

Welfare and Values in Europe:

Transitions related to Religion, Minorities and Gender

(WaVE)

England:

Overview of the national situation

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1. Introduction

A study of England has not only to take account of the religious mix and immigration history of the country, but also the current media and political climate. All of these factors can be seen to impact not only on public policy, but also on the commissioning of research. In addition it is paramount to draw attention from the very outset to the particular situation one finds oneself in when studying England. England is one of four national, or semi national components, with distinct legal systems, which make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The focus of this report is on the situation in England, but given the particular constitutional arrangements of the UK as a whole and the fact that many political decisions and welfare systems cover the whole of Britain, this report will occasionally refer to Britain, or sometimes even the UK, rather than England. This is to allow for accurate presentation of statistics or the research of others. This issue is a practical one, but also serves to highlight the major conceptual issues at the heart of this study. In attempting to sketch the situation with regard to religion, minorities and gender any study of England, must necessarily pay attention to the different degrees to which these countries within a country share political leadership and public service systems. In doing so it must recognise the impact that these overlapping boundaries can have on concepts of national belonging and touch on notions of citizenship, identity and multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism, as it has been practised in Britain, is based on the recognition of group rights rather than individual rights. This has meant, in contrast to the French case, that the focus has been on giving the right to make decisions to ethnic or religious groups, rather than individuals. One consequence of the implementation of this model, however, within the framework of a society also keen to protect individual rights has been the confinement of any discussion of cultural diversity to the private sphere. The logic behind this being that if allowances made to particular groups to decide over their individual members are kept within this sphere cultural considerations will not be able seriously to impinge on individual rights.. In practice, however, this model when implemented within the framework of a society already used to fluid national identities has led to the development of hybrid identities. A group within society, which would be defined in terms of its ethnicity or race by those outside the

community, may, for example, adopt the identity 'black British'. Here they are, Modood argues,

'not so much seeking civic rights against a hegemonic nationality as attempting to politically negotiate a place in an all-inclusive nationality' (Modood 1998, 389).

If this is true for groups that wish primarily to define themselves in terms of ethnicity it is no less true for religious identity (Ameli and Merali 2004; Statham et al 2005). Increasing calls for laws against religious discrimination and for cultural and religious practices to be taken into account by social and health services are examples of current challenges to the traditional system (Meen et al 2005; Grewal, Ini et al. 2004; Morgan 2003). The same situation can be observed in calls for recognition of inequalities in opportunity and care for minority groups in general, but with particular emphasis on the gender dimensions of such issues (Yuval Davis, Anthias and Kofman 2005). The question is how this system of multiculturalism, in a country, which also still retains an established church, can be adapted to meet the current challenges and what is relevant and possible in the current climate. Modood argues for a moderate secularism incorporating a pluralisation of the church-state connection (Modood 1998, 394) and this is one potential way forward. The question is whether current research provides an adequate basis for such conclusions.

Current political interest in the potential for community building, which faith communities and partnerships between government and voluntary bodies can have, means that there is currently a wealth of literature exploring the roles of religious groups at local level in community development and their social capital forming potential (Farnell et al 2003; Smith, K 2004; Furbey et al 2006). Government interest can be seen both in its publication of a major report *Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities* in 2004 (Home Office Faith Communities Unit, February 2004), and in the commissioning of a *Review of the Evidence Base on Faith Communities* (Beckford, James A. et al 2006) completed in 2006.

Where in many countries in Europe immigration is closely connected to the Muslim presence and the presence of religions other than Christianity is a fairly new phenomenon, England's situation is closely tied to the fact that all major world religions are represented in the country. This said, the current focus at an international level on the Muslim community

has not passed England by and has received increasing media, political and academic attention, not least since the events of 7 July 2005 (Abdul Bari 2005). In particular, one ongoing research project *Philanthropy for Social Justice in the British Muslim Societies*, which is studying the “charitable habits of British Muslims and the effects their giving has on aiding and promoting social justice”, is of interest in this context.ⁱ It is a rare example of a project, which seeks to connect the study of minority groups and values expressed in everyday life, in relation to the majority society. Its presence in the wealth of material that does exist serves to highlight the gap that exists at the intersection of the topics we focus on here.

