in this case study. It also prompted me to think of translingual communicative practice, not only speaking 'bilingually' in the traditional sense, but moving across genres, registers and styles in English alone. In Sagoo (2009), I examined the four initial interviews with nursery founders in this way. In Bhai Sahib's and B. Kaur's talk, switches occurred specifically to highlight a concept or a scriptural verse. In R. Singh's and K. Kaur's talk, switches to Punjabi introduced words and phrases that built conversational bridges with me as a co-speaker of Punjabi, or represented the Punjabi speech of characters in a recollection from the past. In chapter 10 which follows, I introduce how translingual communicative practices were established in the nursery in ways that were linked to its wider ethos about children's nurture.

9.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I analysed the discursive production of ideas in early and ongoing processes of envisioning of the nursery. I indicated how the production of ideas was linked to the overlapping British/Sikh and *dharmic/*civic identities being constructed, linguistically and multimodally, by the community of practice which brought the Nishkam nursery into being. The chapter was divided under five umbrella headings to organise the scope and blend of perspectives. These were: 'Responding to socio-historical change: Opening themes in the research' (9.2); 'Ways of seeing: locating the particular in overarching contexts' (9.3); 'Ways of doing and participating: Drawing on dharmic and civic values' (9.4); 'Ways of nurturing: Ideas informing the educational vision' (9.5) and; 'Ways of speaking: communicative resources and situated meanings' (9.6).

Under 'Responding to socio-historical change' (9.2), my analysis of four initial interviews revealed how nursery founders were: weighing up their experiences of different forms of educational provision (formal/informal, private/state-run or home/community-led) in colonial, postcolonial and postwar settings in India, Africa and the UK and associating them with purposes of heritage transmission, holistic nurture and preparing children to participate in the 'modern' word (9.2.1); acknowledging parental life pressures for first-generation South Asian migrants to Britain (9.2.2); anticipating future evolutions of social norms based on ongoing transcultural encounter (9.2.3); taking stock of historical losses and gains and directing energies to move on and create a future 'legacy' (9.2.4). The idea of 'legacy', I noted, was conceived in terms that were both particular to a person or community and more general to society. It was used to advance a view that 'values' comprised the 'richest' legacy humans could leave for future others. Evident in all four interviews was how this temporal

stock-taking was giving rise to attitudes of responsibility and hope for the future, rather than despondency or blame.

Under 'Ways of seeing: locating the particular in overarching contexts' (9.3) I revealed other forms of perspectival distancing around which a rationale for the nursery was being generated. The first subtheme was 'Relating whole to part' (9.3.1), based on a notion used by Bhai Sahib to expand the contextual horizons of local initiatives like the nursery project and to foreground values of 'interconnectedness', 'interdependence', 'kinship' and 'solidarity' in the wider social world. I then organised further ideas drawn from the data under the following subheadings: 'Linking the local and global context' (9.3.2); 'Linking the infinite and finite context' (9.3.3); 'Fusing spirituality with secularity' (9.3.4) and; 'Fusing heritage with modernity' (9.3.5). These were based on a series of twinned guiding principles formulated by Bhai Sahib which connected apparently polar concerns.

Under 'Linking the local and global context' (9.3.2), my analysis brought together observations of how: the idea that 'local is global and global is local' was reflected in the life trajectories of Nishkam *sewadars* and the scope of their networks and projects; the Nishkam Centre had been conceptualised to contribute to work on 'global ethics' and 'globalisation for the common good'; the term 'model' got used to imply a local process for broader consideration, as distinguished from a fixed 'system' for circulation; references were made to the paradoxical 'narrowness' yet 'open' outlook of the project and to people's 'concentric identities' where forms of belonging and 'allegiance' were seen as intertwined and overlapping. These ideas I saw as being indexed by fluid and sometimes ambiguous uses of 'we' by interviewees, moving from particular to generalised forms of social identification.

'Linking the infinite and finite context' (9.3.3) was another way of seeing advanced by Bhai Sahib. I drew here on a moment in his interview where geographical notions of migration were recast in existential terms by drawing on Sikh scriptural analogy. This focal adjustment on every person's migrant status, by virtue of our arrival in and inevitable departure from the world, was offered to deepen reflection on human potential and purpose, on individual transience and social continuity. That such reflection tends to become heightened around moments of birth and death formed the basis of another question formulated by Bhai Sahib about what should therefore constitute our 'overarching vision' for education.

Under 'Fusing spirituality with secularity' (9.3.4), I analysed how the two terms, 'secular' and 'spiritual', were varyingly interpreted, in the light of Bhai Sahib's remark that 'social cohesion' involved some cultivation of 'cohesion within the self' and that 'social regeneration' required some form of 'spiritual regeneration' in terms of life perspectives and lived values tied to one's everyday 'sensibility' and 'consciousness'. This explained the educational interest in 'dispositions', as endorsed in Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. I also noted an alternating espousal and abandonment of the words 'religion' and 'faith', and preference to use the Punjabi word '*dharam*' in contrast to English terminology which tends to polarise the 'religious' and the 'secular'.

Under 'Fusing heritage with modernity' (9.3.5), I introduced how an identification with Sikh heritage was being conceived as a form of 'mooring', as Bhai Sahib put it, in the currents of the contemporary world. Integrated aims to promote 'heritage conservation' and 'social innovation' were seen as one way of 'reconciling' different forms of belonging and becoming. Encouraged by Bhai Sahib was a view of 'heritage' as people's living and evolving practice more so than knowledge or material artefacts which may be commendably

preserved. I also highlighted the global view he was taking of the world's 'heritage of values', along with his note of the 'universal values' often attributed Sikh tradition, for which non-Sikhs had given it praise. This explained his interest in projects to facilitate 'values transfer' as well as 'knowledge transfer' and stress on the ability to 'adapt' and 'innovate' to transport facets of heritage from one sociohistorical location to another. I finished 9.3 by touching on how elements of these above 'ways of seeing' were multimodally communicated in the 'figured world' of the gurudwara and in facets of Sikh identity.

The third thematic heading was 'Ways of doing and participating: drawing on *dharmic* and civic values' (9.4). This introduced Sikh ideas of social participation which were being expressed in Punjabi (e.g. *kirat*, a strong work ethic, and *sewa*, or habit to serve others). *Dharam* suggested spiritually-inspired, socially responsible living and '*jaag*' was used to picture an 'awakening' of momentum for social transformation (from the Punjabi word for live cultures which transform milk into yogurt). I examined how these were being discursively linked to more widely circulated citizenship discourses, e.g. promoting 'self-reliance', 'selflessness', 'capacity-building', and 'spiritual' as well as 'social' capital.

This section also highlighted the founders' awareness that they were participating in national life as part of a linguistic, cultural and religious minority. Importance was given to having nationally established policy and professional standards and, at the same time, scope to develop approaches rooted in their identification with Sikh tradition. It was equally important for them to avoid becoming limited to 'rhetoric' or to a 'candyfloss' of ideas and to develop practical initiatives, with the hope that this language-by-doing could in some respects transcend 'boundaries' of linguistic and cultural difference. The ambitious organisational vision was based on ideas of 'excelling' as a minority to 'earn' instead of

'demand' respect by drawing on a 'rich' Sikh legacy. The emphasis on 'innovation' and 'quality' also looked to move beyond 'deficit models' of provision in deprived, inner-city neighbourhoods, including those with high minority ethnic populations.

The fourth thematic heading was 'Ways of nurturing: ideas informing the educational vision' (9.5). Under, 'Fostering a global and historical awareness' (9.5.1), I outlined how founders were: taking account of recent global and national reports on child-wellbeing; considering the educational impact of British colonialism in the Punjab and a resultant South Asian esteem of a 'British education'; accepting how factors in the social history of Sikhs may have curtailed opportunities to develop and transfer heritage-based knowledge; aspiring 'not to relive a bygone age' but to recognise valuable concepts which could be 'retained and adapted' in new contexts. These resonated with ideas introduced in early sections of this chapter.

Under 'Fostering a keen sense of purpose' (9.5.2), I revealed how the nursery founders sought to go beyond minority demands for proportional representation or addressing historical imbalances. Their accounts of existent 'models' of what it means to be an educated person (e.g. based on economic imperatives, on notions of being cultured) were joined by reflection on Sikh notions of an educated person based around: the idea that 'Sikh' means 'learner'; a distinction drawn between someone who is '*parrhiaa*', or 'learned', and someone who is spiritually 'awake' and not clouded by '*haumai*' (the 'ego'); value given to the 'pursuit of wisdom', to knowledge which is '*thir*' (constant) to being human, and to the cultivation of mindset (or *bhavana* as K. Kaur termed it) based on selfless attributes. Sikh principles were alluded to in interviewees' remarks about education as a preparation to work and be 'self-sufficient'; to 'contribute to society' and live 'a worthy life'; to 'combat

ignorance and hearsay' in the context of religious and cultural diversity; to recognise 'the mind' as the most elusive, 'invisible' threat to safety and security.

From a more immediate and local perspective, B. Kaur elaborated on a rationale grounded in daily realities of work and family life for a new generation of Sikh/Punjabi parents. The aim was to be culturally sensitised to their life circumstances and challenges and to their multifaceted aspirations for their children. It also included developing support for pre- and post-natal maternal wellbeing, as reflected in informal documents she produced identifying points of resonance between professionally established expertise and restorative practices rooted in approaches from India. She thus saw the cultural competency of the envisaged nursery to respond to such issues as playing a vital role in serving the wellbeing of the child.

Under 'Fostering an 'image of the child' and of adult and societal roles' (9.5.3) and 'Fostering a keen sense of place' (9.5.4), I brought together ideas giving focus to the kind of attitudes and environments socially constructed around children, based on viewing the child as a capable agent. I outlined processes of personal 'soul-searching' and 'simple, deep conversations' by the group of Sikh mothers (who had initially mobilised themselves to find solutions for their childcare needs) and of researching Sikh religious and cultural heritage. The atmosphere, 'ambiance' (or Punjabi '*mahaul*') of the new nursery was pictured as providing an extension the warmth, security and nurture associated with the mother-child bond and other close family relationships the start of life. The new nursery was thus to present an opportunity to reconfigure local resources to ensure that children did not miss out on these essential ingredients in spite of work and other pressures faced by parents. At the same time it was viewed as a stepping stone to the world of school and society at large.

In 9.5.4 I also observed how, in the drafting of early texts describing a nursery ethos, emphasis was switched from identifying educational 'goals' to educational 'space'. Emphasis was given to building children's 'exposure', for example, to multilingualism, to intergenerational contact, to people highly accomplished in their respective skills, to nature and the outdoors and, most importantly, to the practice of 'values' (or 'dispositions') by adults around children. B. Kaur referred to developing 'habits and love' to motivate children to learn '*apay*' or 'of their own accord', and to her own shift from 'text-book' knowledge of her faith to viewing it as a resource, providing 'tools' for children's holistic nurture. This mirrored Bhai Sahib's characteristic emphasis on the individual as an 'agent' drawing on dharmic practice. I also noted moments where facets of the nationally legislated aim of education to foster 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' were being interpreted in ways that gave sustained focus to the social dimensions of learning.

In the final section, 'Ways of speaking' (9.6), I summed up the range of communicative repertoires which came into play in the envisioning process. This was linked to the contrasting life trajectories of the intergenerational group of founders, their socialisation and educational experiences (in colonial and postcolonial India and East Africa and late twentieth century Britain), as well as the focal points and horizons of their interests and commitments (from leading a transnational network of Sikhs, to serving the practical needs of local parents and children and interfacing with diverse social partners and institutions). These repertoires consisted not only of contrasting language resources (e.g. English or Punjabi); they included different discourses which they drew upon, reflecting overarching ways of thinking and communicating which have taken shape over time (e.g. western religious discourse, professional educational or governmental discourse). This shed light on the situated meanings and contrasting connotations of words which the founders used,

and on moments of their own agency in becoming aware of the need to 'unravel' and not take all meanings at face value and to recast established concepts. This section underlined the intermeshing of voices and perspectives in the discursive production of a vision for the nursery, which the research process allowed me to examine as a whole, taking account of nuances and complexities highlighted in earlier sections of this chapter.

This insight into the ideas, values and motivations which informed the vision building process for the nursery will now be followed by Chapter 10, Creating and configuring the nursery world. This examines the making and shaping of the nursery as a material and relational space involving the blending of contrasting curriculum frameworks.

CHAPTER 10:

CREATING AND CONFIGURING THE NURSERY WORLD

10.1 The nursery as a 'figured world'

Having considered the embryonic stages of the nursery project and its conceptual underpinnings, I will now examine the formation of the nursery institution itself, from the renovation and opening of the building in 2009 to the construction of its day-to-day world. Drawing on fieldnotes, photographic and documentary data, and on interviews with members of the early years staff team, I will analyse how various material, relational and curricular dimensions of nursery life were being configured and consider some of processes of identity-making, meaning-making and value-making that were involved.

In this regard, the analysis is inspired by research on 'figured worlds' and education (Urrieta, 2007; Holland et al, 1998 – see Chapters 1 and 2) which studies the formation of identities and exercise of agency in culturally produced, socially organised worlds which create contexts of meaning and significance for the artefacts, activities and roles within them. The analysis also draws on the view of policy as a social practice (Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Sutton and Levinson 2001). It thus sheds light on how official policy texts got interpreted and appropriated through local 'frameworks of cultural meaning' (Sutton and Levinson 2001: 3) as the world of the Nishkam nursery took shape within the wider the landscape of British early years provision.

The ethnographic stance I adopted allowed for particular insight into the fluid and dynamic nature of the world that was being created, even as features and patterns of nursery life

began to crystallise and characterise it.   This is partly because of the overlapping British and South Asian, secular and religious, institutional and more homely 'worlds' that were influencing its configuration, as they alternately rose or receded in importance at given moments, spaces and interactions around the nursery. This fluidity was also dependent on the initial and evolving mix of practitioners, families and children involved in the life of the nursery.   Finally, although the nursery founders had been clear on a number of guiding concepts and principles, the need to work with and through variable ground-level factors as part of a longer-term developmental process had been anticipated.

I will begin the chapter by examining how the material and relational (10.2) space of the nursery was configured, growing out of and evoking the series of variously framed social worlds sketched out above.   I will then examine how the staff set about blending and integrating contrasting curriculum frameworks and principles through planning documents, through the establishment of routines and conventions and through practitioner accounts of nursery practice.   In this way, this chapter sets the scene for the 'vignettes' of interactions from daily nursery life which are studied in Chapter 11.   Responses of parents and other visitors to this world are examined in Chapter 12.

10.2 Configuring the material and relational environment of the nursery

This section examines the creation the nursery's material and relational environment and what this communicated about the range of meanings, values, identities and intentions that were being brought into play.   Its organisation under the following subheadings: 10.2.1 *Evoking home, family and local history; 10.2.2 Evoking school and society; 10.2.3 Evoking*

Sikh and Punjabi worlds echoes the ways in which the distinctive 'place' that was created grew out of and evoked different worlds (see appendices 12 – 19 for related visual data).

10.2.1 Evoking home and local history

The value of a homely environment for early years nurture had been theoretically articulated during the early stages of the nursery project. As it was, the building that was purchased to set up a nursery had been designed as a Georgian home and its renovation now required elements of heritage conservation due to its status as a listed building. These circumstances allowed for the physical accentuation of the nursery as a homely environment and this got extended through the kind of relational world constructed within it, leading practitioners like C. Kaur to talk as follows about her motivation to be involved: '*it was like home, and there's no place like home, is there?*' In this section I examine the creation of this homely environment around the following subheadings: working with existing structural and stylistic features; acknowledging the building's history; creating a sense of belonging and family; valuing the nursery kitchen.

Working with existing structural and stylistic features

The exterior of the detached building in itself presented a picture of home, with its front door and sash windows and front and back gardens. This continued into the interior layout, with its entrance hallway and staircase and fireplaces and mantelpieces in each of the rooms (appendices 13-16). The walls were almost exclusively white, save for a decoratively carved, pale golden dado rail running throughout the building and floral designed wallpaper on every fireplace wall. The sash windows also let in ample natural light and, together with the white expanse of the walls, this reduced the need for artificial lighting in the day. Like

the cast iron chandeliers fitted throughout, this range of features was in keeping with the architectural period of the building.

The displaying of children's work on the interior walls was done selectively, through use of specially framed areas in each classroom for such displays. One practitioner, D. Singh, who likened this to home practices of framing things one values, contrasted it with practices he had seen at other nurseries, where coverage of walls with pictures and posters made the visual environment '*so busy, you can't focus on one thing*'. In his view, the sparser displaying of work offered some educational benefits: '*I do find that works a lot for the children, because they tend to listen and concentrate. And when they play with their activities they are engrossed with their activities rather than having all these distractions around them.*' Noting the argument that children need to see their own work displayed to build their self-confidence, he explained how he also used the classroom computers as a means to show children their work, by running screensaver slide shows of their recent activities. Whilst more excessive evidencing of work on the walls was avoided, it did increase in measured ways as the nursery developed professionally, in keeping with the homely style and atmosphere of the building.

Acknowledging the building's history

In an early phase of the nursery project, a young *sewadar* had been tasked with compiling detailed research on Handsworth's local history. This interest was reflected in the first visual display to be designed and framed in the nursery hallway (appendices 13-14). It was a timeline showing the history of the building, as a former private residence from 1875, a wartime nursery from 1944 and a city council community nursery from 1969 to 2006, until it took (in the words of the timeline design) '*A step to the future*' in 2009 as the new Nishkam

nursery. Initially placed on the right side of the hallway just as one entered the main door, this timeline served to acknowledge those who had previously inhabited or used the space. The care that was taken to create and put it up, and to conserve in general features of the building's history, echoed for me the conservation of nearby Soho House (see Chapter 7) as part of the area's local heritage.

Creating a sense of belonging and family

More than as a stylistic feature, 'home' was also being evoked as a place associated with family, going back to the processes of community participation involved in the nursery's creation. As shown in appendix 12, the renovation had involved months of intergenerational input, as male and female *sewadars* assisted with the effort. This included students, working professionals, parents and grandparents contributing their time outside work, study and family commitments. As momentum built up to complete the renovation, I met, for example, other mothers or fathers on site who had juggled childcare duties to come and sand or paint for the evening. Although I had not conducted any formal interviews with them, their self-motivation to turn up and help was clear, coupled with their comments about wanting to be part of '*making history*' and to do something for '*future generations*'.

Down to the finishing details of tailoring and hanging curtains on the windows, this collective process had generated, as Bhai Sahib put it, '*a sense of belonging and ownership*' and had demonstrated '*the power of sharing*'. Such sentiments were later echoed by a nursery practitioner, C. Kaur, who had also assisted with renovation process: '*the whole place, if you think of it as your own, you treat is as your own.*' Thus, alongside the investment of money through community donations to purchase the building, there had been considerable voluntary investment of time and skills. It often got acknowledged, for

example in meetings of the Nishkam Civic Association, that the resulting ingredients of '*passion*' and '*dedication*', sat outside the list of quantitative '*measureables*' routinely listed in the inputs and outputs of more commercial projects.

Once the nursery was in operation, the relational environment that was quickly established was key to galvanising a sense of home as a place of familiar relationships. This was notably through the use, in Punjabi, of fictive kinship terms which I detail in section 10.2.3. This created a surrogate world of maternal aunts and uncles and older or younger siblings, once children had been dropped by their parents or carers to the nursery door. Although in some respects the usage of kinship terms was distinctive to the nursery, it is best seen as a conscious extension of naturally occurring cultural practice in South Asian networks beyond one's family, more so than an overly artificial approach to imitate family life in the nursery.

Practitioner D. Singh [interview 4/10] noted the benefits of being viewed by them as a family member as well as a professional member of staff, particularly in a setting where children ranged from just a few months to five years old. It reinforced for him the notion that a practitioner's role was an extension of the parental one to help build a child's '*first foundation in life*'. C. Kaur [int 3/10] similarly remarked: '*you are replacing their father and mother during that period of time, so you have to give them that hundred percent... otherwise it's not worth coming into it.*' Likewise B. Kaur [int 6/10] commented on how kinship terms gave children a sense that '*This is like a home, it's your second home*.' For D. Singh the sense of '*warmth*' and '*comfort*' that resulted from this could better lead to having children '*who are feeling secure, feeling confident*' and have '*a lot of self-esteem*', and could then '*let down their guards or barriers and learn as much as they can.*' The ways

in which fictive kinship terms were joined by other specific code switches from English to Punjabi to foster dispositions associated with feeling 'at home', are examined in 10.2.3.

B. Kaur explained how, at that time, use of the baby room as a *'family room'* (where children arriving early or leaving late interacted together at the start and end of the day) created a special time to strengthen attitudes of care and respect towards each other as older and younger sibling figures, e.g. in helping build self-awareness of each other's behaviour and its impact around the babies. Children, as she saw it, also needed to feel respected by adults who, having taken due account of any health and safety issues, could be '*showing them that, look, actually we think that you are responsible, you <u>can</u> be next to a baby*.' Although the nursery rooms divided children by age group, B. Kaur pointed out that '*if we separate them all the time, there's no family value there*.' It was also important to her that staff from different rooms got this exposure too; it offered them moments to extend their affection and '*have a little cuddle with the babies*' and also learn to build cohesiveness and continuity of practice across the nursery: '*it's definitely good to rotate and see each other's children, and benefit from what they are learning as well*'.

Valuing the nursery kitchen

The sense of home was also underscored by the way that staff, children and their families valued the kitchen as a key part of nursery life.   Located on the ground floor, it was where the nursery's vegetarian meals were freshly cooked each day (see appendix 17). The nursery chef whom I refer to here as K.D. Kaur was invariably addressed as 'aunty' or '*masi*' along with a diminutive of her name. The affection and respect that she commanded was foregrounded for me when I witnessed an immensely warm nursery celebration of her 50th birthday. As my interview with her showed, and as her colleagues remarked, she had a very

striking personal drive to bring quality and rigour to any catering or cleaning that took place, acknowledging that '*everybody knows my standards by now*'. Like the others she expressed the sense of working as part of a big family as an inspiration in her work.

My interview with her took place in the winter term, just after she had chatted to me about the warming spices she had added to a recent dish, to help keep at bay coughs and colds. She went on to explain the various balances she was striking in her planning of the week's meals. These were balances between official early years guidance on nutrition (e.g. watching for levels of salt and fat, being creative to increase fruit and vegetable intake and vitamin and iron content), her own heritage-based knowledge (see also 10.2.3) on incorporating ingredients such as ginger to regulate wellbeing and support the '*immune system*', and her desire to ensure that children built a taste for a variety of dishes and were not '*missing out*' on broad choices, i.e. dishes termed as Indian, English, Italian or Chinese, where she would replace meat ingredients with a vegetarian twist. A basic principle for her was to prepare everything '*from scratch*' and firmly resist the purchase of ready-made, frozen food, so much so that even the yogurt, she highlighted around the time of her interview, was home-made.

Explaining that '*I cook as if I was going to feed my own grandchildren*' she recounted her habit of visiting the classrooms during or after lunch, allowing her to get direct feedback from the staff and children. She also saw it as boosting children's desire to show they had enjoyed her food. Her view that '*all the staff are not like staff, they're like my sisters and brothers*' reflected a culture of ready cooperation, where both male and female colleagues were made available to assist her in preparing and serving the food. As K. Singh, the nursery manager, remarked, during his previous ten years of experience working in and managing

nurseries in the region, he had become accustomed to problems arising '*between the staff, the cook and the staff, or the cleaners*'.   At the time of my interview/conversation with him, the staff team had agreed not to take on cleaners, but to share the role, with the idea that the children would have something to learn in watching them take joint responsibility to respect and care for the building. It was not unusual on my visits to the nursery during the early months to catch K. Singh, for example, helping to cook chapattis for lunch or sweeping the hallway at the end of the day. As I explain in 10.2.3, this reflected practices that were highly valued and normalised as part of *sewa* in gurudwara life.

10.2.2 Evoking school and wider society

This section introduces the ways in which the material and relational environment of the nursery was evoking the general culture of mainstream school settings and providing a base to interface with societal life more widely. Introduced briefly here, this aspect will be further explored in the analysis of curriculum frameworks that were drawn upon and subsequent routines and activities in 10.3, since both these aspects drew considerably on established societal norms for early years institutions.

Furnishings and indoor/outdoor resources

If one were to step into the nursery emptied of people, just a few material touches might indicate a Sikh/Punjabi character, such as its bilingual signage and two pieces of artwork. Otherwise each room was resource-based in ways that resonated with the manager's previous years of experience in mainstream nurseries, with the choice of furniture and equipment being guided by the need for high quality, durability and preference for a '*natural look*', e.g. wooden tables, chairs and storage units, along with units for mock kitchen, dressing up and other play areas. This was joined by toys, arts and crafts and other, fairly

standard activity resources and books. The book corner featured book titles introducing different religious and cultural identities, accompanied by a few Punjabi/English bilingual books (appendix 15). During the first two years, the outdoor play area in the nursery back garden, included a specially constructed pagoda edged with planting boxes, a small hill to break the flatness of the grass, and storage units for bikes, hoops and other games as well as prams. At times, equipment stored indoors would be brought out, such as sand or water play units. Hopes to further develop the nursery garden to better support learning and development got realised in 2013, when it got fitted with a purpose-built timber play area following the construction of the adjoining Nishkam primary school.

Material communication of the nursery curriculum

The key principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage were in hallway signage and, in the manager's office, that was a large prominent display of Birmingham SACRE's framework of twenty-four dispositions (appendix 18). Over time, a hallway plasma screen, initially used to allow parents to observe their children as they settled into their classrooms, started to be used to present information and notices to parents. It was here that aspects of the national and local curriculum frameworks adopted by the nursery were highlighted. This blending of frameworks informed the content of curriculum documents and of learning journey folders for each child, stored by the computer desk in each room.

Professional identities, relationships and networks

The nursery also received visits from external professionals, such as speech and language therapists and special educational needs coordinators. It also experienced its first OFSTED visit in early 2010. On these occasions, the staff - seen as aunt or uncle figures by the children - operated with concurrent professional identities and their roles as 'key workers',

for example, were foregrounded. These identities were also enhanced by the promotion of ongoing professional development for the staff team, as it grew, for relative novices to early years training as well as more experienced staff. The institutionalised culture of British schooling was often evident in the linguistic practices of the initial team of Sikh/Punjabi practitioners. This could be noticed, for example, in moments where Punjabi staff employed English accents to address children by their Punjabi names, or when their tones of voice and turns of phrase reflected classic 'teacher talk'. I take a close look at these practices in my account of the nursery in action (Chapter 11).

Boundaries, standards and procedures

The homely and welcoming environment of the nursery was balanced by indicators of professional standards and procedures for the care, education and safeguarding of children. This was apparent, for example, in the controlled buzzer to access the building (contrasting with the open visitor access to the gurudwara across the road); in clearly labelled filing in the manager's office and, over time, through increased notices to parents and carers and a regular newsletter issued to them. These highlighted the nursery's aim to be a site for high quality provision in the context of standards and regulations that were nationally set and monitored.

Windows and avenues into the wider social world

A wider social world was evidently being evoked through professional and curriculum practices which the practitioners, and the nursery as a registered institution, brought into play. Children were also able to access the wider world in both virtual and geographical ways. The computer installed in each room was used by practitioners, who also created opportunities for children to use it in purposeful ways. As B. Kaur [6/10] pointed out,

sessions of interactive engagement were encouraged and passive viewing avoided, although some children might well have had experience of this kind at home in front of TV and computer screens. The computers provided a window into resources available on the worldwide web.

On my visits to the nursery I would also observe children being allowed to take time to physically look out of the windows. At the front was the busy main road and crossroads, with passers-by, traffic and people waiting at the bus stop. At the back was the nursery garden, overlooked by a historic church and neighboured by the church school. The cosmopolitan nature of the neighbourhood and its proximity to the city centre, offered a base of varied learning resources in the local area which practitioners made use of in their planning, arranging trips to nearby shops, visiting different places of worship, libraries, museums and other centres, or to the nearby girls' grammar school which had offered a small garden plot for the nursery children to grow vegetables.

10.2.3 Evoking Sikh and Punjabi worlds

One strand to the nursery's homeliness was the evocation of Sikh and Punjabi worlds associated with the home background of most of the children, staff and families. They could view the gurudwara across the road, and nursery staff sometimes referred to as it as '*Guru ghar*' or 'the Guru's home' (a view that got reflected in a montage of children's work on the theme of home). The day-to-day material and relational world of the nursery therefore got furnished with culturally familiar touches. At one level, as practitioners sometimes explained, these touches were of instrumental value, in that they were seen to help put children at ease, for example, to support their national curriculum-based learning as well as heritage-specific learning (see vignette in Chapter 11).

It was also clear from the start of the nursery project that some ideas and practices linked to Sikh/Punjabi heritage had been accorded a more central role in the physical and conceptual creation of the nursery as a site of civic participation aimed at supporting the broader development of educational provision in society. This was apparent when volunteers attributed the nursery renovation to the Sikh *kar sewa* tradition of hands-on community-led participation; and when understandings of the word 'Sikh' to mean '*lifelong learner*' had prompted early articulations of Sikh educational philosophy around values. The desire to communicate how the nursery initiative reflected Sikh faith inspired social ideas and ideals was reflected in an exhibition put together to mark the civic launch of the nursery in January 2010 (see appendix 14). This had been preceded by two religious occasions. These involved an *akhandpath* and *kirtan* on the nursery premises to give thanks for the completion of the renovation *sewa*, and a similar programme at the gurudwara before the nursery's first day of operation. These services culminated at the usual time of 5am, before dawn and the start of the working day. This highlighted for me an underlying spiritual and cultural identity that ran alongside the nursery's civic identity and the fluid interplay of eastern and western-style influences on daily nursery life.

I will now discuss day-to-day communicative and semiotic practices in the nursery which had a specifically Sikh/Punjabi character. My account is organised around the following subheadings: communicative practices and gestures; styles of dress; food; music; signage.

Communicative practices and gestures

Most of the staff in the nursery and most of the parents used English as their main medium of communication. In doing so, they enacted a particular identity, as British citizens of Indian Punjabi origin. On occasion, they also used expressions or gestures which indexed a

Sikh identity and heritage. As I observed linguistic practices in the various nursery rooms, I noticed Punjabi being used in a number of ways for a number of purposes which varied between practitioners depending on their own bilingual proficiency. These practices included: early efforts to give equal weight to spoken English and Punjabi, by rearticulating phrases and sentences in each language; exercises, songs and games to teach children Punjabi vocabulary, such as names of colours, days of the week, parts of the body; the collective recitation of Sikh greetings, mealtime prayers and singing of hymns (kirtan), I noticed with my own daughter who attended the nursery, that these practices accustomed children to the sounds and rhythms of literary and scriptural Punjabi. Practitioners also made informal asides with Punjabi-dominant speaking children, to offer one-to-one support or to calm or console them (vignette in Chapter 11).

From time to time, I observed instances of translanguaging between Punjabi and English which were much more fluid, where speakers were blending the language resources in their communicative repertoires in a more heteroglossic style of speaking. Sometimes, this blending and meshing of language resources included Hindi as well, especially in situations where practitioner could speak Hindi (as well as Punjabi) and where children and their parents were Hindi speakers. For instance, during one interaction that I observed in the hallway (discussed in detail in Chapter 10), B. Kaur moved in and out of English, Punjabi and Hindi as she addressed a group of children who were getting their coats from their pegs to go out to play.

Over the months of field work in the nursery, I was able to discern some differences in the patterns of communication in the baby room and in the pre-school rooms. In the baby room, there was much more use of Punjabi. When I asked the practitioners about this, they

indicated that this was part of a conscious strategy designed to create continuity with the home, for the very young.   For example, one common practice was the gentle repeating of '*sonjo kaka*' ('go to sleep, my little one') when patting, rocking or singing babies to sleep. B. Kaur highlighted that [6/10], the boys and girls also adopted this practice in their play with dolls. In contrast, I was struck by the less frequent use of Punjabi over time in the preschool rooms. When B. Kaur moved upstairs to teach here, I asked her about the striking different pattern.   She explained this shift to predominant use of English had come partly in response to the desire of Punjabi-dominant speaking families to prioritise their children's English language learning needs. Conversely, English-dominant speaking families hoped the nursery would support children's developing abilities in the Punjabi-language. One effort made in this direction was that of enlisting the help of female elders from the gurudwara to formally teach Punjabi and aspects of the Sikh faith to older nursery children.

To some degree, approaches to bilingual nurture remained in flux at the nursery, while I was carrying out this project. However, one clear use of Punjabi lay in communicative strategies adopted with a view to supporting to the nursery's wider aim of fostering dispositions of care and respect. I observed this through the distinctive usage across the nursery of a number of different language resources: fictive kinship terms, terms of endearment, markers of respect and pronouns. I discuss each of them in turn. I also examine practitioner metacommentary (Rymes 2014) about the communicative role of gesture and gaze.

(i)   *Use of fictive kinship terms*

The Punjabi terms that children used to address female and male practitioners were '*Masi Ji*' and '*Mama Ji*', signifying one's mother's sister and mother's brother, respectively (with

'*ji*' - as a marker of respect). In Punjabi tradition, there is a particular warmth accorded to one's bond with family figures addressed in these terms, as extensions of one's mother, which becomes lost in the English language translations of 'maternal aunt' or 'uncle'. Whilst it is a fairly common South Asian convention to address an elder with the English word 'uncle' or 'aunty', the use of Masi and Mama was very particular to the nursery. 'Masi' had been carried over from its use by my daughter and her friends at the pilot playgroup. When the first male classroom practitioner was recruited in the nursery, he explained to me that had consulted with his preschoolers on how they wished to address him and they had decided on Mama Ji. I have mentioned above (10.2.1) D. Singh's remarks about the sense of warm, comfort and security he saw this as creating for the children. He added that '*as a Mama Ji, as a member of the family I can do that bit more, I can say to the child, "Look, what's the matter?"* He contrasted this with the limits of performing the job of a teacher where, '*this is what I do – A, B, C and it ends there*'.

The practice of addressing one's peer as '*bhaji*' or '*bhenji*' i.e. 'brother' or 'sister' respectively, was also fairly normalised across the generations in the gurudwara, as in various other Punjabi-speaking networks.   In the nursery, children were often encouraged to use these terms of address amongst themselves, e.g. in registration time rituals to greet and welcome one another in the morning (see vignette in Chapter 11) as well as other moments throughout the day. Practitioners also highlighted to me the religious significance of this usage for Sikhs, as part of the principle of maintaining strong ethics in social relations by regarding one's elders as mother or father figures, peers as brothers or sisters, and youngsters as one's own children.

In the naturally occurring practices in the nursery, there were actually fluid and complex shifts in naming and addressing patterns. These shifts reflected wider trends in British Punjabi life. Thus, the use of first names only, Punjabi diminutives or English-sounding nicknames also got filtered into staff-to-staff interactions in the nursery, depending on the formality or informality of the given context.

(ii)   *Use of terms of endearment and markers of respect*

The children in the nursery were addressed by practitioners in a number of ways: by their first name only (where the accent used varied between English and Punjabi); by their first name with addition of 'Kaur' or 'Singh', where the child was Sikh, or with '*ji*' as a marker of respect; through terms of endearment, such as 'darling' in English and '*put*' in Punjabi, a short form of '*puttar*' meaning, affectionately, 'my child'. (A glimpse of the value, from a child's perspective, of this term's usage at nursery was given to me by my daughter, who, following a slip at home, she told me that, in all my efforts to console her, I had forgotten to say the word '*put*' to make her feel better, as she was then prompting me to do.)

Use of the Punjabi '*ji*' to create and sustain attitudes of care and respect became a notable characteristic of communicative practice in the nursery, as highlighted in written notes put together by B. Kaur following the pilot playgroup phase. This was particularly evident in cases of disciplining children, where directives such as 'No' or 'Stop it' (or their Punjabi equivalents) were expressly avoided by staff and replaced with use of the phrase '*Nehi ji*' to respectfully say, as B. Kaur translated it, a 'no thank you'. It softened a harsh 'no' to create what she called a '*loving boundary*.' Kinship terms were similarly added to directives for softening effect, e.g. use of the phrase '*nehi, put*' ('no, my child').

(iii)   *Use of pronouns*

Linked to the recurrent use of '*ji*', was the convention, agreed among staff, of using the respectful second person pronoun '*tusi*' (equivalent to the second person plural) by staff when they addressed the children. There was also some fluidity, however, with shifts being made to the second person pronoun '*tu*' in spontaneous moments of interaction, for example in personal asides with individual children. I was aware that in wider Punjabi-speaking networks there were mixed attitudes to Punjabi pronoun usage (echoing historical and cultural shifts in European pronoun usage outlined by Brown and Gilman, 1960). One view is that use of '*tusi*' is overly formal and indexes social distance, whereas the use of '*tu'* is more informal and indexes closeness and solidarity. Another view is that, in some contexts, the use of '*tu'* can index a lack of care or respect for the other. The view adopted by the nursery manager and most of his staff was that the use of *tusi* indexed care and respect for the child and was thus the most appropriate option, since these were dispositions they aimed to foster. This practice was tied to a driving principle for the nursery that the onus was on adults to demonstrate, rather than 'teach', values in their interaction with children. It also reflected views expressed by the practitioners about children's inherent spirituality. This led one practitioner to link the notion of 'respect' to the EYFS concept of 'a unique child'.

(iv)   *Gesture and other forms of non-verbal expression*

Just as routine linguistic practices were consciously adopted by the staff, so too were non-verbal forms of communication. This included, on the one hand, culturally distinctive gestures for greetings and prayers (notably, the pressing of palms together, sometimes with the closing of eyes or slight bow of the head). Practitioners also articulated the conceptual importance of attending to non-linguistic aspects of communication, tracing these ideas to personal and Sikh heritage experience as well as to established early years theory. This

echoed ideas expressed in the envisioning of the nursery, when Bhai Sahib stressed the *'intangible'*, dispositions-oriented dimension of communicative exchange, linking this to Sikh dharmic notions about the impact of *drisht* (gaze) and giving of *asees* ('blessings' through a caring touch) alongside verbal or textual modes of communication (*updesh*).

In their interviews, practitioners often marked out as significant the manner they adopted to communicate with the children. C. Kaur, commented: '*I think it's the way you approach them, the way you talk to them, the way you give them that attention.*' A mother of teenagers herself, she remarked on how her career change to train and work at the nursery had prompted much personal reflection on the long term impact of responding positively to young children, particularly through non-verbal resources: '*You realise how trivial certain things are and how you can make certain things great; just by your reactions you can go one way or the other, on how you handle certain things. It's like bringing up children here [in the nursery]. You don't need to shout at them, the children can understand you through your eyes, through your expressions. You don't even need to say anything to them...*'

She went on to stress the importance of '*building a personal relationship*' with the children which they could intuitively feel as they stepped in through the nursery doors, so that: '*When they're coming in, they feel something, the love is a felt thing.*' The significance to practitioners of this '*felt thing*' was further explained by D. Singh, as he offered a Sikh scriptural analogy about the savouring of a delicious sweet by someone incapable of speech, to highlight the limits of being able to describe the 'taste' of what one inwardly knows. As D. Singh went on to explain, such a person '*knows inside how he feels about it. He'll probably show it through facial expressions, but then he may not be able to express how he feels.*'

Styles of dress

One of the first indicators of the nursery's Sikh/Punjabi character, for anyone entering in, was the style of uniform for the nursery staff. It consisted of a white *kurta pajama* (Punjabi tunic and trousers), specially tailored to optimise practical ease of movement whilst retaining modesty, as K. Singh had explained to me. This was combined with a red cardigan and red *chuni* or scarf for female staff. The two male staff members wore white turbans, sometimes with white shirts and trousers, if not a *kurta pajama*. At the time of writing, as non-Sikh staff came to join the team, the red/white colour scheme was retained, with greater flexibility on the choice of eastern or western style of dress. Likewise, whilst there was no children's uniform in the nursery's first year, a white *kurta pajama* (with a white trouser/shirt option for boys) was then introduced for pre-schoolers upwards. It changed to a western style school uniform in line with uniform regulations for the Nishkam primary school when it opened in 2012.

The purpose and effects of the Sikh traditional dress style could be read in different ways. In the interior decoration of the nursery, the uniform stood out, as I saw it, as an example of heritage conservation, through the tailoring of cloth rather than (as with the heritage conservation of the building itself) the papering of walls. I recalled, in Bhai Sahib's own former envisioning of a nursery, an idea that the dress style of the care staff might evoke for children an intergenerational and historical world of family, less routinely seen by them in their modern-day lives. At time, Mata Ji, his wife, had suggested drawing inspiration from the air hostess uniform of some eastern airlines, successfully managing to fuse eastern and western styles of dress in practicable ways.

The *kurta pajama* was also associated with the dress code at the gurudwara, the site for the former playgroup and for the stream of Sikh *dharmic* ideas and practices guiding the nursery's creation. The red and white colours were associated with GNNSJ, the organisation which had brought together the network of *sewadars* involved in the nursery's creation. Whilst the two male nursery staff wore the *dastar* or turban, and some females a permanent *keski* head covering, other females maintained the gurudwara practice of covering their head with their *chunis*. Likewise, the gurudwara practice of removing shoes before entering the *darbar* hall was echoed in the nursery practice of removing shoes before entering the classrooms. This habit in the nursery was also explained by staff as a professional strategy to maintain cleanliness, especially in rooms where children might crawl with their hands on the floor.

Elements of daily practice in the nursery were thus layered with meaning and significance which could be traced back to the different cultural worlds involved in shaping it. This meant that, whilst consideration of a more western style uniform for the staff had been made, the decision swayed towards a traditional Sikh style for the staff and, initially when it came to it, for preschool children as well. In my informal conversations with other nursery parents, the benefits as well as challenges of this were talked about, for example: the ease and practical comfort of the *kurta pajama* design, some potential impracticality for 'messy' nursery activities and need for extra washes and changes of clothes; perceptions of neighbours (and parents' own mixed feelings as 'modern' British Sikhs) to contend with what the shift to a traditional South Asian style of school uniform implied; a pride in how it reflected a confident coming together of Sikh/Punjabi and British worlds. The uniform thus presented another example of the complex and varied identity-building practices and values at work in the nursery's creation.

Food

I introduced the nursery kitchen earlier as a site for integrative approaches to food planning and preparation. This included, as K.D. Kaur, the nursery chef, explained to me, regular use of spices such as *haldi* (turmeric), *adharak* (ginger), *kali mirach* (black pepper) to balance the effects of food and respond to seasonal change (based on her insight into traditional Indian knowledge systems). A clearly influential factor was the tradition of *langar* in the gurudwara across the road, where an estimated 20,000 meals were prepared and served per week. She stressed her habit of being prayerful whilst preparing meals, mostly by listening to recordings of *kirtan* while she worked. Where staff were made available to assist her, and where she later built a kitchen staff team (particularly when the nursery expanded to a school), principles associated with *langar sewa* fed into the kitchen culture. Thus the covering of the head and strict hand hygiene occurred as professional practices as well as religious practices linked to codes of food preparation at the gurudwara.

Likewise certain practices around the serving of food at mealtimes, in each of the nursery classrooms, had clear links to the langar tradition, such as the chanting of '*Satnam*' and '*Waheguru*' and opportunities given to children to distribute cutlery or fruit. A key feature of nursery mealtime was the collective recitation of a Sikh prayer, beginning '*Dada data ek hai…*' ('The letter D is for Data, the One Universal Giver…'). This would lead to a brief pause prompting one child (usually eager to have been chosen for the task) to exclaim '*Chhako Ji!*' – as a respectful imperative to invite everyone to start eating. Children, over time, became competent in reciting this prayer which was, as parents later commented, sometimes just vaguely known by their families or not at all. Nursery staff would sit by them where possible to eat, at a table or occasionally on the floor in '*chaunkari*' (cross-legged).

Talking to me about the mealtime experience, the nursery manager, K. Singh, explained how staff endeavoured to strike a balance between a more western expectation that mealtimes were an event to encourage conversation and what he saw as a Sikh understanding that they should be a quieter and more meditative affair. I saw this balance struck as staff sometimes encouraged children to contemplate on the goodness they might absorb from the food, or on the names of different types of food, for example, allowing conversation that maintained focus on the activity of eating, appreciating and enjoying the food (see Chapter 10, for an example).

Music

Before systems were set up to access music via the internet, each classroom had a CD player that was initially used to play music as a background to different types of activities, from arts and crafts to free play, quiet time, tidy up time and sleep time. As well as teaching traditional English nursery rhymes, practitioners regularly gathered to do *kirtan* with the children, using the *vaja* (harmonium) and *tabla* (drums) in small and in larger assembly groups. The nursery would also welcome visiting musicians. On my visits this included those specialising in the piano, harp and guitar (appendix 17).

An early musical feature of the nursery was the incorporation of Indian and western, classical and popular instrumental styles with Sikh scriptural lyrics, as pioneered by the non-Punjabi Sikh musician, Snatam Kaur. It struck me how the playing of such music in this particular nursery contrasted with the 'staged' quality it might potentially acquire elsewhere, as the performance of a less familiar cultural identity. Some of the tracks had English lyrics, such as a playfully sung '*Feeling Good Today*' and a Celtic song, '*May the long time sun*

shine upon you…'. This came to be sung in the nursery alongside the traditional 'Happy Birthday' song to mark the birthdays of individual children. Conversely, when a festive Christmas tree was put up in the nursery hallway, the music played around it was the recording of youngsters doing *kirtan*, based on a verse about a mother's blessings to her child (*Puta, mata ki aasees* - see below).

Signage and displays

The nursery's exterior entrance sign featured the Sikh logo '*Ik Oankar*' (appendix 1). With the insight I had into the envisioning process, I was struck by the overlapping significance of this sign, as a badge marking the nursery's religious identity and as a pointer to ideas and values involving a wider social embrace. Sometimes used in balance with the Ik Oankar logo on other nursery signs and paperwork, was a ready-designed, contemporary-style logo suggesting a dynamic and colourful unfurling of energy (appendix 18). Nursery signage also included bilingual notices, such as information about the entrance and security procedures. Coat pegs assigned to each child featured their names in English and Punjabi, in two different writing systems – in the Roman alphabet and in the Gurmukhi script.

Two pieces of Sikh-inspired artwork were put up in the nursery. The first image hung in the entrance to the manager's office and was one of the rarer paintings to get reproduced and circulated in the Sikh world. Reminiscent of western Madonna-and-child depictions, it presented the tenth Sikh Guru as a small child in the arms of his mother. The second image was a piece of original art painted by a nursery parent. It was an attempt to visually express, after a period of reflection as encouraged by Bhai Sahib, the ideas contained in a Sikh hymn, '*Poota, mata ki aasees…*', about a mother's hopes and blessings to her child. Once completed it was hung in the main entrance hallway (appendices 13-14).

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When I asked the artist what he felt about painting's display in the nursery, this father described it as a '*support mechanism*' for creating a sense that the place was more than a conventional childcare or education facility and part of a '*deeper vision*'. He saw this radiating out from the central image of a mother and child, as the bond that got most associated with personal and ultimate hopes around the arrival of a child into the world. It brought out for him a sentiment and a perspective which, as a parent or staff member, you could '*come back to in your mind*' amidst the daily routines of dropping and collecting children, or providing standard care and education for them.

For the nursery Masi, C. Kaur, who specialised in art, visual details echoing the original scriptural imagery added to an '*immensity and depth*' in the painting which '*you can't put into words*'. They included the image of a bumble bee hovering around flower petals and a bird thirsty for raindrops (appearing in the associated verse which the painting depicts, this imagery is widely understood by Sikhs to express the human yearning for spiritual fulfillmlent). A musical dimension, evoked by the figure playing a stringed instrument, reinforced her feeling that painting was able to '*wake up so many hidden emotions*' each time she glimpsed it during the '*hustle and bustle*' of daily nursery life. The '*subtle*' colour palette, together with the unfolding style of the composition, meant for her that it '*grew on you*' over time. I noted that no accompanying translation of the hymn was given; it appeared in the original Gurmukhi script as a small label under the painting I saw this as allowing the painting to 'be', rather than be explained, as a more suggestive exploration of the faith dimension guiding the nursery's work.

10.3 Blending curriculum approaches and enhancing key themes

10.3.1 *Building on and with the EYFS framework*

The nursery's early envisioning phase had involved putting aside established frameworks for a time, asking broad questions and drawing on ideas from Sikh heritage and local developments in RE. The practical work to set up the nursery, however, as a registered day care centre and later (in 2011) as an independent school, had involved taking the 2008 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework as a required basis for planning. Integrated into this was the 2007 SACRE 'dispositions' framework, along with knowledge of Sikh heritage-based dispositions, not as yet articulated in the form of an official, contemporary framework. These latter elements were, as the nursery manager, K. Singh stressed, '*interlinked*' and '*woven into*' its EYFS planning rather than operating as '*separate*' or '*extra*' to it. Indeed, they helped, as he saw it, to allow key aspects of the EYFS framework to be better '*highlighted and come through*'.

Despite the weight of detail in the guidance (it was later revised in 2011), for K. Singh its overall holistic stance meant that the focus the nursery gave to 'dispositions' and valuing knowledge from children's home and family lives readily complemented the national framework. He noted that '*dispositions*' was also term introduced in the EYFS guidance itself as an aspect of '*personal, social and emotional development*'. For him, the Sikh dimension in the nursery's blended curriculum was primarily based, as he underlined, on '*how you live Sikhi [the Sikh faith]*' in terms of day to day interpersonal values as well as on positively integrating familiar aspects of the Sikh way of life. He also reiterated ideas generated in the early envisioning phase and pilot phases of the nursery project, emphasising that such aspects are '*not taught*' to young children as such and that '*it's all about the experiences you create for them*'.

10.3.2 *Curriculum planning and daily routines*

It followed that, in the creation of curriculum planning documents, the long term monthly planning featured a column for selected SACRE dispositions (e.g. '*remembering roots, being thankful, appreciating beauty, expressing joy*') alongside selected Every Child Matters outcomes from the EYFS guidance (e.g. '*making a positive contribution, being safe, staying healthy, enjoying and achieving*'). Other columns were for themes such as '*All about me and families; Where I live, houses and homes; Senses, music, sounds and spiritual journeys; The environment, weather and seasons*'; the marking of special celebrations, days and events; and visits to local museums, nature centres and various places of worship.

The daily/weekly short time planning sheet likewise featured a column for '*SACRE dispositions/activities*' after those for 'communication, language and literacy' (CLL) and 'problem solving, reasoning and numeracy' (PSRN) activities along with '*Focused', 'Independent'* and *'Outdoor'* activities, and before columns for '*Evaluation*' and '*Next step*s'. As I will show in 11.2.3, rather than being featured in any written planning, Sikh/Punjabi elements were apparent as part of a blended curriculum through the day to day routines based around the EYFS guidance. In daily routines there was overlap across the different nursery rooms. I will now illustrate these below (the account is based on my fieldnotes).

After breakfast from 8am for the early arrivers, and after preschoolers had arrived for 9am, the day would start with a religious element in all the nursery rooms. Practitioners would initiate some form of *simran* and, in the baby room, they might actively sing along to a *kirtan* CD. A bilingual registration was followed by, for toddlers upwards, the bilingual rehearsing of words linked to colours, numbers, weather features or the date, opportunities

for 'show and tell' and recounting of nursery rules which the children had helped to formulate.

Snack time was followed by a mid-morning 'focus activity' across all the rooms. In this kind of activity the resources available and specially prepared ones were used to explore aspects of the nursery's planned monthly theme. These involved resourced ways to practice 'communication, language and literacy' (CLL) and 'problem solving, reasoning and numeracy' (PSRN). At the same time, other play resources were put out for children who preferred to play independently, away from the group activity. The morning's focus activity was often repeated after playtime in the afternoon, for part-time children arriving after lunch and those who were not inclined to participate in the morning. 'Free play' sessions allowed children to freely form groups or individually choose resources to play. Children from all rooms had daily outdoor play, with some aspects of structured learning taking place outdoors when appropriate.

Throughout the day, practitioners would attend to babies' feeding and nappy-changing needs, and support toddlers with toilet training. Upstairs, where the preschool and reception class were located, was a spare empty classroom (later used, from 2010, by the first Year One class) and a smaller quiet room. The spare classroom was sometimes referred to as a 'sensory room' where indoor play resources would be brought in and used away from the classroom environment. The smaller quiet room, used at times for small assemblies and music workshops, was also a space where individual children were allowed to go to lie down and rest, read or relax, or use the instruments that were there, if practitioners felt it would help them to take a break from more structured activities during the day. The afternoon included time for stretching and breathing (which one practitioner called 'yoga time'),

singing and music. The day would end with activities encouraging calmer concentration, e.g. doing puzzles, using crayons, pens and pencils, until children were collected by parents. At this point, some children went down to the baby room for '*family time*' (see x above) if they were to be picked up later.

10.3.3 *Interpreting and supporting the EYFS themes*

As indicated in 10.3.1, the four EYFS themes included viewing every child as unique as learning and developing which being supported by positive relationships and enabling environments. As I pointed out in 10.3.1, concepts linked to these themes were already salient in the creation of the nursery's multifaceted world. The official wording of the themes provides a useful basis to consider the specific ways in which they were being interpreted and supported through the practice in the Nishkam nursery. I will therefore use them here as subheadings, in speech marks.

The data analysed for this section includes three interviews with external education professionals (P.D, S.W, T.E. specialising in EYFS, RE and SMSC respectively, all being familiar with early years practice in general). The interviews were carried out following their first visit to the nursery during its second year. In two of these interviews, I used the familiar EYFS themes as discussion-openers as I asked the education professionals about their impressions. During my research journey, these interview opportunities helped to broaden my basic knowledge as a newcomer to the field of early years who was interested in its links with RE and SMSC. They helped me to better recognise points at which in which 'insider' and 'outsider', community-based and society-based approaches seemed to be intersecting and were mutually enhancing, or where differences or alternative approaches were being highlighted. In the section that follows, I combine practitioners' accounts of

their practice and my own observation with the reactions to this practice on the part of the three visitors with a professional early years background.

'Enabling environments'

A good example of how practitioners talked about the environment created and being fostered came from the interview with B. Kaur (6/10], when I asked her to talk through the features of the baby room.   Using professional terminology from early years education, she describe how, for example, the arrangement of the story book corner, the slide or the beaded maze assisted children with *'communication, language and literacy', 'fine motor skills', 'turn taking', 'boundaries' and 'problem solving, reasoning and numeracy'*. At the same time she reiterated how practitioners were able to *'soothe'* the babies, on their laps in the book corner, on the rocking chair and with the use of music as they went to sleep. She also referred to the playing of *kirtan* for the important purpose of promoting restfulness. This, together with her comments on guiding older children to interact in caring and responsible ways towards the babies during *'family time'*, demonstrated how the idea of fostering dispositions was a continuous aim for her as a practitioner, although she did not use the term itself in this interview. B. Kaur's account also provided an example of what T.E. highlighted as seeing *'the environment in terms of the emotional/relational aspect'*, hence the clear overlaps between the EYFS themes.

P.D. noted how practitioners *'thoughtfully regulated children's surroundings'* in terms of temperature and light. S.W. contrasted this with settings where the artificial lighting might be *'glaringly bright and really in-your-face'*, suggesting that its regulation *'added to the calm atmosphere'* and had an *'impact on the children's attitude and ethos of the whole space.'* Practitioners B. Kaur and G. Kaur also described how they used music to help signal

to children what they were supposed to be doing, when specific audio tracks were put on which children associated with '*sleep time*' in the baby room or '*tidy up time*' in preschool. As G. Kaur underlined, it gave her an assurance that '*they know*' what to do next. P.D. also referred to moments in his participation in and observation of a nursery morning, that '*there was a security in knowing what the expectation was*' which helped the way the children '*managed their own space*'.

For P.D the measure of an 'enabling environment' lay in the question: '*What do you see as somebody coming in? You see happy children who have command of the space that they find themselves in*'. Recalling the preschool free-play session, he noted how, whilst some children freely formed small groups choosing various play resources, '*there was a respect for those children who decided that they didn't want to participate in that, so some children played alone but played alone with the greatest concentration*' and that practitioners left them to do so without intervening. For him, '*that was a great strength. So those children were clearly very happy in their own surrounding, they weren't isolated, they had made a positive choice to work on their own and the space enabled that.*'

Echoing sentiments expressed by C. Kaur, PD noted practitioners' '*passion for the children*' as well as '*for the learning*' and that this was '*something that you can feel as well as be told….I think that gave a relaxation to the atmosphere and again, if you think 'starting points for learning', surely it is about being relaxed and feeling at home with your surroundings.*' Both P.D. and S.W. noted the children's confidence to interact with them as strangers, as they stepped into a classroom or joined them for lunch. P.D. described how he was greeted by an older boy and a girl, who said '*You're different, but that's nice,*' and that '*it doesn't matter that we don't know where you're from*'. From this he concluded: '*I*

thought in terms of the children's outward facing-ness beyond the community that is their

school, that both of those comments said a lot, that children weren't afraid to approach me,

they weren't afraid to have a hug. That said something about their personal confidence…'

The supportive and calm nature of the environment, along with the dispositions of care and respect were themes that recurred in these interviews.   The nature of the environment was summed up for me in a comment made by the nursery manager when the large frame featuring the 24 dispositions, usually hanging in the nursery office, had been taken away for repair. When I asked, '*Where have the dispositions gone?*', K. Singh's instinctive and half-humorous reply was that they had '*dissolved all around into the nursery!*'

Since the premises had not been purpose built as a nursery, staff had both opportunities and some logistical challenges to work on and around, e.g. ease with which they could foster a sense of home; constraints in enabling 'messy play' (for this, P.D. suggested, the white *kurta-pajama* uniform was also not so '*enabling*') and 'free flow' (free movement between indoors and outdoors spaces for learning) for children located upstairs.   In time these constraints were addressed and adjustments made as the nursery continued to review its practice.

'Positive Relationships'

The construction of family-like relationships and associated dispositions has been extensively examined in this chapter from a number of angles. It has also become clear that both the practitioners and the visiting professionals saw 'positive relationships' as crucial to creating 'enabling environments' for children.

Practitioners also talked about the benefits of building of broader professional networks, e.g. to develop expertise in cases where children had any special educational needs. They also recognised how their professionally acquired knowledge supported understanding of the nursery's ethos. E.g. B. Kaur [int 6/10] talked of how the baby room's rocking crib (fig x), where children would come to pat, sing or swing their dolls to sleep, offered a spot for practitioners to '*observe, you know, how happy they are and how they feel they should be cared for as well.*'. She linked this to theories of learned behaviour stemming from the 'Bobo doll' experiments of Albert Banduras, explaining how this link could help colleagues in early years training to understand the focus, in the nursery, on dispositions demonstrated to children by adults.

T.E. remarked that the fostering of positive relationships came out for him during his visit, not in any remarkable ways, but in those one would expect in the early years, through the more '*subtle indicators*' of the '*way in which children were listened to and spoken to*' in the nursery. P.D. observed how, in free-play, the children '*listened to one another well*'. He noted how they were guided to sit down in assembly in rows of '*boy-girl-boy-girl-boy-girl*' which suggested something about the '*integration of gender*'. This I recognised as a general principle in other daily activities (around some of the more conventional distinctions in classroom life e.g. the initial designation of pink drinking bottles for girls and blue drinking bottles for boys).

T.E. also mentioned the fostering of positive relationships with parents. To build a relationship with parents, workshops and coffee mornings were organised, and – as I indicated earlier - a parent newsletter was introduced. I attended one of the workshops and, as a parent, I received the newsletter. This revealed for me how this relationship was being

subtly built e.g. in P.D.'s words, nursery practice was '*positively relating with things happening at home*'. The nursery's creation was clearly rooted in the Sikh faith, but there was a wide spectrum of families who chose to use its provision. They were almost all of Punjabi heritage but they had fluid and contrasting ways of relating to their faith backgrounds. Nevertheless, the parents I got to know and interviewed as part of this project recognised in the nursery an open and hospitable approach (see Chapter 12).

S.W.'s RE-related work for preschool settings in the city had included planning to arrange for mums with babies or grandparents to visit classrooms. She commented on how occasions for intergenerational interaction seemed to be readily supported by the nursery's community-based setting. Whilst grandparental involvement occurred to some extent (through the school run and events open to families), it was seen as an area to be developed. As K. Singh noted, such aims for wider community participation had to be balanced by the need to adhere to professional regulations, for safe-guarding and health and safety purposes, and so this aspect had to be carefully managed.

'The unique child'

P.D. summarised in my interview with him how the notion of the 'unique child' had emerged as a response to an institutional tradition within British early years education of grouping children for learning. This notion meant having a regard for children as individuals, the things and people in their lives and giving attention to their wellbeing as well as to their learning. In this regard, as he saw it, '*planning from a set of values, dispositions*' was '*at the heart of planning towards getting the best out of children in terms of their wellbeing*'. It also helped with the process of learning itself '*having got a child into a frame of mind where you know that learning is going to have an effect.*' In contrast, the

'unique child' concept was one that T.E. struggled with insofar as it could suggest a focus on the child as '*an individual in isolation*'. He felt that this might overshadow the fact that '*we are all interdependent*', that children grow as part of ever-widening set-of social contexts, though not always sequentially and that '*learning is a social process*'.

I was first struck by practitioners' attentiveness to children's individual needs in my own first close observation of a morning in the baby room. I took detailed notes relating to practitioners' verbal interaction and the patterns that I identified was that it was strongly focussed around children's welfare and habits. This came across particularly through the active sharing of knowledge between the Masis about the children with them in the room, through remarks such as: '*He likes to be rocked; put him on your shoulders and he loves to be rocked to sleep*'; '*She's very good with her talking now, she can nearly say (another child's name)!*'; '*It's (her) second day, she's not used to other children at all.*'

B. Kaur's description [int 6/10] of sleep time preparations underlined the close attention given to children's physical care: '*Before lunch, we tend to strip them down to their vests and put in their T-shirts, because it's quite warm now as well. And then after that we just flannel them down, make sure their hands and faces are clean, just double check nappies, and then we'll just put them on to their mats or into their cots. And we know that once the kirtan and the paath is put on a bit louder and the blackout blinds go down, that it's sleep time. And we're quite lucky that they just – go to sleep! It is something that becomes part of their routine.*'

In the preschool room, D. Singh, described how care given to children's emotional and psychological wellbeing was key to supporting their learning. Drawing on early years

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theory, he explained the role of establishing '*boundaries*' (agreed rules, expectations, consistent practices) to help children feel secure and confidently build '*attachments*': '*My understanding is that if you have firm boundaries the children will feel a lot more secure... If the boundaries aren't firm, then child will be very much on edge, very feeling insecure... They'll find it hard to make attachments, it comes down to the attachment theory because with each child you need to make an attachment where you know what sort of love they want.*' He then underlined the need to be aware and accept how they might express this in different ways, i.e. by coming to hug or preferring not to hug you, by leaning on your shoulder or just holding your hand.

P.D. recognised practitioner awareness of children's different inclinations and paces of learning as he recalled his experience of a nursery assembly. He noticed a '*natural feel*' where '*nobody was concerned if some children didn't manage to hold their hands in prayer or didn't manage to sing, that was ok. Their presence was enough and that they'll grow from that was anticipated.*' What T.E. had noticed as '*perhaps more distinctive*' about the nursery environment was the opportunity he saw for children to physically rest or sleep as part of attending to their personal and wellbeing needs.

For the preschool practitioner, D. Singh, the concept of the 'unique child' was also linked to children's inherent spirituality. He linked this to the Punjabi saying that children are '*rab da roop*' or, as he translated it, '*the image of God*': '*In that sense, you're looking at a child and you're looking at the child as a unique child, every child is unique, every child has their own qualities, their own identities, their own image; every child brings something to the group. Within the group, every unique child will bring something into the group; it doesn't*

matter what faith, religion or colour they're from and represent but every child will bring something unique to that group.'

Reading back through the field notes I took during PD's visit, I noted that one practitioner had remarked on a Sikh and Indic principle about being receptive to the needs that individual children might express, verbally or otherwise, because the spirit inside them was considered to be ageless, with its own source of knowledge. I linked this to comments made by R. Singh, when he was invited to present a themed reflection on local radio highlighting children's capacity to forgive (see 9.5.3) Together with views shared about the remarkable confidence that young children displayed as learners, this brought another dimension to the nursery's preference for addressing children in respectful ways.

P.D. was struck by the display of smartly produced learning folders for each child on the computer desk, with their names clearly printed (in English on the spine). He commented on this as follows: '*Those folders are exhibited in each room with a pride about the things that have been collected about each child. It came home to me very forcefully.*' As a nursery parent, I also received, at the end of the first year, a gift CD with a collection of photographs of my daughter's experiences in nursery life over the months. I realised it would have taken many additional volunteer hours to produce for every child, yet the gesture was nevertheless given importance.

Learning and development

The EYFS guidance stressed the interrelatedness of its six areas of learning (*personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem solving, reasoning and numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical*

development; creative development). It also stressed the need for planned, purposeful play where adult-led and child-led initiatives were balanced. A detailed analysis the nursery curriculum does not fall into the scope of this thesis; the present research was not designed to analyse the ways in which these areas of the curriculum were incorporated into nursery practice or, indeed, to assess this. In fact, I did not have the expertise to do so. In this regard, the nursery's first OFSTED report (2010) offers some insight with the delivery of these areas of the curriculum.

Rather, my own ethnographically-led study has focused on how aspects of learning and development were being supported in and through situated interactions between adults and children as the nursery's world was being configured. Commenting on the six areas of learning designated in official policies, T.E. highlighted a concern, '*if one isn't careful, [the policies] miss out some of the hidden and subtle aspects of learning environments and learning relationships which I would see as being at the heart of education itself and, in particular, the sort of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of it.*' S.W. saw such aspects as being well supported in the nursery, when she positively remarked: '*you have got personal, social and emotional development – and it just seemed to ooze that it was happening, the children being confident and able to speak to me*.'

After some reflections on the value of experiential and relational learning based on notions of the unique child, D. Singh summed up that: '*I think most of what The Early Years foundation stage has brought in already relates to Sikhi anyway*.' In this early years context, he explained he understood 'Sikhi' as a way of living and of relating to oneself and others, rather than a '*religion*' to be taught about as such. He also gave examples of how he saw '*child-led*' aspects being magnified in other social contexts that might be familiar to nursery

families: '*Now, within the Punjabi culture, you go to India, children there play in the mud, they play with water; They play with cow pat and they'll ride the cows, they'll chase a peacock in the fields, they'll go out and help their parents do the planting and the ploughing, and they'll ride their cycle*.' At a parents workshop, he encouraged them to recreate similar learning opportunities by using natural, outdoor or kitchen resources, and to see the benefits of allowing 'messy play', rather than being put off by it.

P.D. drew attention to the value of the nursery practices he had observed to help children to build a sense of self. He was referring in particular to a shared, living heritage that formed a part of their broader identity. He remarked: '*Google is pretty good at finding out stuff, but it's very difficult to find out who you are if you haven't practised and rehearsed it as a child.*' It highlighted for me the significance of the nursery as a place where heritage-based knowledge was not confined to the celebration of a festival, the sharing of a type of food or song, but as a place where one facet of one's identity and ways of being in the world with others were gradually nurtured.

T.E. noted, from what he knew about the Sikh faith, a strength that lay in its '*international*' and '*non-evangelical approach or non-missionary type approach*' was that '*it looks both inwards and outwards at the same time*'. He added that '*it's terribly easy to say that and it's much harder to do it.*' This pointed towards the achievements as well as challenges involved in creating and configuring the learning and development provision that the nursery offered.

10.4 Anticipating a 'series of evolutions'

Compared to my main fieldwork period and the period of thesis completion, there were some noticeable changes in the day to day world of the Nishkam nursery. For example, non-Sikh staff got taken on (who commented to me favourably on 'feeling at home' in the nursery). This included those on temporary or agency placements, including South Asian Muslims, Afro-Caribbean and white English practitioners. The staff team switched more frequently between the traditional Punjabi *kurta-pajama* and the new 'western' style uniform of jeans, white top and red fleece (whilst preschool children now wore the Nishkam primary western-style school uniform). There was increased signage in the nursery and parental noticeboard communication. The Khalsa greeting was still used but was less prominent with continued usage of other greeting styles. Since the establishment of a Nishkam School Trust the nursery had had a dedicated governor with experience of running successful nurseries who was able to work closely to support the manager and staff team.

Reflecting with me on some of the changes, R. Singh noted an expectation that the nursery would undergo a 'series of evolutions' as it tried to strike a balance between the visions involved in its founding, the aspirations of parents who signed up to use it and the requirements of and ongoing developments in public provision. There was also a need to manage the different directions in which the provision could sway, so as to avoid it becoming a 'Sikh nursery' in any '*narrow-minded*' sense and find ways to draw on the Sikh ethos to be '*multifaith*'. Noting that approaches such as Montessori, Steiner and Reggio Emilia had existed for many years yet were continuing to evolve, he suggested that a '*Nishkam approach*' was inevitably still settling and '*finding its feet*'.

10.5 **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I examined the creation of the Nishkam nursery by viewing it as a 'figured world' (Holland et al 1998: 52) which is socially and culturally formed and reformed to constitute a 'context of meaning' and a 'realm of interpretation' in which identities take shape and agency is exercised. I also took a view of policy as a social practice (Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Sutton and Levinson 2001) to shed light on how policy was being interpreted and appropriated in and through day-to-day practice, as life in the new nursery took shape. These concepts enabled me to analyse the sociocultural processes and practices involved in configuring, arranging and patterning the emergent world of the nursery in terms of its material and relational environment (10.2) and its blended curriculum (10.3).

In my analysis I highlighted the role of language and semiosis in the communicative configuration and landscaping of this new world. I analysed this in relation to the identities that were being assumed and performed, the artefacts that were being produced, presented and made use of, the activities that were being engaged in and the kind of values and discourses that were being given importance. I built a picture of how various verbal and non-verbal resources were being drawn on to 'evoke' (Holland et al. 1998: 61) and to index a sense (or figured world) of home (10.2.1), of school (10.2.2) and of the Sikh and Punjabi life worlds (10.2.3) familiar to nursery children, staff and families. I also examined how staff and visiting professionals saw the imbrication of these worlds as helping to build on and enhance aspects of the nationally-agreed framework for early years care and education (10.3.1 - 10.3.3).

I identified how a sense of home (10.2.1) was evoked through steps that were taken to: accentuate, through details of its restoration and furnishing, the existing features of the

nursery building as a former private residence; prominently display a designed timeline of the building's history as a listed heritage site in the local neighbourhood; mobilise voluntary, intergenerational participation to help renovate the nursery; linguistically co-construct (once day-to-day nursery life began to unfold) bonds of kinship between the nursery staff and children (the use of Punjabi terms of address to do this was more closely examined later in 10.2.3); give special regard to the nursery kitchen and its home-like provision of freshly prepared meals. These aspects of the analysis revealed the value being given to the non-institutional and non-commercial dimensions of providing care, nourishment and education for the very young and to having a sense of belonging to and investing in the immediate urban social landscape and its ongoing local history.

I identified how the world of school was evoked (10.2.2.) through the ways in which: classrooms were resourced and routines were organised in ways that reflected the manager's previous experience in running British nurseries; nursery signage communicated official national and locally-agreed educational frameworks; staff members' professional identities were flagged, as the context required, through use of terms such as 'nursery officer' or 'key worker'; training and networking occurred involving professionals external to the nursery; there was ample use by the mostly British-born or raised practitioners of classic teacher talk in day-to-day classroom interaction; professionally regulated standards and procedures were being set; arrangements were made to enable children's virtual and geographical access to the wider social world, building knowledge about society associated with the role of schooling. These aspects of the analysis revealed the value being given to: situating the nursery in the mainstream educational sector (this was also a legal requirement to register the institution as a day care provider); keeping engaged with and abreast of professional developments; building children's school-readiness and knowledge for participation in

society. They also revealed dispositions and subjectivities which could be linked to the British schooling and socialisation experiences of most of the practitioners.

I then examined (in 10.2.3) how Sikh and Punjabi worlds were evoked through a range of communicative and semiotic practices. This was in the context of an overall fluid blending of language resources (including English, Punjabi and sometimes Hindi) in practitioners' communicative repertoires, engendering more heteroglossic styles of speaking. I described how Punjabi was used in specific activities to build children's Punjabi vocabulary or to offer one-to-one curriculum support to Punjabi-dominant speaking children. I also noted differences and shifts in classroom strategy in response to contrasting parental aspirations for the nursery to offer more English or Punjabi language provision. I then identified one distinctive purpose which had begun to reveal itself in the use of Punjabi as a linguistic resource in the nursery. This was to support the wider aim of fostering dispositions of care and respect and it became apparent as I noted the use of: (i) fictive kinship terms which entailed that, for the nursery children, a practitioner figured as a maternal aunt ('Masi') or uncle ('Mama') and a peer figured as a sister ('*bhenji*') or brother ('*bhaji*'); (ii) terms of endearment (e.g. *puttar*, usually shortened to *put*, 'my child') and markers of respect (e.g. *ji* was regularly used to soften directives and imperatives); (iii) pronouns, where practitioners generally, though not exclusively, gave preference to using the respectful second person '*tusi*' when addressing the children; (iv) gesture and non-verbal forms of communication, as highlighted in practitioner metacommentary associated with interactions I observed.

In the above section I further noted how the Sikh/Punjabi character of the nursery was indexed through styles of dress, practices of preparing and serving meals and the use of music in the nursery rooms. I drew attention to the cultural fluidity maintained or later

introduced (in the case of the nursery uniform) in each of these practices (e.g. in the cultural variety of food or music styles which children were growing accustomed to). I also highlighted instances where the use of Sikh artefacts (material or other) was being construed as serving broader holistic developmental aims, beyond that of staging or celebrating facets of religious or cultural identity. This was revealed in practitioner remarks about the use of Sikh devotional music to 'soothe' babies to rest at nap time and in the way in which the co-creators of the nursery's Sikh faith-inspired artwork conceived its function as a 'support mechanism' to subtly awaken deeper sentiments and hopes for each child amidst the day-to-day institutional running of the childcare facility.

In 10.3 I examined the blending of curriculum approaches in the nursery. As a registered institution, it took the national Early Years Foundation Stage framework as a starting point for its planning and the organisation of daily classroom routines which I outlined. I noted how the nursery manager saw the dispositions-led framework for Religious Education in Birmingham and associated ideas stemming from Sikh faith heritage as complementing and highlighting key national requirements to support 'personal, social and emotional development' and how this underlined for him the importance of 'the experiences you create' in practical ways for young children. I then (in 10.3.3) I incorporated into my analysis of practitioner accounts transcripts of interviews conducted with three external professionals, with specialist knowledge in early years education, religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Triangulating the data enabled me to consider how the four EYFS themes of 'enabling environments', 'positive relationships', 'learning and development' and 'the unique child' were being interpreted in practice, through the perspectives of professionals internal and external to the nursery. In 10.4 I finished the chapter by indicating further reconfigurations of the nursery world over time

and how the founders anticipated a 'series of evolutions' in terms of balances to be struck between being responsive to the founding educational vision, to parental aspirations and to ongoing developments in public provision. I will now move, in Chapter 11 to examine the ongoing configuration of the nursery world through day-to-day nursery practice. I will present a series of vignettes, analysing examples of interactional data which I audio- and video-recorded.

CHAPTER 11:

THE NURSERY IN ACTION - DAY-TO-DAY SITUATED PRACTICES

In this chapter, I present a close analysis of social interactions in the nursery, examining linguistic and multimodal practices in four episodes over the nursery day. I provide a fine-grained depiction of multilingual and semiotic practices as they naturally occurred in the nursery. I also consider the meanings and purposes, effects and influences of these practices and the ways in which they resonated with the nursery ethos.

The episodes presented here are selected for their variety. They show practitioner-child interactions during different types of activity in different locations of the nursery building. The first takes place in the hallway, as pre-schoolers are guided up the staircase at the start of the nursery day; the second is during mid-morning break with babies and toddlers; the third is a preschool, classroom-based arts and crafts activity; the fourth a classroom-based physical development activity with reception-aged children.

11.1 Episode 1: Stepping into school - preschoolers in the hallway

This episode took place in the ground floor nursery hallway, by the staircase that leads up to the classrooms for preschool and reception children. It is 9 am on a February morning. A preschool practitioner who is regularly on morning hallway duty has just brought in a group of six or so pre-schoolers from the playground at the rear of the nursery, where they have been dropped off by their parents. This Masi is B. Kaur, who was involved in founding the nursery and she is now a trained senior nursery practitioner.

The audio-recording began just as the practitioner started to guide the children to climb the stairs. As she did so, two more latecomers arrived through the front door to join the group. Presented and examined here are two transcribed extracts of the ensuing practitioner-child interactions. Extracts from an interview conducted subsequently with the practitioner are also drawn upon to support and extend my analysis. All names used here are fictitious, so as to preserve confidentiality, but where the Sikh names Singh or Kaur were specifically used I have included them.

Extract 1

[Girl 1 (G1) has just climbed a first step and Masi (M) responds]

1 M: Well done, and what do we hold on to?

2   Let's see… *[G1 holds bannister]*

3   *[Masi addresses G1]* Good girl.

      [Masi, in louder voice, addresses group of children]

4   Slowly walking.

5   Looking where you're going.

6   Taking time. Not pushing.

7   *[Masi calls out to Girl 2 on stairs]* Jaspreet Kaur…

      [Girl 2 is not holding the bannister; Masi softens voice.]

8   Have you forgotten something?

9   Hold on to the… What's it called?

10 G1: Bannister!

11 M: Bannister! Well done!

      [Masi shifts gaze to other children climbing stairs.]

12   Well done, Jaipal.

13   Have you got your arm (?) on there?

14   Good listening, Gursev.

15   Well done, Harnam Singh Chana.

In this extract, the practitioner began the task of guiding the group of preschoolers safely and competently up the stairs. In her interview, she identified this as one of the main aims of her interaction with the children: 'It's really important that in preschool we capture the whole safety aspect and how to orderly go up and down a set of stairs.' She pointed out that these children are in a transitional phase; until recently they were in the ground floor toddler room, accustomed to being carried in by their parents. Progression to the upstairs preschool room is a significant developmental milestone; daily interactions such as these and explicit talk about handling the stairs support children in this process.

Elements of classic classroom discourse in this practitioner's talk index her professional training and the ways in which these elements come together reveal a set of underlying aims and purposes. Ample positive feedback, with reiterations of 'Well done', praises the evidence of dispositions ('Good listening') as well as the achievements of individual children ('Good girl'). The teacher questions function as directives in this episode which maintain focus on the task: 'And what do we hold on to?'; 'Hold on to the…what's it called?'. At the same time, the directives are also softened through a preference for continuous verb forms rather than imperatives: 'Slowly walking. Looking where you're going. Taking time. Not pushing.'

The inclusive 'we' in line 1 is a classic example of teacher discourse in an early years context and indexes the building of shared practices. At the same time, this practitioner also

addressed the children individually as well as a group. The terms of address ranged from use of first name alone to the inclusion of Sikh middle names (line 7) and surnames (line 15), evoking identities and relationships which span personal and social contexts and acknowledge a shared faith and cultural identity.

The practitioner interview extended my interpretation of the communicative resources drawn upon and the values and understandings underlying them. She pointed out that her directives (lines 4 to 6) were intentionally simple to be readily understood by all children. She highlighted the need of a few of the children for 'two word level' instructions, especially whilst engaged in a task which was already demanding significant concentration from them: *'Rather than say, "Please take your time!" - it's more to digest for them, and by that time they've turned around to look at you and say, you know 'What have you said, Masi?' Whereas "Taking time" is a simple instruction. It's quite clear as well."*

The practitioner also explained one of the questions she posed to a child who, being preoccupied with meeting friends, had had difficulty focussing on the stair-climbing task. Calling out to the girl, she had asked, *"Have you forgotten something*?" softening, rather than raising, her voice. In commenting on this in her interview, the practitioner showed a consideration of the child's perspective as a basis for eliciting a positive response: *'So she's met a friend and got excited. So, rather than stop her and say, "Hold on, what are you doing?", it's just to remind her to get back into focus.'*

An analysis of this short extract, alongside the practitioner interview, reveals her purposeful use of communicative resources to guide children as they accomplished a fairly new everyday task. It also shows that the practitioner was looking beyond a 'developmental

skills' agenda to consider more broadly aspects of the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It reveals a mindfulness of the values and dispositions that such day-to-day, informal interaction may engender, as well as the knowledge, ability, identities and relationships which it can build. This next exchange between the same practitioner and one girl immediately followed Extract 1 on the staircase.

Extract 2

[Girl 4 (G4) initiates inaudible conversation in Punjabi with Masi (M). She appears to be anxious as to why she has two reading books instead of one in her bag.]

1   M: Because… *<Pata ki si...*

 (Because…you know what…)

2   *Eh… eh>* book *<da haiga hai,>* five book….

 (This…this book is a level five book…)

3   *<Jidhaan>* Spot book *<vala, hana, oh>* five *<hounda hai.*

 (Like the Spot book, isn't it, it is a level five book.)

4   *Eh jehra aapna, oh>* hard *<hai….*

 (This one of ours here, it's a hard one…)

5   *Te mai chauhundi si ke tusi done parleho.*

 (And I was hoping you would try and read both.)

6   G4: [inaudible]

7   M: *Achha ji. Tuhanu pasand sigai?*

 ([Respectfully:] OK. Did you like them?)

8   *Tuhanu ik hee davaan, kai do davaan?*

 (Should I give you just one or two?)

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9   G4: *Do… Ik…* (Two…one.)

10 M: *Achha, theek hai.*

    (OK, that's fine.)

11   *Mai siraf ik dou'ngi.*

    (I'll only give you one.)

12   OK. Thank you, *<ji>*.

This particular exchange was dominated by translingual communicative practice involving Punjabi and English. It was prompted by the girl initiating a conversation in Punjabi with the practitioner, pointing to her clear plastic schoolbag. The girl was anxious about having been given two reading books to take home, instead of one. After an initial 'Because…' the practitioner spoke in Punjabi. An analysis of the elements of Punjabi and English shed light on what the practitioner is doing through her blending of different languages resources.

The practitioner's use of Punjabi is characterised by markers of intimacy on the one hand, and on the other hand by markers of respect for the child. Turns of phrase such as '*pata ki si*' (you know what), '*hana*' (isn't it) and reference to the reading book as '*aapna*' ('ours') signal a style shift into a more informal, close-up and reassuringly familiar context. So too does the practitioner's move to refer to herself as '*mai*', using the first person singular pronoun, contrasting with plural usage of 'we' in extract 1. At the same time, the respectful second person plural pronoun ('*tusi*'; '*tuhanu*') is used to address the child, alongside the reiteration of '*ji*' a marker of respect for the child when the practitioner offers positive feedback to thank her. The practitioner interview further explained the reasoning behind the switches to Punjabi. We see that the practitioner's communication style is guided by child-centred pedagogical discourses:

'With that child, her main language is Punjabi. She gets very, very worked up, if something's not within her grasp, or she feels it's too easy for her, she gets very worked up. So she came to me – "Masi ji, masi ji!". So I had to come down to her level and explain it to her.… Just to speak to her in Punjabi was just a bit more reassuring. If I was to have had the conversation with her in English, she'd have had to digest what I was saying as well as being stressed out about the situation itself.'

Significantly, whilst the practitioner addressed the child primarily in Punjabi, she used English for terms like 'book', 'five', 'hard', suggesting Punjabi was being used to mediate the English dominant world of the preschool classroom, with its text books and reading levels, as the practitioner ushered them up the stairs. The child's home language was thus used to support both the child's wellbeing (by not causing undue stress) and induction to 'mainstream' knowledge and social and educational norms.

Extract 1 and 2 from this episode show how the hallway itself functions as an 'in-between' space for communication, accommodating children's transition between home and school as parents drop off and collect their children. However, as we see from 11.4 below, the bilingual ability of practitioners enables them to continue managing children's linguistic and spatial transition within the classroom itself. It must be mentioned, however, that as I occasionally visited the preschool during my fieldwork period, interactions in Punjabi became less frequent. Ths suggested to me that staff were using such interactions as a means to support children's learning and identity-building, rather than setting children's proficiency in Punjabi as a learning goal.

11.2 Episode 2: Morning greetings and 'show and tell' in the reception class

Since it was established as a 0-5 early years unit, the nursery accommodated a small reception class for children aged 4-5 in its first year. This episode (see appendix 19 for photo data) took place at the start of the day in the reception classroom, during the first Spring term. Seven children were seated on the floor in front of Masi ji, who sat on a chair with a whiteboard beside her. This Masi was G. Kaur who had worked previously in private day care.

At the beginning of Extract 3, we see that she has just finished guiding the children in choosing monitor duties for the day. Turn by turn they have come up to the board to place a card with their name in English onto a card illustrating their chosen duty. The children are sitting by the large classroom window which overlooks the main road and lets in plenty of daylight. They are also in view of the classroom door with its clear glass pane, offering a view into the corridor where the children's coat pegs are located. One last task, that of being the lead monitor, is about to be assigned, but at this moment the sound of a toy trumpet is heard. It is being played out in the corridor.

Extract 3

1   Masi: OK, Keerat Kaur, there is only one job left!

2   Would you like to be at the front of the line today?

[Keerat nods and is invited to the whiteboard to place her name on the lead monitor card]

3   *Haan ji*. OK, *baihttho ji*. (Yes. OK. Please sit down)

[One boy in the group notices, through the glass pane of the door, a boy who is just about to step into class, with his mother behind him]

4   Mandeep: Amarjot's here! *[Mandeep starts getting up, pointing at the door]*

5   Masi: OK *ji, baihttho*. (OK, please sit.)

6   Wait till Amarjot *bhaji* comes in.

[Amarjot comes in, blowing a toy trumpet in a slow rhythm. He wears a T-Shirt with a picture of the film animation character, The Incredible Hulk. His mum steps in behind him.]

7   Masi: *[greeting Amarjot] Vaheguru ji ka khalsa, vaheguru ji ki fateh!*

8   *[looking at the trumpet]* Wow!

9   Mum: We've got incredible hulk playing the trumpet!

[brief inaudible exchange between Amarjot's Mum and Masi ji.]

10 Masi: Amarjot… *[inaudible – she asks him to greet the class]*

11 Amarjot: *Vaheguru ji ka khalsa, vaheguru ji ki fateh*, every-bo-dy!

12 Masi: Well done. Can everybody say *fateh?*

13 All: *Vaheguru ji ka khalsa, vaheguru ji ki fateh!*

14 Masi: Well done!

[Amarjot continues to play his trumpet.]

15 Mum: He got it on Saturday.

16 Masi: Oh, that's nice.

[inaudible short exchange between Masi and Amarjot's mum.]

17 Mandeep: Amarjot, where did you buy that?!

[inaudible class conversation as the trumpeting gets louder and louder.

Mum chats briefly to Masi then leaves to go.]

18 Mum: Bye.

[The trumpet goes quiet, then begins again quietly. A girl arrives through the door.]

19 Masi: OK, Amarjot can you say *fateh* to Sehaj Kaur first?

[Trumpet stops. All children join Amarjot in greeting the girl.]

20 All: *Vaheguru ji ka khalsa, vaheguru ji ki fateh*, Sehaj Kaur *bhen-ji.*

21 Masi: Who said *bhaaji*?! I'm sure it was *bhenji!*

22   Sehaj kaur *ji,* come and say *fateh.*

23 Sehaj: *Vaheguru ji ka khalsa, vaheguru ji ki fateh,* every-bo-dy!

24 Masi: Well done *ji.*

In this extract, the practitioner was bringing to a close one routine morning task – assigning monitor duties for the day – when there is an unexpected incident, namely the late arrival of a child to class. The practitioner had to manage the excitement and noise that the boy, Amarjot, generated as he entered and grabbed everyone's attention. It is usual for children to be invited to bring in an item to show and talk about to their classmates (the 'show and tell' routine found in many schools). Today Amarjot's offering was rather dramatic, with his striking T-Shirt and toy trumpet, and his mother felt obliged to linger a while to introduce him and offer an explanation to Masi Ji and the class.

The practitioner drew on a number of communicative resources to manage this process. Her tone remained pleasant, cheerful and interested in the children. A gentle firmness in tone surfaced at moments when she asserted her authority as teacher and redirected the classroom conversation. She also used Punjabi. The directive *Baittho ji* 'sit down please' was twice used, though it is important to note that it was expressed in the respectful second person plural form to individual children.   Moreover, it was

accompanied by the marker of respect, '*ji*'. The use of Punjabi here was thus more than just a teacher command; it also served as a contextualisation cue signalling respect and the firm but courteous voice tone indexed esteem for the child coupled with expectations of good behaviour.

The practitioner also used Punjabi for terms of address such as *bhaji*, meaning 'brother', and *bhenji*, meaning 'sister'. In addition, she encouraged the children to address each other in the same way. This use of 'fictitious' kinship terms clearly illustrated in this episode contributed to a sense of family in the class. As I indicated in Chapter 9, whilst use of the English equivalents sounds overly self-conscious, the Sikh/Punjabi usage, amongst some families and networks, is fairly routine and unremarkable amongst related and non-related peers. In contexts, such as those presented by Nishkam, it is maintained and normalised as a way of underpinning a framework of values. This practice is associated, as one practitioner pointed out to me, with the Sikh saying that one should: 'treat all elders as one's parents/grandparents; all peers as one's brothers and sisters; all youngsters as one's children.'

The third use of Punjabi by the practitioner in this extract, relates to the use of the Sikh religious greeting, which functions as the formal greeting of the nursery. One of the parents I interviewed recalled her own constant stumbling to correctly say this greeting as a child growing up in England, finding it too complicated. She contrasted this with the readiness and ease with which her toddler son at the nursery now utters it. We see in this extract ample opportunities created by the practitioner for children to practice the pronunciation and rhythm of this greeting in Punjabi.

In this extract we see how the greeting has been extended to include a melodic prompt - 'every-bo-dy!' - which served as a directive, eliciting a choral response from all the children. This drew my attention to the fact that the reiteration of this greeting does more than underline the Sikh origins and identity of the nursery. From its particular heritage positioning, it welcomes everybody to the class. It can be perceived as both exclusive (affirming only Sikh identity in a class including non-Sikhs) and inclusive (as a culturally situated way of addressing and embracing all, as is the simple 'hello').

Aside from these uses of Punjabi and the evoking of Sikh identity, the extract actually echoes much of the everyday talk and activity of any mainstream nursery. Take, for example, Amarjot's 'show and tell' event, which brought the wider world of entertainment and music culture into the space. The boy's trumpeting became almost excessive, but the practitioner does not ask him to stop right away. Instead, she prompted him to greet the class and then greet the newly arrived girl. He listened quite readily to her and stopped momentarily before resuming playing. She then gave scope for the children to converse before turning directly to Amarjot in the extract below.

Extract 4

[Masi ji has allowed the children to interact freely for a short while engaging in conversation with Amarjot prompted by the trumpet, which Amarjot continues to play intermittently. Masi then engage in conversation with the other children. She then turns directly to Amarjot and discusses his trumpet.]

25 Masi: *[with fascination]* H-o-w does this work?!

26   This is quite interesting.

27 Amarjot: You press these buttons.

28 Masi: Oh! I see! OK.

29   And you blow from where, here or here?

   [Amarjot points to the correct place on the trumpet]

30   There, oh wow.

31 Sehaj: Masi Ji!

32 Masi: *Haan ji.*

33 Sehaj: I can even blow a balloon up!

34 Masi: Can you?

35 Sehaj: I can…

36 Mandeep: A real one?

37 Sehaj: Yeah.

38 Masi: Oh, wow.

39   OK, ji. Can we…? *[her tone of voice implies that there should be an*

   end to the general conversation].

40   OK. *[children have quietened down.]*

41   And then when we get our instruments out, then you can play.

42   OK. And you can be a lovely little band.

43 Mandeep: I wanted to blow that.

   [Masi takes trumpet and puts it down beside her]

44   *Achha ji* (OK), we'll put this here just now.

45   *Ethey saarai baittho ji.* (Everyone come and sit here please)

46   Thank you. *[Children now sit attentively.]*

In this extract, through a series of teacher questions and ample positive feedback, the practitioner engaged the attention of Amarjot Singh and prompted the participation of Sehaj Kaur. Having allowed the class considerable scope to wander 'off task', she attempted to bring the episode to a close, proposing that they play instruments later, forming a little band. She responded to the last flicker of excitement at the trumpet (Mandeep's exclamation in line 43) with an effective closing gesture and a brief utterance in Punjabi. She laid the trumpet by her side saying '*Achha ji…Ethey saarai baittho ji.*' (OK…everybody come and sit here please). The children complied readily with her request and she regained control of the classroom talk. (For a further account of this episode, see Sagoo 2016).

In this and other similar episodes, Punjabi was used, by the practitioner, to index teacher authority. Speaking in Punjabi signalled a change of footing and a shift in the practitioner's aims and intent. She was drawing on her personal repertoire of linguistic resources in Punjabi to express simple directives, capture children's wandering attention, build relationships and engender attitudes of care and respect. The episode also highlights the affordances of small class size to establish attentiveness and cohesiveness; and also highlights how this was achieved communicatively, through talk, tone and gesture on this particular occasion.

11.3   Episode 3: Time-out for five children in the Reception class

For the first time, five children (four boys and one girl) were put on 'time-out' by Masi Ji, after she had found the bathroom area soaked; it seems they have been splashing water everywhere. 'Time out' involved sitting a child on a chair, explaining what they have done wrong and giving them time to think about and apologise for what they have done until the

teacher allowed them to get up. The children were usually compliant in accepting time out. This time, Masi positioned the five in different corners of the room and asked the remaining five children to sit on cushions in the corner. Making it known that she was not happy, she approached each child in turn, asking for individual versions of events to be given to the class as a whole, as well as to her personally. At the point shown at the beginning of Extract 5, she had come to kneel beside the second child to request an explanation. In the background, a CD is playing 'Feeling Good Today', a gentle and light-hearted song (from a collection of children's songs by a female Sikh song-writer and devotional singer) which is often played in the Nursery as a background to activities. The following extract shows the practitioner's interaction with the children taking time out:

Extract 5

1. Masi: Preet Singh, what were you doing?

2. *[noticing his nose is running]* You need a tissue for your nose.

3. *[gently]* Can you wipe your nose for me, please?

4. *[raising voice to address group]* You know, Masi ji is not happy.

5. Because Masi ji was going to take you outside.

6. But now we can't even go outside.

7. Priya: Sorry! *[she is the first child, a girl, who has already been questioned]*

8. Masi: Well that's a shame.

9. Priya: Sorry…sorry.

10. Masi: OK.

11. Preet Singh, Priya has told me what happened.

12. What happened? You tell me now.

13. Preet: L was using the towel, the *taulia.*

14.　　　　Then he was, he was putting it inside there.

15. Priya:　And then…

16. Masi:　Ah! One minute. Let me ask Preet.

17.　　　　Were you splashing everybody?

18.　　　　*Haan ji or nehi ji?*

　　[the child is not responding]

19. Masi:　Who was splashing you, then?

20.　　　　Why are you all wet?

21.　　　　Why are your *kapray* (clothes) all wet?

22.　　　　Look, *gillay hoi pai*. (They are soaked through.)

23.　　　　Why is it all wet?

24.　　　　Who was splashing you?

　　[Preet points to Nirmal]

25. Masi:　Did you splash anybody?

26.　　　　Look at me? *[Masi looks into his eyes]*

27.　　　　*Haan ji* or *nehi ji*?

Although English was used for the practitioner's reprimand and although an apology was offered in English by one of the girls (Priya) involved in the splashing incident, the practitioner's use of Panjabi and her non-verbal strategy of looking into Preet's eyes mitigated the force of the reprimand and added a personal tone. At the same time, as I saw it, her uses of Punjabi communicated a kind of parental authority and concern associated with her role as Masi, i.e. a mother's sister.

11.4   Episode 4: Fruit break with babies and toddlers

This episode took place on a December morning in the baby room, which is opposite the toddler room, on the ground floor. There were fewer children present on that morning and the babies and toddlers (ranging in age from 6 months and 2 years) had been brought together for the morning fruit break. Two crescent-shaped tables had been joined together to form a circle, around which eight children were seated on small wooden chairs, with the youngest ones being secured in with a strap. Four Masis were managing the morning fruit break.   One of them, M2, is C. Kaur, whom I had also interviewed (see Chapter 10). She had just entered carrying clear plastic bags of fruit, presenting them to the children and initiating a conversation about the different types of fruit contained in the bags. Along with another practitioner, she washed and chopped the food, ready to distribute it in coloured bowls to the children. The extract begins as one practitioner showed the children the contents of the final bag, containing carrots.

Extract 6

[M1 holds out a carrot and looks towards the boys (identified in the text as 'B') and girls (identified as 'G') in front of her around the table. Sound of kirtan playing faintly in background]

1   M1: What's this?

2   B2: Carrot!

3   M1: It's a carrot!

4   B2: Carrot!

5   M1: It's a nice carrot. Do carrots taste nice?

[M1 starts cutting the carrot]

6   M1: Shall we taste the carrots first?

7   Another child: Yes!

[G4 is a new girl who is still settling in to the nursery. M2 gets up to sit next to her. Two children, G2 and B2, bounce up and down on their seats, making loud playful sounds. The Masis are about to prompt them to do their 'paath' (recitation of a prayer)]

8   M2: Have we done our *paath* yet?

9   M1: Shall we do our *paath* now?

10 M2: Shall we do our *paath*?

[M2 now sits cross-legged, putting G4 who is crying on her lap.]
[M1 looks towards children who have been jumping on their seats]

11 M1: Who is going to start the *paath*?

12 G2: Me! *[girl who was jumping on her chair now volunteers]*

13 M1: All right then.

[Chanting begins, led melodically by the two Masis. It is the Mool Mantar prayer. Some children join in, a few automatically fold palms together. One girl has covered her head with her woollen scarf. M1 chops and divides fruit into coloured plastic bowls. Children watch, fairly attentively.

Another Masi, M3, approaches the table leading a child, G9, who has just woken from the sleeping area. G9 goes straight to M1, seeking and receiving a hug. M1 points her to the seat on the opposite side of the table, indicating that is where she needs to go and sit down. M4 helps her get seated. M2 turns her gaze to two girls who have covered their heads during the prayer; one with her woollen scarf, the other with her hood.]

14 M2: Good girl, Manisha.

15   Look, Manisha's got her head covered!

16   Good girl, Bhajan Kaur Ji.

[M4 sits the newly woken child on the seat indicated by M1. As the paath continues, M1 continues to distribute fruit pieces into the coloured bowls in front of her. G4, sitting on M2's lap, is now calm.]

In this extract, we see some classic elements of classroom discourse, with teacher questions, directives and positive feedback accompanying a range of non-verbal practices as the practitioners carried out the task of preparing children to receive their mid-morning snack of fruit. The episode began with an initiation, response and feedback sequence (IRF) as M1 prompted the children to identify the carrot she was holding in her hand. Her gaze, gesture and voice guided the children to look at a carrot (line 1), and then name it in English. The children's response, including B2's echoing of the practitioner's affirmation (line 4) suggested that the were already familiar with exchanges of this kind, which are typical of classroom interaction. This English-medium exchange was the conclusion of a longer sequence of IRE exchanges introducing the various types of fruit to be served.

After the exchange about the carrot, two children, B2 and G2, started to bounce up and down mischievously on their chairs, making playful sounds. They were not rebuked by the adults. Their activity was met with a brief gaze by M2, who then drew the children's attention to the routine recitation of a prayer (*paath*) before food by asking, 'Have we done our *paath* yet?'. This style of questioning, with the teacherly use of the inclusive 'we', was echoed by M1. M1 then looked towards B2 and E2 and asked, 'Who is going to start the *paath*?' G2 immediately volunteered and the other children joined in.

One child, G4, who had recently started the nursery and was still settling in, was restless and tearful around the table. M2 moved to sit down on the floor next to her. She then put her on her lap, swaying gently as she helped to initiate the chanting of the prayer. A subsequent interview with this practitioner revealed her awareness of strategies to address the needs of this particular child. I return to this interview below. Another child who had just woken up from the sleeping area was then led into the snack area by M3. This child instinctively headed towards M1 to receive a hug and was then directed by M1 to take a seat around the table.

As the children joined in or listened to the chanting, they made different non-verbal responses to this daily prayer routine. Some closed their eyes or folded their palms together. Two girls found ways of covering their head during the prayer, with a woollen scarf or a cardigan hood. These non-verbal responses, indicating awareness of the culturally specific dress and body language in a moment of formal prayer were met with positive feedback from M2. Throughout the nursery years, there is no compulsion for children to cover their heads, except during formal religious activities for older children (e.g. singing hymns or prayers in the assembly). However, on a daily basis, children see the practitioner dress code

where female staff mostly cover their heads with red chunis or scarves as they would do at the nearby gurudwara.

In an interview following this episode, M1 commented on the children's learning of the culturally specific practice as she recalled the positive feedback she routinely gave the children for reciting the *paath*:

'It's like an achievement for them as well as... You know, when they do something good, and you say wow, that's amazing. And when they've done the paath, it's the same thing. And that way they're in tune with it more as well. And they'll sit there, and, like you said, I didn't tell her to cover her head, but she acknowledges that, you know, for paath time, you cover your head, and then you put your hands together and do your paath.'

Extract 6 provides detailed insights into the ways in which the practitioners collaborated to help the children to settle and focus before the fruit break, managing children's behaviour in non-intrusive ways. It also reveals children's sense of security with the staff and the ease with which they approach and respond to the staff. In addition, it shows their familiarity with routine practices and the confidence and readiness with which children take up practitioner prompts, as well as making spontaneous responses to routine practices. As in the previous extracts, with other practitioners, the communicative practices of the four practitioners in Extract 6, especially those of M1, serve to build relationships of respect and inclusion and relatively fluid identities. The communication takes place largely through English and gradually builds children's knowledge of the world (about food, routines, cultural practices). The ebb and flow of the conversation with these very young children involved occasional switching into Punjabi, on culturally specific terms like *paath* and Sikh

names. Later on, some time into the fruit break, the practitioners also encouraged the children to practice using Punjabi to identify different fruits. Other non-verbal practices – such as sitting cross legged, swaying, chanting, using verbal and non-verbal directives which mitigate the force of imperatives - contributed to the creation of an atmosphere for the staff and children which is infused with elements of both Sikh and a more general South Asian culture.

Extract 7

[M2 remains cross-legged on floor, gently rocking. G4's head is on her shoulder, looking towards the wall. M2 makes reassuring, circular motion with her palm on G4's back]

1   M2:   Do you want some fruit, *putar* (my child)?

2   Do you want some fruit?

3   Mmm, nice.

[G4 turns her head from M1's shoulder to look at M1 as she moves around to serve everyone fruit.]

4   M2:   *<Oh dekh>,* look. *<Kha-iye?* (Look over there... Shall we eat?)

5   *Oh dekh,>* look. (Look over there.)

6   *<Ah dekh,>* look. (Look over here.)

 [M2 turns G4 around to sit on her lap and face the table. M2 cups both her hands in front of G4, gesturing M1 to bring them some fruit, and starts to speak in a melodic, lilting voice]

7   *<Ah dekh>...* (Look at this.)

8   *Masi liaa de...* (Masi is bringing us some).

9   *Oh dekh,>* look, *<oh dekh>.* (Look at that. Look at that.)

10   Fruit.

[*Kirtan continues to play faintly in background*]

This extract shows a practitioner's one-to-one interaction with a child, where conversational Punjabi predominates. This is a recurring practice in the class with babies and toddles, where Punjabi (and sometimes Hindi) is drawn upon in more intimate moments of social interaction, where it is sensed to be a main language for a child. Here, M2 begins the interaction in English, using Punjabi just once to address the child as '*putar*' (my child), whilst rocking and patting her. She then guides her to observe the fruit-serving scene, alternating her gaze between an activity further away ('*Oh dekh*' – Look at that) and one nearby ('*Ah dekh*' – Look at this) as she cups her hands in front of the child.

This child had recently joined the nursery and was from a Hindu Punjabi family. In her interview, the practitioner (M2) explained the ways in which new children were settled in. Her account sheds light on the interactions in this extract:

'You judge each child, so you know you've got to give them time and space... And also, you've got to give them time to get to know the nursery and move around, because it becomes their space. So you've got to see whether they prefer having their own space, whether they prefer having lots of kids around them... So each child comes in differently. So what you do is that you assess each child. But at the beginning, we've seen that one definitely needed comfort time, where you do have to hold them, pick them up, sooth them, sit down, read a book, and then you gently just put them on the side. So they understand you're still in the room, you're still with them, and you haven't left them.'

Ocassionally addressing children as '*putar*' (my child), sometimes abbreviated to '*put*' (with the softened 't' specific to Punjabi) is a practice which pervades the nursery. In my

interview with her, the practitioner explained her feeling that the use of terms of endearment, such as *putar* made the bond between practitioner and children closer, in the absence of their parents. This, she points out, complements the practice of children addressing female practitioners as 'Masi', positioning them as a mother's sister and, thus, a fictive family member. M2 suggested that these terms of address helped to express and enhance an attitude of love and care towards every child. She put this as follows:

So, 'putar', it just builds you closer. I think that's what it is here, where we call each other Masi, and our kids become 'put'… That makes a difference. If you go to a normal nursery and you're saying just a child's name, yes, there's still something there isn't there? But once you say 'put', for me personally, that becomes, OK, it's my child, I want to give it the best as well… it builds the relationship up, more than just teacher-pupil. I'll say to all the kids 'put' as well. They are like that, aren't they, really, at the end of the day?'

In her interview, when I asked M2 about her use of a range of communicative resources like gestures and voice quality in comforting and guiding the children, she described them as both conscious and instinctive, 'like driving a car', where conscious knowledge and awareness is absorbed subconsciously into habitual practice.

11.5 Episode 5: Preschool arts and crafts activity

This episode took place in the preschool classroom in the summer term. The video recording focused on an arts and crafts activity led by D. Singh, the senior male practitioner, addressed by the children as 'Mama Ji' ('mother's brother'). He had worked in regional mainstream nurseries for twelve years. A brief audio-recorded interview with this

practitioner followed the video-recorded activity. The interview threw some light on the context and purpose of this activity and was thus drawn upon in my analysis.

Ten or so children were seated around an oblong table, busying themselves with paper, glue, pencils and crayons on the table and going up to the practitioner present for assistance. The practitioner included Mama Ji, the senior practitioner and two junior female practitioners. Behind them, the fireplace area was decorated with bold coloured paper cut-outs, depicting a jungle scene with trees, leaves and flowers. In his interview, Mama Ji explained that the topic for the month was animals and that the children had been reading 'The Gruffalo', which features a number of animal characters, one of which is a snake. He explained that, he and 'bhenji' (one of the two female practitioners that he addressed as 'sister'), had decided to plan an activity involving the making of paper snakes to populate the jungle area created by the fireplace. This was a way of building on the children's recent literacy work and of supporting aspects of their overall development.

During the task, the pre-schoolers worked independently and occasionally sought assistance from the adults. To make the snake body, children drew and coloured patterns on two long strips of paper, whose ends were then glued at right angles together. Staff helped them to make a series of alternate folds to create a concertina which allowed the structure to wiggle. A face was then drawn on to a separate head shape, which was then stuck on to the body. After completion the children took their snakes to the jungle area and were then allowed to embark on free play.

The two extracts that follow, were in the main, consecutive one-to-one interactions between Mama Ji (MM) and two children, as he knelt beside them at the table to guide them through

the completion of the task. The extracts also include simultaneous talk around the table, with the voices of assisting practitioners (Masis MS1 and MS2) and other children.

Extract 8

1 B1:   *[audible, but not visible]* I've done my snake!

[G1 next to Mama Ji also stretches out her hand to show him her completed snake.]

2 MM: You've done it. Well done! *[characteristic rising intonation]*

3   Thank you. Go and play then.

[B2, from behind Mama Ji, touches his shoulder and shows him his completed snake]

4 MM: Oooh! Scary snake!

[MM addresses G2 who is still at the table in the early stages of the task. Beside her are G3 and B2 who have still to start. They watch as MM starts to observe then assist G2 with folding]

5 MM: *[addressing G3]* Have you done it? OK…

6   *[Turning to G2] Aha dekh. Aha edhar nou.* (Look at this. This goes this way.)

7   *Aha houn ehdar no lay ke ja.* (Now, take this and put it this way.)

8   That's it.

[interactions heard from the other side of the table, between two female practitioners and children]

9 MS1:   *[addressing a child]* Are you OK?

10 Another child: Masi ji, can I play with lego?

11 MS1:   Err, you have to ask Mama Ji first what we're doing.

12 Same child: Mama ji!

13 MS2:   *[unclear who she is addressing]* You can do it by yourself now.

[MM continues interactions with G2, helping and guiding her to independently fold the

paper]

14 MM: *Edhar-la, aha, edhar nou.* (The one on this side, this one, take it this way.)

15   *Aha vala, edhar nou lai key ja.* (This one here, take it this way.)

16 Another child: *[calling from the other side of table]* Mama Ji!

17 MS1:   Do you want to come here and Masi Ji will help you?

18   *[addressing younger Masi]* Kiran, can you pass me a black and red pen

please.

19 MM: *Aha houn edha* fold *karna, aha vala.* (Now this folds this way, this one here.)

20   *Aha dekh. Edhar* head *laga dey.* (Look at this. Stick the head over here.)

[G2 confidently glues and affixes head. MM picks up completed snake, wiggles it in front

of G2 and smiles. She smiles and gets up. Various other children behind them have

completed the task and have begun their free play – sound of baskets of toys being emptied

in the background]

The focus of this extract is on the interaction between Mama Ji and one child whose

dominant spoken language is Punjabi. The use of Punjabi is interwoven with talk in English

with other children and practitioner-child talk from elsewhere around the table. The extract

illustrates the ways in which he draws on his bilingual repertoire in interacting with children

with different language backgrounds.   From my extended experience of participant

observation in the nursery, I became aware of how this Mama Ji inspired a great deal of

affection and also deference from the children in and around the nursery. I noted the

children's delight when he would come unexpectedly into a room or if his picture appeared

on a photo slide show on classroom computers. When other practitioners encountered

difficulty in motivating or disciplining children, they brought children to spend a little time with him. The rapport he built with the children seemed to chime, as I observed and interpreted it, with the connation of a familiar, affectionate and trusting bond which tends to be culturally associated with the role of a 'Mama Ji', or mother's brother.

As extract 8 opens, we see three children in succession communicating to Mama Ji that they have finished making their snakes. They do this verbally and through gestures. Mama Ji's responses to the first three children involved positive feedback and playful communicative practice (e.g. 'Scary snake!' in line 4). This feedback was given in a cheerful, raised tone of voice. Mama Ji's style is reminiscent of habitual patterns of teacher talk internalised through professional experience. The children were clearly familiar with this aspect of teaching style and showed that they were keen to approach and receive approval from him before they engaged in the free play session which routinely follows the morning's focussed activity.

After glancing at G3 – the girl and who was sitting immediately next to him who was still in the initial stages of the activity – and after addressing her in English, Mama Ji then spoke in Punjabi and started to guide her and to show her how to go about the paper-folding task. Here, his tone was quieter and the talk was more pedagogic in nature, aimed at supporting her individually so she could accomplish the task. Mama Ji was working with the child's strongest language (she entered the class as a fluent Punjabi speaker) and giving her consistent one to one attention in Punjabi, while, at the same time, responding to questions and comments in English from other children and from the two other practitioners.

The function of this kind of translingual practice was taken up in interview with Mama Ji, when I asked in which ways he saw the Early Years Foundation Stage and the focus on dispositions as working together with a Sikh and Punjabi dimension. This mention of Punjabi prompted him to comment immediately on the language issue, drawing on the terminology of mainstream educational discourse:

Some of the children speak English as an additional language. So, obviously some children do need the encouragement of more sort of Punjabi-led talk. So you can use a mother tongue language they are quite familiar with. I mean, a lot of other schools you will find, compared to here, will have teachers who speak English and don't speak any other language. And what happens is that the child gets put into some category as either delayed or there's some sort of additional needs that are required. But in essence there are no additional needs required. It's just their language needs aren't usually met. They can perform the activity just like all the other children. It's just the language barrier which creates the barrier for them. But developmentally, they are all, with all the other children, really.

As we have seen above, Mama Ji successfully supported the Punjabi-speaking girl through the 'snakes' task. She undertook the task with attentiveness, enjoyment and confidence. In his interview, he also mentioned that he tried to introduce 'western, English words' into Punjabi-dominant interactions. Here, in this extract, his momentary uses of English included the words 'fold' and 'head'. What he appeared to be doing in lines 20 and 21, when he switched into English on these words, was using Punjabi to mediate an English-dominant classroom world. His use of the very teacherly phrase 'That's it' to give positive

feedback in line 8 was probably a reflex associated with years of professional experience in an English medium context. Taken overall, his communicative style in this extract is best described as fluid and flexible bilingualism.

When I asked Mama Ji if he endeavoured to develop the Punjabi language ability of English-dominant speakers, he noted that, as practitioners, they encouraged use of the Punjabi equivalent '*sap*' instead of the word 'snake' in the craft activity. This explicit strategy was observable in other contexts in the nursery. During my fieldwork I found out that certain classroom practices, such as identifying and pronouncing groups of Punjabi nouns (colours, days of the week, objects, family relations) were routinised through activities of singing, repeating, finding, guessing. This clearly contributed to the children's knowledge and enjoyment of the language, honing their pronunciation skills at a young age and establishing an awareness of the social meaning associate with some terms (e.g. grasping the significance of markers of respect, terms of address).

What we see in extract 8 is one-to-one support being given to a child in a non-judgemental way by an experienced mainstream practitioner who is able to draw on his bilingual ability as a resource. In the next extract, we see Mama Ji's interactions in English with a second child – Simran – (who was a bystander to the interactions in extract 8). We see show Mama Ji drawing on classic teacher strategies to creatively practise language with the children.

Extract 9

[Simran - G3 - has just gone to the other end of the table to get a head shape to stick on the body of her paper snake. Mama Ji then calls Simran back to his end of the table.]

1   MM: Right, come and sit here, Simran.

2   Glue your head on, on to the snake, and we'll take it to the jungle.

3   G3:   Here?

4   MM: Yep. Put some glue on.

5   It's a ssssss…snake.

6   Wiggle it. Wiggle your snake.

[Simran wiggles the paper snake, smiling.]

7   Ooooh! A slithery snake.

8   That likes strawberries.

9   And sits in the sun.

10   And plays with sand.

11   Lots of ssssss….

[Simran looks up at Mama Ji and smiles. Mama Ji shifts gaze to B2, still making his snake.]

12   Right. This one over this way.

[Mama Ji turns his head to check Simran's work. In the background B1's voice is heard.]

13 B1:   My snake plays sand!

14 MM: *[addressing Simran who is trying to fix the snake's head on]* Is it coming off?

15 G3:   Yeah, it's coming off.

16 B1:   *[voice heard again in the background]* My snake is… plays sand!

17 MM: *[addressing Simran, who has fixed the head on]* Good girl, well done.

18 MS1:   *[from other side of table, addressing another child making a snake]* Well done,

19   Sehaj!

20 MM: *[shifting attention back to B2 making his snake]* Well done.

21   That one goes that way.

22 Another child: *[child's voice in background]* Masi, mama ji.

23 MS1:   *[addressing a girl sitting next to her]* Good girl, now this one.

24 Same child: *[child's voice in background]* Mama ji!

25 MS1:   Yeah, you've got the hang of it now.

This time, the task of making the snake has been completed, and Mama Ji gives scope for interactions which build language and literacy skills in English (lines 7-11), through creative and explorative talk. One phrase from this (line 9) 'And plays with sand' is twice echoed by a child who is nearby but unseen on the video footage: 'My snake plays sand!' and 'My snake is…, plays sand!'. The children were clearly responding to Mama Ji's playful style. It was both instinctive and strategic and was achieving an effect in the audible space around him. When I asked, in my interview with him, how the snake-making activity might contribute to children's wider development, in terms of dispositions and values, Mama Ji responded again as an experienced early years practitioner, drawing on the terminology of established early years pedagogy. In his words, the activity will develop their

knowledge and understanding of the world, of what a snake is. A lot of the hand-eye coordination as well, by the folding. So you're focusing on fine and gross motor skills. Their coordination will help them later on in their writing.   So even like when they were drawing on the actual snake's body – it's the formation of letters which they'll start forming later on. And also, experiencing the animal itself, it wobbles, obviously, a snake slithers… But otherwise the intention is about making it creative, and good learning for them.

11.6 **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I presented a close-up analysis of five interactional episodes which I had audio- or film-recorded in different locations in the nursery and at different times of the day. These vignettes helped to shed light on the role of translingual communicative practice in the moment-to-moment configuration and co-construction of the nursery world.

In analysing this data, I was able to gain insights into the ways in which language was being used by practitioners, in the daily ebb and flow of nursery life, to: index their British professional and as well as Sikh/Punjabi identities; construct relationships and foster children's sense of belonging and identity; build school-based as well as children's heritage-based knowledge; use children's strongest language to mediate the English-dominant nursery curriculum; respond sensitively to children's needs to elicit their positive engagement; engender dispositions of care and respect towards and between the children. I identified a range of communicative resources and practices which the practitioners employed to do this, including: elements of classic classroom discourse; translanguaging that involved drawing on communicative resources from English and Punjabi; style-shifting prompted by Punjabi-language markers of informality, intimacy and solidarity as well as markers of respect; verbal and non-verbal devices to soften teacher directives as well as assert teacher authority.   I showed how practitioners employed these resources as contextualisation cues to manage the interlacing of different styles, practices and identities which were giving shape to the hybridised world of the Nishkam nursery. I was thus able to build a picture of the communicative construction of the nursery's British Sikh/Punjabi character and of its character as a provider emphasising the holistic and formative, dispositions-oriented dimensions of early childhood care and education.

In 11.1, entitled 'Stepping into school: pre-schoolers in the hallway', a nursery Masi, B. Kaur, was guiding a group of pre-schoolers to climb safely and competently up the stairs after they had been dropped off by their parents. A follow-up practitioner interview helped to extend my interpretation of her use of communicative resources in the two extracts of interactional data I presented. Elements of classic classroom discourse in the first extract included: use of an inclusive 'we'; ample positive feedback, praising evidence of dispositions ('Good listening') as well as individual children ('Good girl'); typically teacherly questions ('And what do we hold on to?') and the softening of directives designed to maintain focus or to redirect a child's wandering attention; use of simple, two-word level instructions. The second extract illustrated the use of Punjabi by the same practitioner set about reassuring an anxious child who was a Punjabi-dominant speaker, by using turns of phrase to mark intimacy and solidarity as well as markers of respect (e.g. 'ji' and the respectful second person, '*tusi*'). The analysis revealed the hallway's function as an in-between space, mediating children's spatial and linguistic transition from home to school and, for a few of the children, from a Punjabi-speaking world to the more English-dominant world of their preschool classroom (as represented in the reading books which the children were carrying with them up the stairs in clear plastic book bags).

In 11.2, entitled 'Morning greetings and 'show and tell' in the reception class', I discussed an episode that began just as the practitioner, G. Kaur, was completing the morning routine of assigning monitor duties. She then had to manage the excitement generated by the late arrival of a boy playing a toy trumpet he had brought in for that morning's 'show and tell' session. She also had to guide the routine exchange of morning greetings between the children, which involved uttering the Khalsa greeting, using the Sikh names 'Singh' and

'Kaur' after a children's first name (if they were Sikh), followed by the kinship terms '*bhaji*' (brother) and '*bhenji*' (sister). The translingual practices, involving use of multiple communicative resources from English and Punjabi, in the two extracts, indexed changes in footing and shifts in aims and intents as this practitioner found subtle ways of navigating this episode. She drew on Punjabi to express simple directives (*baittho ji* – 'sit down please') and to index teacher authority; to engender attitudes of care and respect (through ample us of the respect markers 'ji', e.g. added to statements such as 'OK' and 'Well done') and; to build a relationship with the children and foster relationships between the children. I also highlighted practitioner tone as a communicative resource. It remained pleasant, cheerful and interested in the children, with a gentle firmness as she asserted her authority as required.

Section 11.3, entitled 'Time out for five children in the reception class', involved the same practitioner, G. Kaur, who had just called five children into the classroom from the adjoining bathroom, after they had played with the water taps and left the floor soaked. 'Time out' involved her sitting these children on chairs in different corners of the room. She then approached and knelt by each child, asking them to explain their version of events. She did this by using English to elicit an explanation, interspersing this with '*Haan ji* or *nehi ji*?', a (respectful) 'Yes or no?' to establish what happened. She also employed Punjabi to express her dismay at how a child's clothes were soaked through. She did this in a way that echoed parental authority. Other gestures mitigated the force of her reprimand, such as gently asking a child to wipe his nose before offering his explanation and looking into his eyes in a personable way.

11.4, entitled: 'Fruit break with babies and toddlers', involved four different practitioners collaborating and drawing on various communicative resources to respond to the different sensibilities and needs of the children to help them settle and focus before eating.   It also revealed the children's sense of security with the staff and ease with which they approached them and responded to their prompts with readiness and confidence as well as spontaneity. The first extract showed classic elements of classroom discourse, such as an initiation, response and feedback sequence, through which one Masi encouraged the children to identify and think about the carrots being offered to them.   The children then readily responded to a prompt to start '*paath*' or the chanting of prayers as part of the nursery's mealtime ritual.   The second extract homed in on a one-to-one interaction, after one Masi had brought a restless and tearful child to sit on her lap on the floor by the table.   Verbal and non-verbal gestures such as gently rocking the child, stroking her back, addressing her in Punjabi as '*puttar*' (my child) and to employ a melodic, lilting voice to direct her attention towards the food (observations made by this practitioner in a short follow-up interview), revealed her sensitivity to the child's needs and to the building of a caring relationship to elicit the child's positive response.

In 11.5, entitled 'Preschool arts and crafts activity', a male practitioner, whom the children addressed as 'Mama Ji', was directing a snake-making activity involving folding strips of paper into a concertina pattern.   The first extract showed how he was able to support a Punjabi-dominant child to accomplish the task with attentiveness, enjoyment and confidence.   Drawing on mainstream educational discourse he later explained how his 'Punjabi-led talk' enabled him to lift what he stressed was nothing more than a 'language barrier' to learning.   In the second extract he switched to engage exclusively in English with another child.   I contrasted the practitioner's playful, creative and more audible use of

English ('A slithery snake that likes strawberries and sits in the sun') in this second extract with the more functional, instructional and quieter use of Punjabi as a form of one-to-one language support in the first extract. This illustrated for me some differences in the way English and Punjabi were being used and valued at this stage in the nursery's development. As with the previous episodes analysed here, this episode underscored how practitioners were able to draw on their fluid and flexible bilingualism to meet a variety of interlinked aims and intentions to support individual children's wellbeing and learning.

CHAPTER 12:

PARENTAL RESPONSES TO THE NURSERY INITIATIVE

12.1 Selecting the Nishkam Nursery: initial motivations and reservations

At the start of the interview, parents were asked to cast their minds back to the time they first considered sending their child to the nursery, and to recall their thoughts and feelings at the time. Responses varied greatly, from an instinctive eagerness to enrol their child to caution and reservation before making their decision.

12.1.1 Negative experiences of previous nurseries

A number of parents had had negative experience of previous local nurseries, which led them to consider the Nishkam Nursery for their child. Issues of concern in previous nurseries included: lack of cleanliness, an uninviting environment, lack of space, lack of focus on the individual child, lack of care for the child's wellbeing, sustained negative behaviour of other children impacting on their own child. One parent explained her motivation to choose the Nishkam Nursery in this way:

> It was an easy decision only because I wasn't very happy with the day nursery where he was. The cleanliness, the focus on individual child. I am not saying you get that in every nursery or any school, it doesn't happen. But when it's straight there in your eyes, you think, you know, you are not happy.

Another mother described her bewilderment and increasing frustration at her son's change in behaviour when he joined his previous nursery:

> He started, honestly speaking, he started swearing ...and he was becoming more and more aggressive. I don't know, because me and my husband, we are very calm in the house. The atmosphere is really, really calm.

At a meeting with the manager for this nursery, she had been told it was most likely he had picked up the habit of swearing from other children in the nursery. She explained how her

anxiety was exacerbated by her inability to leave her job to care for her son, or to find any alternative solutions, until discovering the Nishkam nursery. She also revealed a concern that her son's behaviour might be seen by as a problem in the new nursery, when, during my interview with her, she initiated a comment, recalling the first day she met the nursery manager:

> And I want to tell you, you know, once…The first day when I met K. Singh bhaji, I asked him, like, I told him my son's behaviour is not good. Like, he's very, very aggressive, he's started swearing, he bites the other children, he pushes other children, so he's very naughty as well. And I liked K. Singh bhaji's words. He said, "Just leave it with us, don't worry.

Parental critiques of previous nurseries suggested that, at one level, the Nishkam nursery was meeting the level of quality and standards expected by them of any good nursery.

12.1.2 Practical convenience

Some parents highlighted the practical convenience of the nursery location. One couple, who identified themselves as not "very religious" mentioned the close proximity of the nursery to their home; it was their preferred choice of local nursery, having been disappointed with others they had visited. Having the faith and heritage dimension was an unexpected bonus. For other families, close proximity to the gurudwara was also a convenience, in terms of family members who spent time there regularly being able assist with dropping off or collecting children.

12.1.3 The nursery environment and atmosphere

The physical environment of the nursery created a key first impression for parents. Most, like the mother whose words are cited below, were impressed by the design, layout and cleanliness of the space: 'For me, it was the way it was set out, the settings. The cleanliness,

obviously, because it was newly furnished and everything, wasn't it? That was the main thing.'

During a short exchange between a mother and father that occurred during my interview with them, three characteristics which appealed to them were highlighted: that it was 'very clean'; 'very calm'; and looked 'quite posh'. This gives a sense that, as well as its internal qualities, of cleanliness and calmness, it was perceived as a place of high quality and reflected a sense of progress, upward mobility and a pursuit of excellence, in the area of Handsworth.

12.1.4 Balancing quality mainstream provision with nurture in language, culture and faith

For many parents, the nursery struck an ideal balance by offering quality mainstream educational provision alongside daily practices which introduced them in positive ways to Sikh and South Asian heritage. For one father:

> That was one of the important issues, because the nursery looked like, I mean, a professional establishment, that you would want to send them to. But also, like you say, to follow the normal high standard curriculum that nurseries abide by, but also, not to push them away from our own Sikhi. We are born into this, and so therefore he should be shown Sikhi. Obviously the choice, as he gets older, will be his own. But if we don't show him from the beginning, he won't know. So that's why we felt that it was important.

Interestingly, he voiced a concern that a children's educational experience should not 'push them away' from their heritage, revealing a view, stemming possibly from experience, that some forms of provision (no doubt in combination with other social factors) can lead to alienation and exclusion from the experience of heritage. Like this parent, the couple below underlined the importance of exposure to heritage in the early years, acknowledging that the

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best they can do is to build positive foundations; the rest will depend on other factors, and

on the children themselves.

> *Mother*: Because if we didn't teach them from this young age, when they get older they're going to say, 'Well, you didn't teach us when we were younger, you never taught us when we were young, so why now?'... So I think they need those roots to become the Sikhs that we want them to become.

> *Father:* You can look at it from certain angles, it depends how they grow up. Obviously you can push a child as much as you like into Sikhism, but in later life it's up to them what they follow isn't it? Every child is different, so it depends.

12.1.5 *An extended family and an extension of home*

One first-time parent, who had planned to raise a long-awaited child as a devoted mother at

home, was drawn by the idea of the nursery fulfilling the role of an extended family which

could provide specialised nurture in the child's heritage:

> Because, myself and my husband we live alone with our child. We haven't got, like, the grandparents there or anything. So, you know, we haven't got a lot of that support of …'*Hanji*' ['Yes' – here, the mother is indexing a world where use of resources from conversational Punjabi is common]. But we do try our hardest to speak Punjabi at home. But knowing that he goes somewhere, and they will speak a little bit of Punjabi here there or there, is a bonus for us. It's like having some grandparents there, really!

Here we see expressed the idea of the extended family playing a role in the linguistic, and

by extension, cultural and faith nurture of the child. The sense of family also related to the

perceived homeliness of the nursery, helping children to feel comfortable and valued. This

was particularly appealing for one father who, before his actual visit, had been wary about

the faith character of the nursery:

> It felt, not spiritual, it felt homely, if you know what I mean. I could see that my son was going to be relaxed when he was here. They had, like, you know, the music playing in the background, nice chilled out music as well. And I thought, you know, he could learn quite a few things here that he would not be able to learn at home quickly enough.

Such comments suggest that the homely dimension of the nursery, in the eyes of parents, was not solely to fill a gap in heritage education which the parents were not in a position to provide themselves. The very quality of homeliness, experienced by parents on visiting the nursery, seemed to make them feel happy and secure about the provision offered to their children.

12.1.6 Parental life conditions

The life conditions of parents varied greatly. Their stories characterise many of the social and economic challenges and time-management pressures facing parents in their contemporary urban life in the UK and the nursery offered a solution to a range of predicaments. One mother had become physically ill, through extreme distress at her son's experience at a previous nursery, her own inability to leave her job to care for him (and lose an essential income), or draw on family assistance, with most of the extended family living overseas. She described the discovery of the Nishkam Nursery as a dramatic turning point, reiterating her gratitude to the manager and staff. For working parents, the nursery offered a high quality service with a bonus of a faith and cultural nurture. For others it offered the kind of provision that resonated with the home environment. Another mother, who was both able and willing to care for her son full-time in the years before school, describes her excitement at discovering the nursery as a place which would complement and successfully meet her aspirations for his early years education. She described her 'discovery' by saying: 'it was like a light, really.'

Parents also reflected on their personal histories, on the conditions of their own upbringings and on how they saw the nursery might fill gaps they perceived in their own nurture when they were young. One mother recounted how, as a child, she would follow family and

religious tradition with little help to make sense of it, relying on her 'common sense' and putting pieces together as she grew up. She recalled her embarrassment at speaking her language and at having what she saw as a terrible Punjabi accent. She explains her parents' lack of formal education and poor English, stressing her love and reverence for them nevertheless. This paints a picture of living, as a child, in two very different worlds, with little experience of translating between them and bringing the two together. These recollections set the scene for her positive welcoming of the Nishkam Nursery, one generation on, as a contemporary resource, engaged with the wider world, for gaining understanding of and confidence in one's faith identity.

12.1.7 *Confidence in the Nishkam 'brand'*

For those parents who were familiar with the nursery's parent organisation, this inspired a sense of trust and confidence in the service that would be provided. One mother described her discovery of the nursery in the following terms:

> Funnily enough, I heard about it on a Saturday. We just …. I knew there was going to be a nursery opening but we didn't know when. I saw the banner up, it was a Saturday, we'd come to the gurudwara . I saw the banner, and said to my husband, 'Wow! Find out when that's opening. We'll try our son there.' And then, it was just from there. There was no, 'No…', or thought. It was, 'Yes, he's going there.' We didn't think, 'Shall we, shall we not?' … to tell you the truth.

This was the mother (referred to earlier) who had wanted to raise her child at home until he was of school-age. In this part of the interview, she added: 'And the only reason that I sent him to nursery is because of, like, because of the Nishkam Nursery, and how it is.'

Some parents were introduced by word of mouth to the nursery, by family members familiar with and active within the gurudwara. In some cases, a grandparent had recommended the nursery, whilst parents themselves had initially been more cautious. One parent - who

expressed his wariness about a faith-based nursery, remembering the negative associations with religion he had accumulated growing up - commented on how he felt the organisation had transformed the gurudwara and surrounding area. Memories of the harshness of gurudwara Punjabi classes in his childhood were contrasted by the dramatic changes he could see at the time when my interview with him was conducted:

> The positives, like with the temple itself, I've seen it, you know, from a place of fear to a place of excellence now, and education. You know – and it's changed so much, Soho Road, and the area. So many positives have come out of the *sewa* people have done here. I think it's fantastic.

12.1.8. *Reservations about segregating children and the nurse*ry's faith character

Whilst happy with the general quality of the nursery, some parents had reservations about narrowing the social exposure of their children. Whilst the nursery had an open admissions policy, it had attracted children of South Asian heritage and for some parents, this raised a concern. One mother explained that, while one grandmother had wholeheartedly encouraged enrolment at the Nishkam Nursery, she and her husband had felt differently about this and had therefore decided to enrol their child for a trial period: "We had reservations because we were concerned that, you know, we didn't want him to...to segregate him from society, you know. We didn't want him to be helped back in any sort of, in any form".

12.2 Ideas about childhood and raising children

Parents were asked about their visions of an ideal childhood; and if circumstances were not a barrier, about the things they would want most for their child. In some interviews, this theme was introduced by asking what parents expected from the nursery for their child, generating, in a slightly different way, a picture of their aspirations as parents. Since all the parents had experienced the nursery for some months, it is difficult to say to what extent

this exposure may have sharpened their self-understanding about what they sought for their child. In any case, what emerged were the parents' views about the aspects of raising young children they valued most.

For one couple, most important was love, attention and stability, along with developing a child's basic morality. They responded to my questions as follows:

Father: Love and attention for him, really.

Mother: The attention.

Father: Bringing him up, you know....[knowing]

Mother: The right from wrong.

Father: Telling them the right from wrong from an early age… [reflective pause] Just a stable childhood. The simple things, you know, to give him a good start in life.

Enjoyment was a priority for another father, as he reflected on his child's current experience at nursery. Earlier in the interview, he had highlighted the importance of enabling his son to experience his heritage, preparing him to be part of the 'normal' world was also clearly valued:

Providing them with something that's obviously fun, that he enjoys, so he'll want to keep coming to nursery. That's quite important. Because if your child is not enjoying it, then he is not going to be upset and not wanting to come to nursery....So that is one important thing, that he is enjoying it. The second is that he is learning… normal preschool stuff that kids learn, and [that he] does normal things and…what else? Well, that he is happy and he is enjoying, and he is picking up what he should be before school, before he goes to school.

One mother described the early years as a stage for her child to develop knowledge and skills for future learning (reflecting the principles of Early Years Foundation Stage literature). However, halfway through the comment below, the general notion of building 'confidence' took on a new significance, as she drew us more specifically into the family's cultural context, revealing that part of the confidence building is for her son to feel

comfortable with and knowledgeable about his identity as a Sikh [a disposition, as she highlights in her life story, which she lacked when she was young]: "I want him to learn within himself, to be able to speak up, and be confident. And this kind of thing, you know, I think, will make his educational life easier...I don't want him to by shy of his *keski*...or Indian things".

Like the previous parent, she valued opportunities for her son to learn the language, culture and faith of his heritage, reiterating the importance of enabling him to make sense of it in a way that she has not been able to: 'I just wanted him to be more understanding of what he was doing'. However, when she enrolled him at the nursery, she was less worried about what he would formally learn and more concerned about the type of person he would become, suggesting that it might seem unusual for a parent to emphasise this as an educational goal: 'I was more into, like, making him, like, a strong person, loving, nice, you know, those sort of things that probably people don't really put too much into.'

When I suggested that she was talking here about qualities, she said: 'I wanted them to shine out of him', echoing the notion that one of the purposes of early years education is to unlock a child's innate qualities and enable them to emanate.

Some parents highlighted the importance of investing proactively in their child's education. One mother, had weighed up whether she could afford to switch to the Nishkam Nursery, and she recalled the words of a relative, highlighting, in Punjabi, the importance of forward thinking when it comes to a child's education, of not being half-hearted or holding oneself back.

12.3 Creating a 'place' from a 'space'

Running consistently through the parent interviews was an appreciation of the meanings, values and practices which brought a sense of 'place' to the nursery. This emerged through remarks evoking the physical environment of the nursery, its atmosphere, the people within it, their dispositions as well as their language and interactional practices, the resulting influence on parents as well as children: "It feels like home, you know, to the parent and to the child. And I think, that sort of makes the child feel comfortable, and the parent…And I think it's spacious…And very clean". The homeliness was thus important for this parent, who was put off by the more explicitly institutionalised nature of other nurseries she had visited. She explains that she decided to keep her child at the Nishkam Nursery: "Mainly because it was, a homely, a homely feel. [My son] has been to a nursery before. And it didn't, it wasn't a very homely atmosphere when we got there. It was very, you know, you could tell it was an educational establishment".

In some ways, the nursery was seen as an extension of the gurudwara as well as home. For one mother, accustomed to visit Hindu mandirs as well as Sikh gurudwaras, the nursery evoked a sense of a sacred place and she described her first impressions as follows:

> When I go the atmosphere it's really good. *Pehla ta safaaee bahut hai, jistara asee gurudwara mandir jaanday, jutti chuk ke baahur jande*… ['Firstly, there's a lot of cleanliness, it's like, when we go to the gurudwara or mandir, we take off our shoes and go in']. So it means it is a Guru *da ghar* ['a house of the Guru']. When you remove your shoes and you can go inside, it's very neat and clean. The plus point is this, the main, important thing I am talking about. You know, the Gurbani, you know, every time *rab da naam chalda* ['the name of God is being played/chanted'], every time. I think that's brilliant. *Kio ke, shaant atmosphere, jis ghar naam hounda, os ghar vich kaafi sukh shaanti…*[Because, a calm atmosphere, in whichever house there is the reverberation of *naam* (rememberance of the divine), in such a house there is peace and calm…']…and that's, we liked it.

Homeliness was also generated by feelings that the members of staff in the nursery were like parents or family to the children, and treated them as they would treat members of their own family. One mother remarked on how, with the various pressures of day to day life, the nursery has been more of a 'parent' to her son than she felt she had been able to be. Parents also echoed the talk of children, addressing staff as 'Masi ji' [maternal aunt] and '*Mama ji*' [maternal uncle], creating, linguistically, a world where the nursery practitioners are seen as an extension of their family. This is expressed as an almost seamless transition by one couple, as they described the daily ritual of dropping their son at nursery:

> Father: [My son at nursery] now, he just goes "Dada!' [gestures his son waving goodbye to him as father] "Masi!" [gestures his son greeting a nursery practitioner, as an aunty]
>
> Mother: Which is good!
>
> Father: "Masi ji; Mama, Mama, Mama, Masi!" He says that.
>
> Mother: So, that's really relaxing for us to know that he is, yeah... Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, he didn't cry!" and I get upset. "He doesn't need me!" But, it's a nice feeling to know that he is comfortable."

One grandmother explained that the presence of Bhai Sahib (often addressed in a more familiar way by the children as Baba Ji) as a parental figure also helped the children to feel secure:

> *Baba Ji* keeps a graceful eye on the place, whenever they have a chance, they pay a visit to the nursery. That has an influence on the children. Children have the feeling that their parents are with them. He has become like a parent-figure.' [translated from Punjabi]

The term of reference used here, *Baba Ji*, has a range of both homely and religious connotations, evoking a wise, loving and authoritative presence. In everyday language, it can be used to refer to, or address, a grandfather, or wise elder [alongside *Bibi Ji*, for a grandmotherly figure]. The scripture revered as Guru, whose 'residence' is the gurudwara

across the road, is also referred to as *Baba Ji,* on occasion; so too are the human Gurus, who founded the Sikh faith. In the everyday world of the Nishkam campus, *Baba Ji* is also the more informal and affectionate term of address for Bhai Sahib. One parent explained how the phrase '*Baba Ji's* nursery' helped her child understand where he was going, when he first started the Nishkam nursery: 'Now it's, ever since, a month after he started..."Oh, I want to go to *Baba Ji*'s nursery, I want to go to *Baba Ji*'s nursery!"'.

12.3.1 *Practices creating* and sustaining the 'sense of place'

Practices which created and sustained the nursery's 'sense of place' were often described or alluded to by the parents, including practices such as the creation of its clean, comfortable, homely environment and its loving and calm atmosphere. One grandmother summed up in a few words how staff practices helped to generate the caring character of the nursery: '*bol bani* nice *hai, bachiaa nou balounde pyaar naal'* [their way of speaking is nice, they address the children with love]. She also noted, in Punjabi, how cleanliness is stressed in the nursery, remarking on how the staff routinely wash their hands, echoing the etiquette of doing *sewa* at the gurudwara across the road.

One mother revealed as appreciation of the 'mode, the feeling' that nursery offers as a daily experience for her son. She also contrasted the positive nursery practices with negative ones in imagined institutions:

> The only reason I sent him to the nursery is because of…how it is… Like when you enter, and you take your child in, you don't hear children screaming in corridors or teachers shouting at the children. It's just like calmness, and it's brilliant.

This mother was keen to convey the welcoming atmosphere of the nursery by describing everyday conversations with the staff when she drops her son off:

> When I go to drop A off, I'm welcomed as well. They welcome me, like, "Hello," and "Sat Sri Akal!"… It's not like [style switching in a manner that conveys a disinterested voice], "Oh, A's here. Hi, you OK?" and done, you know.

In contrast to this, another couple suggested that the 'meeting and greeting' role of practitioners needed to be consistent and more professional, across all staff and with all parents.

12.3.2. **The value of a 'space in-between'**

For many parents, the nursery was particularly valued, not only for the comfort and security exuded by its homeliness, but also for the continuity of learning and development it enabled between home and school environments in the early years. This included developing attitudes and behaviour as well as knowledge of linguistic, cultural and religious heritage. Evidently, the nursery was seen to both encourage and reinforce parental efforts at home.

One mother talked of her attempts to speak Punjabi at home. However limited her attempts, because of the nursery, she says, 'I feel that there is somebody to continue it with him.' Another mother drew attention to their lack of ability, as parents, to enthuse children to learn Punjabi or to recite or sing scripture, and of how the nursery environment had enabled this learning to happen with relative ease:

> Because, we tried to teach [my son] Punj[abi] – sorry – his *paath* [recitation of Gurbani] at home, and he wouldn't pick it up and learn from us, whereas, from the nursery, he picked up his *paath* straight away. And that was, you know, quite a strong point. And also, you know, he does *kirtan* at the nursery now.... I think it's hard to teach a child of that age at home, and I think the nursery is bringing that through.

One mother said that she felt that she had a duty to pass on knowledge of heritage, and highlighted the value of support provided by the nursery in this regard:

If anyone was to ask me why are you sending him to this nursery, I would give them the reasons, i.e. it's the atmosphere; it's a Sikh nursery. I would like him to grow up to learn who we are, where did the Sikhs come from, how they were created... He's not going to get that from a day nursery in Great Barr! There is no way he was going to get it. *Jio jio vade hounde bache* [as children get progressively older], you know, it's the day and age now, do we get a chance? It's down to us parents to sit down and teach our kids. We don't see, we don't do that, do we now?

Similar concerns provided an incentive for one couple to enrol their child at the nursery:

Father: And I thought, you know, he could learn quite a few things here that he would not be able to learn at home quickly enough… Like, for example, eating the *roti* here… set meals, sitting down.

Mother: The language as well!

Father: The language. Like, my older son can't talk Punjabi, he doesn't understand it, because we hardly talk at home anyway. And, like, [my son at nursery] has picked it up.

12.4. Perceptions of teaching and learning and 'how' to be at the nursery: practices around dispositions and 'how' to be

Parent revealed a range of understandings about teaching and learning at the nursery. Most had not had the chance to observe teaching and learning events, hence they were reporting their perceptions, based on regular visits to drop off and collect their child, impressions generated from their child's talk about nursery life, as well as existing insights into the cultural and religious character of the nursery from their own Sikh or South Asian backgrounds.

'Dispositions' is a word which has embedded itself in practitioner talk and planning at the nursery, following on from the framework of the 24 spiritual and moral dispositions of Birmingham's current agreed syllabus for RE. At the time when I was interviewing parents, it was not part of the discourse they employed in describing the values, attitudes, inclinations, habits and behaviours which form a focal point in teaching and learning at the

nursery (although, with time, the parents were introduced to the terminology, with the launch of a newsletter for parents in September 2010). Nevertheless, the concept of 'disposition' was a dominant theme in the parent interviews as they conveyed their perceptions of the kind of teaching and learning taking place in the nursery and talked about their children's ongoing development. This came through in references to 'how' practitioners are with the children and reports of children's thinking, emotions, attitudes and behaviours, often observed at home.

12.4.1 The dispositions guiding practitioner practice and the perceived impact on children

One couple, cited earlier, for whom love and attention were the priority in their understanding of a child's needs, highlight the way this attention is given in the nursery, in terms of time (through having patience) and interactional space (through sustained one-to-one focus): 'I think they've got more patience and more time with the individual children, I think. That's what I pick up when I come to pick up Manraj'.

The ability of the practitioners to make children feel comfortable and to built their confidence was commended by one mother, as she talked about her son's transition from the toddler room, with female practitioners, to the preschool room with a male practitioner. She recalled a conversation with the new lead practitioners and explained her son's journey through the change:

> He said to me when [my son] first came upstairs into his classroom, his primary thoughts were to have him comfortable, build up his confidence and that would be a positive framework he can have....I think because – as he calls him – *Mama Ji*, put the development in him, sort of, built his confidence up, built that relationship with him, as a friend, as a teacher, that then, sort of, helped him to open up. And now he interacts really well with the children. Because he was comfortable downstairs, he had that atmosphere he was familiar with. And moving upstairs to a completely different teacher, and he'd been downstairs with females, and moving upstairs to a male

teacher, I think, it sort of knocked his confidence. But I think the way he handled him, I think, it worked wonders.

Having described the building of a relationship with the child (reinforced by the mention of *'Mama Ji'* and the notion of him being both teacher and friend) she concludes: 'It's mainly the rapport with a child, isn't it?'

Politeness and respect were also significant qualities highlighted by parents, along with the practitioner's capacity to build an interpersonal or 'relational' mode among the children. Examples given by parents revealed how this attitude is cultivated and reinforced communicatively, through social interaction. For example, one mother observes how the use of *'ji'* experienced by children at the nursery was carried on by them into the family home:

> Everything is with *ji*. And you can see that sort of reflects the way he is at home. He will say "sorry *ji*" if he's done something wrong...when he says "*ji*" you know that element has come through from the nursery, *hana* ['hasn't it']? And other things he will say "*ji*" with, *hana* ['isn't it']? And it's very polite, the mannerism that comes through, *hana* ['isn't it']?

Descriptions of nursery practices around food also revealed an appreciation of the attitudes and behaviours this dimension of nursery life encourages as well as the knowledge it builds:

> And I like how they do, like, different ethnic foods, and like the *roti*, and *deheen*, and how they sit together, how they do *paath* to start. I really love that. I think that is so nice...To learn, that's how you sit down, with *bhenjis* and *bhajis* (sisters and brothers) and that's how you sit down and eat.

Another couple stated that practices around food was one of the key dimensions of the nursery. In their eyes, these gave the child's nursery experience added value, alongside the relaxed atmosphere, patience and one-to-one interaction with children. Their child's growing independence and manners around food, as well as sense of responsibility, were

attributed to the practices of the nursery. When asked if they could talk about any 'light bulb moments', they had had when they felt the nursery was starting to make a real difference with their child, they both responded as follows:

> Father: Actually, it's just the basics, like actually getting [my son] to sit down and eat his *roti* and [getting] him to feed himself.

> Mother: Oh yeah!

> Father: Just things like that. Because, like the older one used to feed him with a spoon, 'Come on R, eat, eat, eat!' Especially his mother! 'Eat, eat, eat!'. With [the son at nursery]…

> Mother: He doesn't want to know.

> Father: "Leave me alone, I'll eat it myself." And when he's finished, he'll say, "Fish...Finished!" and that's it.

> Mother: And he picks his dishes up, doesn't he?

> Father: he'll pick a dish up and bring it into the kitchen. And, obviously, he's picked that all up from here.

> Mother: Manners.

There were differences of opinion among the parents about the impact of the nursery. One mother expressed the view that the nursery had not significantly impacted on her son's development:

> I mean, sharing, you know, not doing bad things, we teach our children anyway at home. I know they tell him here as well, because he does come home and tell me, "*Masi ji* says we mustn't push, *Masi ji* says we must not kick.' He will continuously repeat that. You know, if I'm going to be honest I don't think there has been a huge impact.

The main preoccupation for this mother was that the nursery had not fulfilled her expectation of building her son's linguistic ability in Punjabi. In all other ways, it was a good nursery which followed the best of mainstream practice whilst incorporating a Sikh heritage dimension. Her sense that it had not made a 'huge impact' can be partly attributed

to her perception that the added value she sought from it (as a bilingual nursery) had not materialised, as well as a feeling that the nursery had not made any unusually striking contribution to his development, over and above what one might expect from any other high quality nursery.

12.4.2. **Children's emerging dispositions and their impact in the home**

Some references to children's development were made without any direct references to nursery practice. The mother (mentioned earlier) who, in her first meeting with the nursery manager, described her child as 'very, very aggressive', with habits of swearing, pushing and biting other children, contrasted this with his behaviour in the weeks after starting his new nursery: 'He started saying sorry, he started saying thank you. He started saying please. Respectful words he started saying.'

Another mother, who had initial reservations about the nursery, summed up some of the benefits to her son's development as follows: 'his interpersonal skills are developing. His confidence as a young child is developing as well. His speech has developed, you know, quite well since he joined the nursery.'

The parent of another child made the following observation: 'I think he's started listening more, because he loves asking questions... I have seen him lately, and he will actually listen, very thoroughly, to what is being said.'

In describing the small strides her son has been taking in numeracy, this parent depicted his character as a learner: 'He's <u>really</u> enthusiastic. <u>Really</u> independent. So that's good.' Her

appreciation of the nursery as a whole during the interview suggested that it provided an environment which embraced, worked with and reinforced these attributes.

Things that children had said at home were often reported in parent interviews. This provided ample insights into children's enjoyment and enthusiasm for the nursery, as illustrated in the examples below:

'He will talk about his experience at the nursery in a positive way.'

'He loves his nursery, he always says, "Oh, I want to go nursery!" Because he loves his friends and everything and…*apne mame ji nu bohat* like *karda* [he likes his *Mama Ji* very much]!'

'And there are days where he has said, like, it will be a weekend, and he'll say, "Am I going to nursery today?" Which he would have never said before. So that is one important thing, that he is enjoying it.'

One striking theme recurred across all parent interviews and that was the phenomenon of prompting the adjustment of the habitual attitudes and practices of parents or siblings. This is revealed through the two following vignettes of home life recorded in the parent interviews:

If I raise my voice at home, which I feel I have to, like, if he's messing about – "Don't do that!" – but really loud, he doesn't, he doesn't like it. You know, that loudness. I think it's because it's so calm at the nursery and that's how he wants it to be at home.'
'And now, he teaches me. My son teaches me and my husband. If I'm a bit loud at home, sometimes, like, you know, "KP, you're not listening to me!" – and he comes and says to me, "Mum, can you be a bit slow and polite to me please?" And, you know, the credit goes to the nursery, doesn't it?

So, when Manraj says it, "*nehi ji*" - because he says that a lot to us, because I think everyone here says "*nehi ji*", don't do that, or something, so he says it at home. So [elder brother] will say it back to Manraj and Manraj is teaching Ravi [elder brother]…. This is what I was saying, so they're teaching us as well, which is really nice.

12. 5 Perceptions of teaching and learning at the nursery: the knowledge being acquired

12.5.1 Parental awareness of the nursery curriculum

Often, the word 'education' is used by parents to talk about the knowledge and skills that the children are acquiring through the formal (as opposed to 'hidden') curriculum. Thus, one mother recalled her reasoning for selecting the nursery and listed the kind of qualities it might bring out in her child, she starts by stressing: 'It wasn't the <u>education</u> I was really thinking of, to tell you the truth.' Her initial concern was to give her son an ideal foundation of qualities and capabilities that would enable him 'to pick up on education' and have 'the ability to actually study.'

Several parents were reassured that the nursery followed both the mainstream curriculum as well as familiarising children with a Sikh and South Asian heritage.

> Because everyone, like in this country, everyone has to more or less follow that [mainstream curriculum]. And then it would be strange if they didn't and [if] the other kids, like my nieces and nephews, spoke about that, and he didn't understand; "Hey, what are you on about?!". So, I think it's important to follow that, but also to have that [heritage knowledge]. That is one of the reasons why we chose this nursery, because it teaches about our own religion as well as everything, as normal preschool kids learn.

In the words of another parent, born and raised in India:

> If you are saying, regarding the day-to-day ingredients… *Oh, pichhla, apnaa India di vi yaad delanda vaa, te ethha da vi* learn *karanda* ['he is being reminded about his Indian heritage, and he is also learning about life here'] - so both the mixtures are together. So the kid's going to grow up…*Ethe rishde vi dasda..eh masi hai, eh mama ji hai, eddan*, you know? ['Here, they learn about family relationships…this is *masi,* this is *mama*, like that, you know'] So, *apne India de vi, matlab, jiddan, sanskaar bache'ch pende ne, apne India de vi. Te apne ethe de vi bache no vi pata lagda, parhai da.* ['So the child absorbs the ways and traditions of our Indian heritage, and the child can also learn about, be taught about, life here']

Thus, the general understanding was that children were receiving a good quality 'mainstream' education and at the same time benefitting from experiences and knowledge stemming from their distinct heritage.

Several parents made explicit reference to 'normal' features of nursery learning that their child was picking up:

Father: 'You know, he's picked up on his ABC'

Mother: 'Oh yes, and counting!'

At the same time, parents expressed their lack of awareness about the actual content of the nursery curriculum. This is partly because, in the first year, as the nursery was establishing itself, mechanisms to engage with the parents were limited (as I noted earlier, the parent newsletter and parent workshops were launched in the second year). One parents' evening had provided scope to introduce and update parents on the curriculum; although it was illuminating for many, one of the parents, amongst the six interviewees discussed here, indicated that it had not been as informative as she had hoped. This same parent was full of praise for the nursery, saying: 'I always try to find a fault with the nursery, but I can never find one. I think I love it here!'

Other parents indicated that, around the ages of 2-4, it is difficult for them to assess what learning has taken place in the nursery. The one father, whilst happy with his son's overall experience at the nursery, remarked as follows: 'I think it's too early to say, to be honest, to say that's what he has learnt and stuff like that. Only time will tell.'

Another father indicated that, in time to come, he would be interested to know about the curriculum content in more detail:

> Well, I don't know what they do with the older kids. So if [my son] is to stay for a few more years longer, you know, I'd actually like to know what he is learning. You know, they've got the [preschool and reception] rooms here [where the interview took place, on the top floor of the nursery], but downstairs [location of the toddler room, where his son is] I think it's perfect.

12.5.2. Complementing parental capacity to provide heritage education

One point reiterated by parents was the nursery's success in enabling and enthusing children to build knowledge of their heritage in ways that had not been possible at home. The learning of *paath* (prayers from Sikh scripture) was repeatedly celebrated by parents as a key achievement. I did not probe the significance of *paath* to parents during the interviews, but reflected on my own valuing of *paath* in the nursery as a parent and my own appreciation of my child's ability to recite it with interest, enthusiasm, clarity and confidence, with a sense of ownership rather than compulsion. The appreciation is multifaceted – the sense of enabling a child to connect to a whole linguistic, social, historical, cultural and religious world as well as to a body of spiritual teachings.

> Because I tried to teach DP Punja[bi] – sorry, his *paath*, at home, and he wouldn't pick it up and learn from us. Whereas, from the nursery, he picked up his *paath* straight away. And that was, you know, quite a strong point. And also, you know, he does *kirtan* at nursery now. I mean, we often tried to teach him to do his *paaath* before having *parshada* [meal] at home. And he'd just ignore it and laugh at us. But now, since he's been to the nursery he will come home, and before we eat, he'll say… if anybody starts he will stop them and say, "Let's do *paath*." Nobody else is allowed to do the *paath* except for him.

Some parents picked up on the role of practices around food in the nursery in building the children's knowledge - being introduced to different types of food, different names and different flavours as well as familiarising children with linguistic and scriptural knowledge through *paath* or prayer:

He knows what *roti* is, he knows what *chaul* (rice) is, he knows what *dhal* (lentil curry) is, he knows what *karah parshaad* is (sweet mixture served at gurudwara) and he knows *oorha, airhaa* (first letters of the Punjabi alphabet) as well. So I'm very happy.

12.5.3 Achievements and limitations as a bilingual nursery

Most parents were happy with children's learning of Punjabi alongside English at the nursery, noting, as shown below, the words their children were now able to say. :

So he can describe in Hindi/Punjabi, he can describe in English as well. So, the names of colours, he knows. He can say red, blue and yellow, green. He'll say *laal* and *haraa, gulabi* and *neela*. So he is learning both languages. So I'm very happy with that.

This mother was alluding to the fact that South Asian language provision was flexible at the nursery, with the inclusion of Hindi as appropriate (a practice confirmed by classroom observations). In the case of this particular mother, the language practices of the nursery resonated with those of her home. Parental delight in children's ability to count in Punjabi, say names of colours, types of food, days of the week, as well as recite *paath*, featured throughout most interviews. However, one parent (already referred to above) stood out in suggesting that proficiency in spoken Punjabi was not being nurtured according to her expectations. She expressed a clear disappointment with the provision. When I asked her about the ways in which she saw a Sikh dimension to the curriculum, she responds:

It's difficult for me to understand that at this moment. You know why? Because my other hope was, if he started this nursery, that he will pick up on his lingo as well, his mother tongue*, apni Punjabi bolee* [our Punjabi language].

Once more, when I asked her in a more abstract way about the key ingredients of an ideal childhood for her son, she returned to the theme of language:

It's the language more so. Other than that I am happy with how he is now. I mean he is, he is learning every day. It's just the Punjabi. It's - to some parents it may not be an issue, for some it is. To me everything else is spot on apart from, I think they focus more on English than Punjabi… From our parent focus, right, they publicised it as a very Punjabi nursery, a Sikh nursery, but it would be really nice if, *je ehna ne Punjabi* lingo *de vich vi focus kita hunda* [if only they had focused on having the Punjabi ('lingo') language also].

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She put forward a view that, since her child is going to pick up English anyway, greater attention needs to be given to building proficiency in Punjabi:

Kitthe enhan nu English aai jandi hai jade [they will keep picking up English quickly], right? Right, they improve their English everyday, because he comes out with new words, nearly every day. It's a shame because I have witnessed… I know it's not their duty to teach them Punjabi, and you know why should we make them teach them Punjabi, but I would prefer them doing complete 50 -50.

She noted how her husband too had humorously questioned whether his son had learned any Punjabi beyond the Khalsa greeting. She goes on to observe that her son has picked up this more complex greeting very well, suggesting that children's capabilities and sophistication in terms of language learning should not be underestimated:

All the children have. Yeah? So if they can understand <u>why</u> they have to say that, <u>at what point</u> they have to say that, they could pick up a lot of other Punjabi lingo, *ma boli apni* [their mother tongue'…Kids understand, all the children understand Punjabi; *bolan te hai* [it's down to the speaking of it.]'

When I probed further to find out why this mother felt Punjabi was important, her response encompassed qualities associated with speaking it; the connection and understanding it builds with elders; it's key role in helping one to understand the Sikh faith:

Respect. Understanding your elders, especially *apne siaanhe* [our elders]… OK, they [the nursery] are teaching Sikhism as well. Faith is a very huge thing for the Nishkam Nursery, *so apni boli kithhe gei*? [so, where has the language element gone?]

The views of this mother are quoted extensively here, because they introduce a range of issues concerning how one might go about conceiving and cultivating children's bilingualism in nursery and school settings. They raise questions about capacity, resources, or intention even to promote language proficiency beyond a more symbolic association with language resources associated with one's heritage, or beyond aims to engender dispositions through translingual communicative practice, as I had noted during my fieldwork.

12.5.4 Notions of holistic learning and development

For the parents interviewed, the development of the child as a whole, in the early years especially, was an obvious concern, hence their talk about qualities, behaviours, personal and social skills, as well as knowledge acquisition, and hence their stress on the importance of the environment, atmosphere and relationships surrounding their child.

At the same time, other notions of holistic learning emerged through the interviews, through the connections and continua established in the nursery – between home and school, between heritage and contemporary life in the UK, between national frameworks and locally generated visions and practices. One father's summary remark about the nursery was quite telling in this regard: 'We liked that, we liked the idea, the <u>whole concept</u> of the nursery as it is' [*my emphasis*].

One mother characterised the nursery as one resource to support a number of aspects of her son's development, particularly those relating to personal development and heritage education. She saw it as her own, overall responsibility to ensure that the nursery experience was combined with others to ensure a socially holistic upbringing. She noted that it was the duty of parents: "To take them to museums, you know, take them to theatres, you know. So, you know, your child is getting a development in every aspect and not just… just his Sikhi side. He needs to develop as a child as a whole".

12.6 An emerging and ongoing commitment to the nursery

The questions I asked in each parent interview were designed to build a picture of motivations and reservations around the decision their child at the Nishkam Nursery. At

the time of interview, the children of these parents had experienced at least one, if not two, school terms at the nursery. I ended the interview by exploring what had motivated them to stay, asking them to describe the kind of challenges they had faced in a social climate which, I suggested, was generally weary of the establishment of new faith-based educational institutions.

One of the fathers (quoted above) clearly had negative associations with religion, faith identity and faith communities. This stemmed from his own experiences growing up in Birmingham, both in gurudwara and school settings. However, on discovering the nursery and what is possible, he used words such as 'relaxed' and 'chilled' to describe the environment, reflecting an initially unexpected ease with the faith character of the nursery. He also talked about the changes he had witnessed over a generation, expressing admiration for the 'fantastic' *sewa* undertaken in this corner of Soho Road, referring to the 'positives' which had transformed it to a place 'of excellence now, of education.' This suggests that the evolution of the Sikh community, guided by Nishkam, was something he could relate to and appreciate. The contentment with the nursery shown by this father, along with the child's mother, indicated a willingness to continue with the provision.

Another couple who had, likewise, overcome their initial reservations, recounted the questions posed to them by family and friends:

> "Haven't you got any reservations about…you know, that your child is going to be segregated?" But we are not worried about that because he is not segregated, we do take him… I think it's more about a parent issue as well… I think you need to sort of develop your child and take him outdoors into other sort of cultures, into other societies and show him that we mix with everyone, not just our people.

Keenly aware of presumptions made by others, as well as their own initial doubts, this couple, in particular, felt that the inside story of the nursery needed to be told and widely shared:

> People see it as just a Sikh nursery, it's a single faith nursery. You know, it's similar to what our naïve views are about Muslim nurseries. Why have that, you know, all sorts of teaching that goes on inside, you know, the curriculum, the British curriculum they follow, as well as everything else they do inside… I think we need to, sort of, make the Nishkam nursery, sort of viewed, in all the dimensions that it is. Because there are loads of positives to the nursery.

One mother reported an assumption, made by her friends, that the nursery would be "too Indian-y, Indian-y, Indian-y", with the view that 'these faith nurseries are too much into only the Sikh side'. She continued with reference to her own reaction to the nursery, saying: 'after sending my son here, I know it's not.' She and her husband had one other concern and that was that their child could miss out on an 'English' education – the type British Asians, most former migrants and their descendants aspired to. She then revealed momentary doubts about the nursery, and she wondered if she should have sent her child to a private nursery with a good reputation in the city, saying that in such a place, his education would be 'absolutely brilliant'. She then countered thus by identifying elements from the Nishkam Nursery which have been of special value to her, by imagining what things would have been like had she not enrolled him there:

> But then we would have missed out on all of the other things, that I really, really wanted. Like the faith, like him doing the '*Sat Sri Akal*', '*Vaheguru ji ka khalsa*', *roti, dhal, deheen, daliaa, semviaa* [chapattis, lentils, yogurt, porridge, sweet vermicelli – all features of Punjabi cuisine). You know, his *paath*, his language, his speech. You know, understanding the actual pronunciation… There are so many things he wouldn't have got at a different, you know, public nursery. But the things that he would have got are overpowered by the things at the nursery. It's just, I think it's just come at the right time for my son.

The Sikh character of the nursery had presented a small but not insurmountable challenge for the Hindu mother, whose friends suggest a Sikh nursery might turn her son into a

'*paatthi*' – someone responsible for reciting scripture in the gurudwara. Whilst she was comfortable with her son's exposure to Sikh tradition and a shared Punjabi culture, she wanted to sustain and grow his knowledge of Hindu tradition. Making reference to the 'Christian prayers' many children have been exposed to in their 'mainstream' schooling, she indicated that she had no problem with, and indeed welcomed, the Sikh prayers featuring in day-to-day nursery practice. The nursery had evidently become a sanctuary for her as a parent during a difficult personal time, and her gratitude to the nursery for the care and balanced education offered had kept her as a firm supporter, who was planning for her son to continue through to the proposed Nishkam school.

The balance the nursery struck between a 'normal curriculum' and heritage education was important for one father, who suggested that the overall learning experience was, in a sense, more inclusive. Whilst it was important, 'to a certain degree, to continue with the norm,' he highlighted that 'in other schools or nurseries, <u>we</u> feel left out as well.' Earlier he voiced a concern that some educational settings inadvertently serve to 'push them [children] away' from their heritage. One detail alluded to in the same interview (a mention of chemotherapy) was that this man's son was undergoing long term medical treatment and had a physical disability. However, no issue was raised in the interview about the care and support he received for his special needs. Any talk of inclusion or exclusion centred on issues of nurturing and drawing on a child's connection to culture, faith and heritage. In a closing remark, the father talks about the importance of not excluding a child from mainstream culture, education and society: "Yeah, you don't want them to be excluded, to think that they don't understand <u>that</u>. Whereas, we have seen that, and we have seen that side, and we are mature enough to identify what you want out of life".

Here, I interpreted his words as meaning that dominant exposure to the mainstream can also prompt one to think about the purposes and goals one creates for one's life, which evolve as one matures. The phase 'what you want out of life' points to ideas about what one would 'want out of' education. I drew from the interview that this father had found in the ingredients of nursery the holistic and balanced education, a discovery which had secured his ongoing commitment.

12.7 **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I organised my analysis of six parent interview transcripts around six different subheadings. These were based on key themes which emerged as parents reflected on their choice of the new nursery facility and experiences of it, as well as the role they saw it playing in the wider context of their lives. The subheadings were as follows: 12.1) Selecting the Nishkam nursery: initial motivations and reservations; 12.2) Ideas about raising children: what parents wanted most for their child; 12.3) The creation of a 'place' from a 'space'; parental valuing of the nursery environment; 12.4) Parental perceptions of teaching and learning: practices around dispositions and 'how' to be; 12.5) Parental perceptions of teaching and learning: the knowledge being acquired; 12.6) An emerging and on-going commitment to the nursery.

The first section was the most lengthy since the parents had made reference to a broad range of factors motivating, or cautioning, their decision to enrol their child. In 12.1.1, *Negative experiences of previous nurseries*, I collated references parents made to their dismay at standards of day care provision which they had unfortunately encountered elsewhere (e.g. an uninviting atmosphere, accepted norms of poor behaviour, lack of cleanliness or of attentiveness to their child's basic care needs). In 12.1.2, *Practical convenience*, I noted how, for some parents, the nursery's local accessibility made it a convenient choice, as well

as its proximity to the gurudwara (routinely visited by family members able to assist with the school run). In 12.1.3, *The nursery environment and atmosphere*, I noted parents' first impressions of the nursery as a 'new', 'clean', 'calm' and 'posh'-looking establishment which made it an attractive choice.

A significant motivating factor for all parents was outlined in 12.1.4, *The balancing of quality mainstream provision with heritage-based nurture*. A key bonus for them was the nursery's combined offer of a nationally set 'normal high standard curriculum' with scope to provide children with early life exposure to facets of their families' linguistic, cultural and religious heritage. Both forms of learning were construed by these parents as an educational entitlement, whatever paths, as they pointed out, their children might choose to take in later life. A shared view that the nursery was ideally positioned to fill gaps in their own parental capacities to provide heritage-based nurture (in their more time-pressured, resource-poor, nuclear-family home contexts), as well as to create a social atmosphere where children comfortable and valued, was discussed in 12.1.5 - *Perceiving the nursery as an extended family and extension of home*.   I then discussed *Parental life conditions*, in 12.1.6. This section highlighted how, for some parents, the opening of the Nishkam nursery helped them to resolve a troubling or distressing life predicament, e.g. one Hindu Punjabi mother, recently settled in the UK from Germany, who felt stuck between a very distressing experience of using one local nursery and her inability to leave a job and lose an essential income to care for her child, or to call on extended family assistance since they were all overseas.

Confidence in the Nishkam 'brand', introduced in 12.1.7, was a sentiment expressed by some parents familiar with the work of the wider organisation behind the nursery. Whilst

some knew it from distance and others were more closely aligned to its activities, they considered it to have built a track record of positive impact in the area over recent years. I closed this section by highlighting, in 12.1.8, *Reservations about segregating children and the nursery's faith character*. Whilst the nursery had an open admissions policy, its initial cohort of children were exclusively of South Asian and, mostly Sikh Punjabi, descent and its association with the nearby gurudwara raised conjecture, by parents themselves or their friends and relatives, about the possible narrow focus of its provision. This had prompted one British-born Sikh couple to enrol their child for a trial period only.

In 12.2, I brought together parental responses to questions I posed on the theme of *Ideas about raising children: what parents wanted most for their child*. Through this I tried to glean what parents (leaving aside their thoughts about the nursery itself and thinking more specifically about their child) felt were the most important ingredients to ideally provide in early childhood. This line of questioning echoed one exercise undertaken with the group of mothers in an early phase of nursery project, to generate a guiding vision. The parents I interviewed identified these ingredients as including 'the simple things', such as 'love and 'attention'; 'enjoyment' as a basis to learn well; developing a moral sensibility to know 'right from wrong'; being 'confident' as a learner. One mother noted as linked to feeling comfortable, knowledgeable and 'not shy' about any markers of cultural or religious identity (e.g. about, in her son's case, the cloth '*keski'* covering his topknot*,* or what she referred to as other 'Indian things'*).* This parent admitted that, more than being concerned about her son's formal education when she enrolled him, she had prioritised the goal of making him a 'strong person, loving, nice' and wanting such qualities to 'shine out of him'.

Section 12.3 was entitled *The creation of a 'place' from a 'space'; parental valuing of the nursery environment*. I discussed here parental appreciation of practices which created sense of 'place' (12.3.1) in the social environment of the nursery e.g. through patterns addressing one another using Punjabi kinship terms. One couple illustrated how they valued the nursery as a space in-between (12.3.2) which allowed for an almost seamless transition between home and school. They described how their son, during morning drop-off, would said goodbye to 'Dada!' (his father) in one moment, then immediately turn to enthusiastically greet 'Masi!' (his nursery carer). Another mother identified some of the nursery practices (removing shoes, emphasising cleanliness, playing devotional music, creating a sense of '*shaanti*' or peace and calm) with those of a '*Guru ghar*' ('house of the Guru', i.e. gurudwara). One grandmother present in one of the parent interviews suggested children saw Bhai Sahib as a parental figure, during his intermittent visits as the nursery patron, and this for her was another way a sense of home was being felt by the children. I also noted one telling bilingual remark she made, about how 'nice' she found the '*bol bani*' in the nursery, i.e. ways of communicating in terms of how words were spoken ('*bol*') and what was being uttered or conveyed ('*bani*').

In the next two sections I examined *Parental perceptions of teaching and learning*. I split this into two areas of focus being outlined in the parent interviews. The first concerned '*practices around dispositions and 'how' to be* (12.4) and the second concerned '*the knowledge being acquired*' (12.5). Although the word 'dispositions' was not itself a part of parents' discourse, their recognition of the nursery's role in fostering particular values, attitudes, habits and behaviours was a dominant theme in the interviews. From what they made out of nursery life, they identified dispositions guiding the practitioner practice which seemed to be having an impact on the children (12.4.1). These dispositions included:

'patience'; making children 'comfortable'; building there 'confidence'; practitioner ability to build 'rapport with a child' (aided by the use of kinship terms). Some nursery practices, parents remarked, had filtered into their family lives at home, e.g. through their child's increasing usage of the respect marker '*ji*' in conversation and show of general politeness and respect. Nurseries are often accorded with fostering good mealtime habits and parents noted how children had become more able, independent and responsible in their management of mealtime at home. Two parents gave credit the nursery for its fostering of positive 'mannerisms' and 'manners'. For one parent, however, the nursery had not made a 'huge impact' outside of average expectations. Her main preoccupation was the nursery's shortcomings as a bilingual provider.

In section 12.5 I elaborated on ideas introduced in 12.1.4 about parental valuing of the two streams of 'knowledge being acquired' by their children, i.e. that rooted in mainstream early education (discussed in 12.5.1) and that oriented towards their Sikh Punjabi heritage (discussed in 12.5.2 and 12.5.3). I noted how all parents wanted to provide their children with a 'normal' preschool education, remarking it would be 'strange' if they didn't, although they felt, at the time, that more could be done to inform them about the curriculum. I then brought together parental observations concerning their child's acquisition of heritage-based knowledge. They saw this occurring in the nursery setting with degrees of enthusiasm they were themselves unable to elicit from their children through their own parental efforts at home. I noted obvious parental delight at their child's confident use of Punjabi at home to name colours, for example, or types of food, to recite prayers or the letters of the Punjabi alphabet. For the mother who was clearly disappointed at the nursery's bilingual provision (12.5.3), nursery practices did not go far enough beyond Punjabi naming and greeting routines. I finished this section (in 12.5.4) by noting parental valuing of the multifaceted,

'whole concept' of the nursery and parental focus on helping their child to 'develop as a whole' (by viewing the nursery as of several local resources, such as museums and theatres, to be drawn upon to foster a rounded upbringing).

I finished this chapter, in 12.6, by identifying factors which were strengthening '*An emerging and ongoing commitment to the nursery*' for these six parents by the end of the nursery's first year. A father who had been wary of the nursery's faith-based character had found it unexpectedly 'relaxed' and 'homely' which he saw as creating a good atmosphere for learning. The couple wary about segregating their child commented on the nursery's positive impact on his development and underlined their own parental responsibilities to broaden his social experience outside of school. The Hindu mother (grateful for how the new nursery had helped her resolve a distressing personal situation), compared her acceptance of her son's exposure to Sikh prayers with that of Christian prayers in other school settings. One father summarised how the nursery fulfilled for him a need 'to continue with the norm' by accessing mainstream education and not be 'excluded from that', without alienating children from knowledge involving their family heritage. As a child of first-generation Punjabi migrants, aware of the opportunities and limits of mainstream education to address his own needs, he talked of being able to take stock and reach a stage of being 'mature enough to identify what you want out of life' and so to identify, as I understood it, what one would want out of education.

This chapter brings the four analysis chapters to a close. I will now return to my three research questions and discuss my findings in Part E and the concluding chapter of this thesis.

PART E: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 13:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter (in 13.1 – 13.3), I will return to the three research questions that I presented in Chapter 1, and I will provide a response to each of them, in the light of my analysis and my readings of the interdisciplinary literature. The discussion underscores the ways in which this study, guided by the three orienting theories I outlined in 2.3, has involved taking both a wide-angled and close-up view of the structuring contexts and agentive practices which came into play in the creation of the first Nishkam nursery, at a particular juncture of local and global conditions during the early years of the 21st century. I will go on to consider some of the constraints on the study (13.4) and I will finish by making recommendations for future research (13.5).

13.1   Responding to research question 1

'What blend of ideas and values were guiding the process of creating the nursery?'

13.1.1 Linguistic, cultural and perspectival criss-crossing and blending

Following from the iceberg analogy referred to at the end of 8.5, the body of ideas and values guiding the nursery's creation can be seen as submerged beneath, and carried into the visible surface of its day-to-day world. Through the analysis I presented in Chapters 9 – 12, I revealed how these ideas and values arose out of people's intergenerational and transcontinental life experiences and their sources of knowledge, motivation and direction, located in their shared Sikh/Punjabi heritage and contrasting societal life contexts.   This

meant that they readily used English terms in common currency, ranging from civic/secular notions of 'social cohesion' or 'active citizenship' to those with a religious character, such as 'work is worship' (9.4).

At the same time, Sikh concepts entered the mix through terms such as *dharam* or *sewa*, with touches of verses from *Gurbani* which, being lyrical and often orally transmitted over the generations, added an evocative dimension to the discursive processes of theory-building. Thoughts and sentiments from participants' Sikh/Punjabi lifeworlds could be regarded as subliminally present, even as standard English terms were employed and were consequently imbued with new meanings (9.4), reflecting what Mandair (2011) describes as 'a hybrid conceptuality where European and Asian terms mutually affect and transform each other' (6.2.2). Likewise, Bhai Sahib saw possibilities for '*resonance*' between ideas and for the non-verbal language of '*value-led*' practices to '*percolate*', '*permeate*' and emit '*fragrance*' across boundaries (9.5.4). The phases of project development for the nursery within the centre for civic engagement and adjacent gurudwara , and its eventual location opposite these two sites, reflects the blending of civic and Sikh dharmic ideas and values that were involved in its creation.

13.1.2 Multilayered notions of citizenship to make and shape social provision

The participants in this study drew attention to their overlapping identities as British (colonial and UK-based) citizens, minority citizens, active citizens, local/global citizens and secular/spiritual citizens. Bhai Sahib made a particularly apt comment on this. As he reflected on the link between notions of residency, rights and responsibilities, he suggested that Sikhs had a 'triple allegiance', as residents of their respective nations, global inhabitants and inheritors of the Sikh *dharam.* Through their diverse histories of migration, this 'triple

allegiance' had clearly been a shared resource for several of the participants as they had engaged in 'remooring' or 'anchoring' their lives, across space and time. It has also made it possible to assume an 'ensemble of different forms of belonging' (Isin & Wood 1999: 21) (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.4).

In particular, the overlapping identities of those leading the nursery project had been the source of the multi-layered meanings and motivations underlying their vision of and commitment to mobilising '*grassroots community participation*' and working with society's '*guiding institutions*'. This finding resonates with the argument that, in an age of increased localisation and globalisation, greater participation by citizens and accountability and responsiveness from institutions can enable individuals and groups to be 'makers and shapers' rather than 'users and choosers' of social provisioning (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). Through the research process I also made a link between these terms and the idea that pioneering developments in Birmingham's globally influential past (introduced in Chapter 7) involved innovators who were both '*savants*' and '*fabricants*', bringing ideas and action productively together (Jones 2009: 70). A conciousness of the city's local history had been very much apparent in the nursery project. It had included conducting some his historical research on Handsworth, the conservation of local architectural heritage and recurring reference to drawing on Birmingham's 'Civic Gospel' (7.1) basing social action on a municipal sense of belonging.

Communitarian notions of citizenship which came into play in the nursery project reflect May's (1999: 11-41) argument that the universal concept of the individual citizen '*solely* as a political being' in relation to the state, overlooks people's embeddedness in social groups. Despite intellectual and political reticence about 'ghettoization' and 'essentialism',

mobilisation around group-based identities can, he argues, be positively transformative. Likewise, Hunter (2012) suggests that in the search for common values, instead of glossing over difference, such mobilisation helps to contribute to the distinctiveness of communities and traditions, where collective rituals and narratives giving continuity over time are grounded in history, memory and telos. Historically for Sikhs, distinctiveness and sovereignty have been valued alongside the active forging of common bonds across social divides (6.1.4). As emphasised by Singh, N-G.K. (2007: 33), attitudes of 'kinship' are reflected in the translingual nature of Gurbani. For Bhai Sahib, the notion of 'kinship' was reflected in what he saw as the less talked about French enlightenment ideal of 'fraternity'. It also introduced a sense of 'family', 'belonging' and 'interdependence' to the 'Big Society' initiative launched by central government in 2010, promoting civic participation.

Gaventa (2002) notes that group-based civic participation is challenged when people's voices and sense of self 'are derived from identities which are not recognised, respected or likely to be heard'. The move to work past a 'deficit model' of minority citizenship identity was evident in aspirations to excel whilst remaining humble (9.4.2), as per the Sikh maxim - *man neeva, mat uchi* - later inscribed on the Nishkam school crest (see appendix 6), as well as Bhai Sahib's observation that Sikhs as a minority had to earn rather than demand respect and that *'we can excel with the rich legacy we have'* (9.4). Migration, upheaval and the Sikhs' status as a minority meant that it was sometimes '*hit and miss*', as R. Singh put it, what understandings you could '*transport*' forward and what could be '*retained and adapted*' for new contexts. This explained new institutional moves to link '*heritage conservation*' with '*social innovation*'. Bhai Sahib also existentially framed the idea of '*legacy*' with references to the inevitable fact of everybody's mortality and to scriptural analogies about our temporary migration to this world (9.3.2.).

K. Kaur (9.2.4) had reinforced Bhai Sahib's stress on not being held back by attitudes of 'gloom and doom' or 'blame'. For R. Singh, familiar with earlier activism around minority rights, the concept of *dharam* suggested that: *'The starting point should be our responsibilities, not what we are owed by institutions or other people.'* The idea of rights then became linked to finding the means to *'create those structures, the institutions, the support mechanisms, for us to fulfil those responsibilities'* In this regard, 'participation' which enabled the nursery's creation was viewed both as a Sikh dharmic and British civic value. It was linked also to concepts of 'community' summarised by Smith (2001) associated with values of solidarity, reciprocity, commitment and trust, with notions of mobilising 'social capital' for 'social change' encouraged through people's concrete experiences of social networks and a sense of belonging (5.3.3.). People's participation in the nursery project likewise reflected the potential seen by Moss (2007) for early childhood provision to be a site for 'democratic and ethical practice', where individuals are invited to be more than passive consumers in a mass childcare 'market' (where Anglo-American educational discourses tend to exert a normalising power – see 13.2.2 below) (see also Dahlberg & Moss 2005).

13.1.3 **Engendering local processes for the 'global reimagining' of education**

The '*whole to part*' leadership principle - to be mindful of the larger contexts of one's endeavours - was reflected in the rippling out and in of the nursery project's horizons of concern. So too was the idea that to engender wider change involved working locally to '*become the change*', by taking practical initiative rather than stopping at '*rhetoric*' or, in R. Singh's words, of a '*candyfloss*' of good ideas.

The gaze of the nursery project creators was partly directed at reports concerning child wellbeing in local, national and international contexts. These identified low levels of child wellbeing in the UK (UNICEF 2007); a values climate resulting in social failure for British children (Layard & Dunn, 2009); long-term benefits of investment in early intervention through networks of good practice rather than overly top-down approaches (Allen 2011). Media articles on the value of grandparental input in early childhood and high rates of family breakdown in the UK were also gathered. These reports were seen to support the importance given in the project to fostering a loving, home-like environment in the early years, extending from womb which was regarded as the vital first site of early nurture. In early project documents produced by B. Kaur (9.5.2), suggestions were made for long term planning to support maternal and wider family wellbeing, and identify strategies to encourage attitudes better attuned to children in very different (extended-family, nuclear family or single-parent) home set ups involving different work shifts and routines. She identified challenges in the social realities of family life which the nursery could help address, be it for British-born Sikh parents or those more recently settled in the UK.

Reflected in B. Kaur's observations were ideas from a qualitative study (Ipsos Mori 2011) comparing child well-being in the UK, Spain and Sweden (5.2.1). It showed how family and societal values can be oriented to be more focused on children's nurture, following findings about the positive benefits of a culture of extended family support in Spain and of joint parental habits in Sweden to prioritise quality time with children, as compared with a more 'strained' UK parenting across all income brackets, and a more entrenched consumer culture. Ethnographic research by Gupta (2006) in urban nurseries in India generates a cultural framework of child-rearing values stemming from its Vedic heritage. From this work, it was possible to see the potential for less dominant frameworks (not recognised in

globalised, western-style practitioner training programmes) which can offer wider benefit beyond their own cultural contexts, by foregrounding children's sense of comfort or peace, or values such as respect, empathy, interdependence and cooperation.

Through the research I carried out with the makers and shapers of the Nishkam nursery project, I became keenly aware of the fact that any awareness of the rich pre-colonial educational culture in the Punjab, captured in Leitner's (1882) account, had been dwarfed by the unquestioning esteem many South Asians have given to an 'English' or 'British' education, as colonial subjects, as migrants arriving in the UK or as minority citizens. A 'whole to part' principle laid the basis for the nursery project to synthesise new knowledge for new contexts, rather than operating from an 'empire-strikes-back' agenda. Studies of educational history from other parts of the world also pointed to a 'global reimagining of schools' (Cottrell 2010), where the forces of globalization and the legacy of colonialism are acknowledged, and the validity of local, indigenous epistemologies and cultures is recognised (Cleghorn & Prochner 2010). Echoed here was Bhai Sahib's encouragement to evaluate historical gains and losses as a basis to imagine new futures and legacies (9.2.4). The dual focus on global and local was also reflected in R. Singh's analogy of the artist working at close-range with his or her art, to suggest how being '*insular*' yet '*open*' can be mutually enhancing (9.3.3).

In Chapter 4, section 4.2, I outlined how adoption and synthesis of educational approaches is not a new phenomenon in the context of transnational migration and has involved processes of knowledge-transfer concentrated across Europe and the United States. This resulted, for example, in the first Froebel-inspired, American kindergarten, which was established to serve German-speaking migrant families. Montessori's extended stay in

India and encounters with progressive educationalists like Tagore points to earlier exchanges of ideas between east and west (Day Ashley 2008). Ethnographic studies of preschools in three cultures (Tobin et al, 1989, 2009), and research by Gupta (2006), reveal the implicit cultural knowledge which adults bring into their work with children. The formal development and use of diverse cultural frameworks is now more common in the current global marketplace for early childhood care. It provides an increasingly significant alternative to the patterns of increased urbanisation, consumerism and the erosion of family- or community-based support systems.

May (1999) contrasts this interest in cultural frameworks with the postmodern focus on 'cultural fragments' (4.3.4), where the latter can potentially undermine group efforts to develop bodies of knowledge as a basis for transformative interaction, exchange and adaptation. Bhogal's (2014) view of Gurbani reflecting a 'pluriversal' exchange which 'tends towards interdependent networks' (contrasting notions of a kind of 'universalism' which 'tends towards totalitarianism') seems pertinent in this vision to enable cultural exchange in ideas (more so than commodities). Bhai Sahib and B. Kaur stressed the need for exchange between community/professional, religious/secular, commercial/third sector and other contrasting networks, to get past entrenched thinking in different camps and '*ignore nobody*'. Through this the nurture of children as a '*shared responsibility*' could be more fully recognised (9.5.3).

13.1.4 Converging perspectives on educational purpose and practice

Broadening life perspectives to help 'measure what we value'

In the envisioning process for the nursery, key bearings were marked by Bhai Sahib's pinpointing of questions arising within him as he looked back and sought to draw meaning

from life experience.   One such question, *'What have we gained, what have we lost, what should be perpetuated, and what is important in life?'* (9.5.2) resonated with Biesta's (2010: 12) emphasis on shifting educational attention to 'measuring what we value' beyond 'valuing what we measure' (4.3.5).   Another question (appearing in an article in the local Birmingham press and so directed at the general public) suggested to Bhai Sahib that an '*overarching*' educational vision should be measured by the '*two facts'* of human birth and death, so as to reframe ideas of what education ought to consist of '*in between'* (9.3.2).   The intention, as I saw it, was to stimulate processes of personal and societal '*soul searching'* (9.4.3) and reconstruct visions based on an increased global sense of '*interdependence*' (9.3.1) and '*shared responsibility'* (9.3.5; 9.5.3).

Values, dispositions & SMSC: practical nurture for new life contexts

Bhai Sahib's perspective echoed Dewey's (1915) view of education as a rebirthing of society with each successive generation (5.5).   For Bhai Sahib the '*richest treasure*' and '*legacy*' humans had to pass down was '*values*' (9.2.4) which were vital in an era of rapid growth of and access to knowledge, as well as powerful leveraging of it.   From his Sikh viewpoint, these '*values*' are qualities '*latent*' in all people, (strengthened as they transcend the pull of *haumai* or ego and become spiritually 'awakened') and so regarded as '*universal*'.   Work begun on a Sikh *dharmic* values framework offers new linguistic and cultural contributions to existing taxonomies of spiritual characteristics (see Best 1996) (5.2.2).   Educational legislation concerning SMSC and the locally agreed 'dispositions framework' for RE were thus seen to validate the vision for the nursery (5.2.3).   Given the significant ambivalence and reticence towards SMSC terminology, Peterson et al (2014) view its role afresh in contexts which are 'increasingly diverse and decreasingly deferential', as a 'catalyst' to enable 'deeper thinking' about educational purpose, and support the young

to 'live confidently' and 'adapt and thrive' in fast-paced and uncertain global contexts, as 'active, productive, responsible and participative citizens' (13.2.1). Damon (2014) further suggests that ideas which may otherwise be dismissed as 'lofty', 'grand' or 'ethereal' can be broken down into simple, everyday language and approaches to nurture, and we can examine the role of, meaning, purpose and attendant values, in children's lives.

Foregrounding the role of social environment

A key principle in the nursery project was that '*in order to bring the best out of individuals, we must first learn to become the kind of society we'd like to see*' (9.5.4), putting the onus on adults to embody traits they hoped to cultivate in children (9.5.4). Bhai Sahib had highlighted the social identity of values (*e.g. social forgiveness*) (9.3.4), and this was being strengthened through the '*accumulative effects*' of their practice. B. Kaur had emphasised cultivating '*habits and love*' in the pilot playgroup and transforming her previous '*text book*' approach to heritage transmission into one viewing heritage as a resource, providing '*tools*' for lifelong holistic development (9.4.5). Implicit here was the concept of 'dispositions' and of learning 'from' faith, and the foregrounding of Grimmitt's (1987) work on RE and human development (5.2.3) as particularly apt for the early years focus on young children's holistic development.

The EYFS principles of 'enabling environments' and 'positive relationships', like the SMSC requirement, strongly chimed with ideas in the nursery project. In the drafting of texts to express this vision, descriptions of learning '*goals*' were replaced by those of learning '*space*' and of '*what you might see*' (9.5.4). R. Singh's view that it was vital to provide the '*right environment…right atmosphere…right support*' for citizenship values to '*blossom*'. This echoed Lawy and Biesta's (2006) concept of 'citizenship-as-practice' (5.5) and

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Bhai Sahib's stress on environmental '*ambiance*' and '*fragrance*'. Using the Punjabi word '*apay*', B. Kaur described the aim of the nursery as being to create conditions for children to be self-motivated (9.5.4). This resonated with the interest in conative development in the Birmingham dispositions-based RE syllabus (5.2.3). Finally the concept of '*sangat*', or 'company', was often drawn on to consider learning and '*blessings*' engendered through co-presence with others.

Responding to the spiritual and cultural self of the child

The ideas about the social environment of the nursery espoused by those leading the project reflect Eaude's (2006) view that SMSC tends to prioritise learning processes, relationships, values and attitudes, breadth of curriculum, space for reflection and hard to assess outcomes (5.3.2). They also point to Osberg and Biesta's (2010: 604) alternative view of curriculum as 'a space of complex responsiveness' so as to create what Davis (2004: 184) describes as 'conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined'. This resonated with spiritual perspectives offered by Bhai Sahib about humans who arrive in the world with '*infinite potential*' and powers of '*agency*' and '*originality*'. In this vision, the early years are viewed an optimum time to strengthen innate attributes in children who, in narratives of Sikh and wider Indic traditions, are represented as transforming the narrow or delusory thinking of adults (9.5.3) and as inspiring respect for their capabilities.

In addition, in my interviews with the creators of the nursery and with the practitioners, it became clear that a young child arriving in the classroom was considered more than a self-contained individual comprising of body, mind and spirit. They were also viewed as being centred in the sociocultural contexts of family and community life. This view of the child has also been highlighted by Eaude (2006) and by Hazareesingh et al. (1989). It also ties in

with the work by Gonzalez et al. (2005) on 'funds of knowledge'. Moreover, Mayes et al. (2007: x-xi) take this view further, suggesting that cultural identity is seen as 'interwoven throughout' a child's 'entire being - physically, psychologically, cognitively, ethically and spiritually' and that learning may become 'deep and durable' when it is related to the wholeness of a child's life experience. Such starting points can be seen to echo the notion of curriculum as a 'space of complex responsiveness' (Osberg and Biesta 2010: 604) which I introduced in 4.3.5.

Ideas about education as a means to participate in and transform society

As highlighted in the initial interviews for this study, the general esteem given by South Asians to education, and to ideas of having a British education, with an admiration for private schooling, could be seen as reflected in the theme of 'excelling' (9.4.2). The purposes of education to 'qualify' and 'socialise' learners, inserting them as 'newcomers' into 'existing ways of doing and being' and preparing them to participate in different kinds of social order (Biesta 2010), can be seen as pertinent to minority group aspirations to settle and do well, in a national playing field, and in one that is increasingly globalised. As my study has shown, this local Nishkam nursery project was also envisaged as supporting children to participate in wider society.

Highlighting the risk that both education and religion can function as a 'technology' which aims topossess and control the student, Miedema and Biesta (2003: 94-5) also indicate their potential to be 'transformative', allowing for a 'holistic education' which is 'educating for life' and is at the same time 'humanizing' and 'spiritual'. This perhaps sums up the convergence of 'religious' and 'educational' ideas in the nursery project, involving a religious tradition which is itself conceived in terms of the practice of learning (Punjabi: *sikhna*) for transformative participation in the everyday world. Like the citizenship concepts

used to explain the nursery project as a civic participatory exercise, the EYFS ideas of a 'unique child; enabling environments; positive relationships; learning and development', took on new resonances as the nursery was envisioned, created and developed, linked to capacities, influences and possibilities considered less tangible or easy to measure.

13.2   Responding to research question 2

'How was the world of the nursery being configured and reconfigured in and through the day-to-day communicative and semiotic practices of those participating?'

Chapter 10 examined how the material, relational and curricular environment of the new nursery was created and how it configured a sense of home and local history, the world of school and wider society, as well as Sikh/Punjabi worlds. Chapter 11 examined the ongoing configuration of this world through vignettes of day-to-day interactional practice. This part of my analysis was inspired by research on 'figured worlds' (Urrieta 2007; Holland et al 1998) which highlights how culturally produced and socially organised worlds (involving roles, artefacts and activities) create contexts of meaning and significance as individuals come to 'figure' and reconfigure who they are through their participation within them.

In Chapters 10 and 11, I showed that day-to-day communicative practice accentuated and brought cultural variance to the sense of home that was materially conveyed through the physical features of the heritage conserved building. The nursery's place in a historically evolving local world was highlighted in a timeline framed inside the entrance. Also, as an extension of naturally occurring South Asian cultural practice, the use of fictive kinship terms in the nursery created a surrogate world of family, where practitioners were addressed as maternal aunts ('*Masi Ji*') and maternal uncles ('*Mama Ji*'). At the same time, nursery

children were encouraged to address each other as siblings (*bhenji*, 'sister', and *bhaji*, 'brother'), and opportunities were created for them to have multi-aged '*family time*' as well as time in age-categorised classrooms. In these ways, the sense of home was also linguistically and relationally configured in nursery life.

In these chapters, I also demonstrated that additional communicative strategies helped to create a home-like sense of '*warmth*' and of '*comfort*'. My interviews with practitioners confirmed that their aim was to have children '*who are feeling secure, feeling confident*' and who have '*a lot of self-esteem*', thus removing '*barriers*' to their learning. This aim was reflected in their communicative and pedagogic practices. In addition, through my analysis of audio-recorded data in Chapter 11, I was able to show that ample use of translanguaging using resources from English, Punjabi and occasionally Hindi, and also nuanced style-switching and changes of tone, characterised the verbal exchanges between adults and children, and that practitioners endeavoured to use a child's strongest language wherever possible to mediate the world of the nursery curriculum, and to be sensitive to individual needs and build relationships with the children. Particular classroom routines, such as the use of songs to teach Punjabi vocabulary, recitation of a mealtime prayer, bringing the children together to do *kirtan* (singing Sikh 'hymns') and frequent use of the Khalsa greeting (Chapter 10) reflected the practitioners' efforts to support children's cultural and religious identity formation.

At the same time, I showed in Chapters 10 and 11 that there were institutional, classroom and communicative practices which placed the nursery in the mainstream world of early years provision. A *Masi Ji* or *Mama Ji* also functioned as a 'key worker', a 'nursery manager' or 'deputy manager'. These institutional roles were highlighted to visiting

professionals (10.3.3) as well as to parents (Chapter 12) and their enactment was indexed where classic 'teacher talk' was intertwined other modes of communication to children (10.3). Mainstream practice was also reflected in nursery resources, safeguarding and other procedures, signage, communication to parents, planning and assessment paperwork and learning journey folders for children. Beyond the home-like base of the nursery, children virtually and geographically engaged with the wider societal world, through guided computer use and regular trips out in the neighbourhood and city.

The intention for nursery practice to foster 'values', 'dispositions', and 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' was indicated in a number of communicative strategies which reflected the emphasis on attributes embodied by adults. There was frequent use of the polite second person plural pronoun '*tusi*' to address the young, understood to reflect a caring and respectful regard for them in comparison with the second person singular '*tu*'. This was accompanied by the marker of respect '*ji*', used also to soften directives, e.g. by saying '*nehi ji*', likened to to a '*no thank you*' instead of a curt 'no'. Sometime '*nehi*' would be softened with use of '*puttar*' or - in shortened form, '*put*' - the endearing Punjabi word for 'child', i.e. '*nehi put*', 'no, my child.' Practitioners also viewed their non-verbal communication with the children as playing an important role: '*you don't need to shout at them, the children can understand you through your eyes, through your expressions*'.

The nursery's focus on '*dispositions*' taken from Birmingham's local syllabus for RE was seen to be '*interlinked*' and '*woven into*' (rather than '*separate*' or '*extra*' to) its planning around the national EYFS framework and closely linked to the aspect of 'personal, social and emotional development' (where 'dispositions' were referred to in the guidance. These ideas linked to Bhai Sahib's highlighting of Sikh dharmic concepts where communication

and learning are seen as taking place interactionally through *drisht* (gaze), the transference of *asis* or 'blessings' through human touch and *updesh*, the spoken word. The attention he directed to the '*intangible*' dimensions of teaching and learning also mirrors concepts expressed by Gupta (2006).

Thus, whilst facets of Sikh/Punjabi artefacts and practice in the nursery involved heritage transmission, staff talked about their dispositions-related role, e.g. the use of music to '*soothe*' babies at nap time; of attitudes of thankfulness and of sharing together associated with mealtime rituals; of the role of the Sikh faith-inspired artwork hanging in the nursery hallway to '*wake up so many hidden emotions*' and hopes that come with welcoming a new born child. Sikh/Punjabi practices were thus seen to enhance everyday curriculum practice and to help '*dissolve*' the practice of dispositions into the overall atmosphere or environment. I saw this as contrasting with more staged or exotic insertions of activities to evidence heritage (or 'multicultural') engagement in classroom life.

Just as daily patterns of nursery life were settling, the study showed how reconfigurations of the nursery world were taking place moment-to-moment (e.g. as staff alternatingly responded to children as teacher-figures and *Masi*-figures) and over longer stretches of time (e.g. the introduction of a western-style uniform, worn interchangeably with the traditional Punjabi one). In the midst of this, therefore, practitioners were configuring and reconfiguring who they were through the various roles, activities and communicative practices occuring within the nursery. How very young children were 'figuring out' and 'reconfiguring' who they were, as 'newcomers' (Biesta 2010, Lave & Wenger 1991) offers ideas for future study. For now, this study indicates how aspects of nursery life supported children and families both as a stepping stone to the wider social world and as a means of

achieving an *'anchoring'* to facets of their faith and cultural identities. It also suggests how moves to build connectivity between the two worlds can inspire other such approaches to advance the project vision of '*sarbat da bhalla*' or wider wellbeing in society.

13.3 Responding to research question 3

'Why did parents participate and how did they respond to the nursery project?'

13.3.1 *Motivations to register a child at the nursery*

Decisions to use the nursery were prompted by very different life circumstances. Parents were mainly British-born Punjabis, though two parent interviewees who had more recently moved to the UK from India and Europe. Some had little connection with the nearby gurudwara and found the nursery to be conveniently located in the neighbourhood. For one recently settled (Hindu Punjabi) mother the nursery had rescued her from a personal crisis. As I indicated in Chapter 12, she had been distressed at her son's increasingly aggressive and unsettled behaviour at a former nursery, she was unable to leave her job (and lose an essential income) to care for him and had no extended family members to offer help. In the Nishkam nursery she found a culturally-attuned support system and environment which quickly calmed and settled her child. In contrast, a British-born mother, who had planned to devotedly raise a long-awaited child in her nuclear family home-setting, saw the nursery as being '*like having some grandparents*' and '*like a light'*, providing family-like affection and heritage-based nurture which herself and her husband saw themselves as less equipped to provide. One UK-raised mother was specifically interested in finding a bilingual early learning environment, to strengthen her child's competency in Punjabi. Another saw the nursery as helping to make her son '*a strong person, loving, nice*' and for helping similar qualities '*to shine out of him.*'

Most parents also saw the nursery as '*high standard*' mainstream provision as well as heritage-learning provider, striking a rare balance they could not find elsewhere. They saw the physical environment as '*clean*', '*calm*', '*quite posh*', and reflecting a '*professional establishment*'. Some were attracted to nursery's home-like atmosphere. Trying to describe this one father explained '*it felt, not spiritual, it felt homely*' with '*nice chilled out music*' in the background, where he felt his son would '*be relaxed when he was here*' and so learn well. Another mother was taken by the atmosphere of '*sukh shanti*' ('bliss and peace') and practices (e.g removing shoes, attention to cleanliness) she associated with visiting a mandir or a gurudwara, or as she rephrased it '*Guru da ghar*' ('home of the Guru').

Recollections of their own upbringing, as children of first-generation settlers to the UK, also influenced parents' decision-making (linking to themes in Chapter 9). One nursery mother recalled her parents' poor English, lack of formal education and of ability to help her make sense of her Sikh Punjabi heritage. This echoed Bhai Sahib's observation regarding the difficulty that youngsters experienced at the time to '*reconcile*' the culturally contrasting worlds they were part of. Highlighting her own embarrassment at speaking Punjabi, she felt the nursery would help her child '*not to be shy*' of his Sikh identity and other '*Indian things*'. One father clearly had negative associations from the past with his religious identity, stemming from childhood experiences at a local school (where he was bullied) and at gurudwara (which he then associated with strictness and '*fear*'). He now found himself drawn to the unexpected ease of the nursery atmosphere, having initially been wary of its faith-based identity. Like some other parents who expressed being inspired by the 'Nishkam' brand due to knowledge of its recent developments, this father observed how he saw the gurudwara locale as being transformed to a '*place of excellence now, and*

education'. Another couple, regularly attendees at the nearby gurudwara, mentioned their initial reservations that '*your child is going to be segregated*' and told me that these concerns had been overcome by their experience of the nursery-in-action.

13.3.2 Parental responses to their child's experience o*f nursery life*

Parents reiterated how the nursery's family-like relationships enabled their children to feel 'comfortable' and build their 'confidence'. The effect of the nursery providing an almost seamless transition between home and school was summed up by the father who described the morning drop off routine, where his son said '*Dada!*' waving goodbye to him and '*Masi!*' as soon as he was welcomed by his nursery carer. Another parent commented as follows: '*It's mainly the rapport with the child, isn't it*?'

Most parents reported the speed and interest with which children picked up heritage-based knowledge and skills (e.g. linguistic, musical) at the nursery, as compared to their slower and less eager responses to parental efforts at home. They also reported how practices they recognised in nursery life seemed to be filtering into life at home, such as a polite usage of '*ji*' (e.g. '*nehi ji*' or '*sorry ji')*. Other effects parents suggested were: signs of increased independence and sense of responsibility (trying to put dishes away after mealtime); evidence of '*interpersonal skills*' and '*speech*' developing well; ability to '*actually listen, very thoroughly, to what is being said*'; being '*really enthusiastic*' and '*really independent*' in their learning; saying '*please*' and '*thank you*' more often; asking their parents, to be '*a bit slow and polite…please*' instead of shouting; their enjoyment and familiarity with Punjabi food and Punjabi words; expressing how they missed or wanted to go to the nursery.

As the interviews were conducted in the nursery's first year, parents who felt positively about the nursery environment overall remarked on the lack of detailed knowledge they had at the time of the curriculum. A clear disappointment for one mother was that the nursery was not more extensively bilingual, moving beyond daily uses of phrases, greetings, prayers or songs. This raised questions about the institutional capacity to build children's bilingual competency, over and above a more symbolic and clearly strategic (in terms of fostering dispositions) uses of Punjabi which characterised the nursery's early world.

13.3.2 Reasons for ongoing parental commitment

Parental perceptions about the generally positive impacts of nursery life resulted in their ongoing commitment to it despite initial reservations. Faced by concerns raised about social segregation from family and friends, parents noted how they were factoring the nursery as one of a number of city-wide resources (e.g. '*museums*', '*theatres*', the '*outdoors*') for their children's education and socialisation, to show them '*that we mix with everyone, not just our people*'. Echoing this, parents used the word '*whole*' in their interviews, to stress being mindful to '*develop a child as a whole*' with exposure to different resources and settings. An appreciation of the '*whole concept*' of the nursery was also expression, as a bridge between different worlds and a support to children's holistic development for the present and future contexts of their lives.

13.4   Constraints on the study

This study has examined the ideas and processes involved in creating the first Nishkam nursery and configuring its day-to-day world, as well as responses of early nursery parents to the provision. It has drawn on interdisciplinary perspectives from different fields of

research.   Because of the breadth of scope and the range of data collected, constraints on thesis length meant that guiding ideas and many aspects of the analysis had to be presented in condensed form. This entailed using brief rather than more extensive quotes and extracts, and brief reference to instances of discourse in Punjabi or *Gurbani.* My positioning as a fully participant observer brought a particular leaning to the study which rooted the phenomenon of the nursery's creation in the experiences and ideas of the project founders. This community-based project had involved different waves of people's participation and there are several individuals who contributed behind the scenes whom I did not interview or have but briefly referred to.

The positioning of any researcher inevitably limits the analysis in some ways and opens it up in other ways. This study reflects my own academic and life interests as well as involvements with the Nishkam group of organisations and Sikh heritage more generally. The broadening and deepening of my understanding about the phenomenon I was studying was a gradual processes, with periods, as I see it now, of obscured vision as well as moments of greater clarity and of making connections. This concluding chapter, for example, could have been further developed, following some later stages of writing to elaborate on the theoretical framing for this study (in Chapter 2) and to take account of the complex policy environment in which this study was located (in Chapter 5, section 5.1).

13.5   Recommendations for future research

The study opens up opportunities for future research in several thematic and disciplinary directions. This could include studies of day-to-day classroom life, across a now nascent network of Nishkam schools, looking more closely at the language and literacy practices of

the schools and classrooms, or at children's socialisation, agency and identify formation, particularly in relation to the dispositions-based ethos. The nursery project also presents further scope for translocal comparative research and for interpreting its creation in the context of wider perspectives and debates about national and global educational provisioning (including widely publicised political ones). In addition, the picture of historical processes and intergenerational experiences informing the nursery's creation can be further unpacked. The study also presents fresh opportunities to examine how concepts of education and human development are formed and communicated in *Gurbani*.

In these ways, I hope that the particularity of this case study may stimulate more valuable future work in areas such as early childhood studies, the history of education, Religious Education, citizenship- and SMSC-related studies, Sikh studies, as well as studies of civic and spiritual leadership and community mobilisation for social change. Finally, in a world which seems more complex and less predictable, I hope this study encourages further linguistic ethnographic research of contemporary social processes. This stands to offer holistic and nuanced approaches to sense-making - and to cohesion-building - in conditions of apparent fragmentation and flux.

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Note

For identifying extracts from Gurbani I referred mainly to *www.srigranth.org* – an online search tool for the contents of the Sikh sacred text, Sri Guru Granth Sahib.