1.1 New perspectives

Despite the wealth of research that is available on issues of minority groups, of religious identity and of gender, there are no studies currently available in England or indeed in Britain as a whole that have focused on the intersection of values relating to religion, minorities and gender. It is here that the current study can make a valuable contribution. Over and above this there are further gaps in current research that can be addressed by this study. Most research mentioned above and in the following report focuses on perceptions of minority groups from other people’s perspectives. Where it does address discrepancies between minority and majority perceptions of the minority group this is rarely done with respect to an exploration of value orientations and shifts in these, on which the WaVE project focuses. Furthermore it is clear that most research done in this field is quantitative, an approach which has huge advantages, not least in terms of developing public policy, but which needs to be complemented by the nuanced responses which an in-depth qualitative study can provide.

The WaVE project also has another asset to bring to the development of knowledge in this field, namely the unique approach of studying the lived values of communities and individuals through the prism of welfare. Work that does exist on minority groups in the sphere of welfare in England is primarily in the healthcare sector and, therefore, does not allow interpretations based on a broader understanding of welfare, is quantitative and focuses on health inequalities and service user satisfaction. The case study will, however, use the field of welfare to access value orientations, which are hard to access through direct questions.

Finally, we can see that most research to date on minority groups in England has focused on ‘multicultural’ urban environments. As this report will go on to show, however, the unequal

spread of minority ethnic and religious groups in the country means that this approach leaves significant gaps in knowledge of less diverse areas of the country, where there is a nonetheless minority ethnic and religious presence. The English case study, by focusing on one such town, is an attempt to redress this balance.

2. Characteristics of the national welfare system

In Esping Anderson's model of welfare regimes Britain is labelled as a liberal welfare regime (Esping Andersen 1999). It has what has been described as a 'mixed economy of welfare', where the State directs and organises welfare while not necessarily acting as provider (Clarke, Lanagan and Williams 2001a). The model exists as a balance between family, market, voluntary sector and public provision.

The basic framework of the welfare state was put in place post World War Two (1948) as a system of national insurance based on three basic principles: family allowances, a national health service and full (male) employment. It was a move away from concentration on poor relief, although the poor law tradition has continued to live on in the concern of the British system with the alleviation of poverty (Lewis 2001, 10). A shift in focus has, however, taken place. This is evident in the focus of current day policy on shared responsibility for welfare between the state and the family, voluntary sector and market. It can also be seen in the increase in calculation of people's economic resources as a basis for deciding eligibility for social security support (means testing). This is a move away from basic (non means tested) security to a system based on labour market (re)integration supported only secondly by needs based minimum support (Clasen 2003, 581).

At the beginning of the century voluntary organisations, worked in partnership with the state and were seen as part of the welfare system. Gradually, however, the state took control over the sector and voluntary organisations were seen as a supplement (Lewis 1999). In the post war system the state was viewed as a support to the family economy and a woman's place in the welfare system was as a dependent, yet an active connection was made between participation in the labour market and benefit provision (Lewis 2001, 11). The state took on the role of primary provider in the fields of health and education and here state provision expanded. But, in those areas of welfare where responsibility for provision had been given to local authorities, voluntary bodies provided services, which the local authorities did not have

the capacity to produce. The role of the voluntary services, thus, remained central to welfare provision as the role of the private sector continued with the provision of private education, pension schemes and health insurance alongside public provision.

Reforms in the 1960s and 70s introduced a system where finances were allocated centrally. Government increasingly moved focus from the state to the market and the individual and family (Lewis 2001, 13- 14). Further reforms in the 1980's and 90's broke up the administration of public welfare into agencies and the purchase and provision of services were disconnected from one another. Welfare was consumerised and the voluntary sector and private sectors both had a role to play through entering into partnership with the state. The family was given a role in both carrying out welfare work and making choices. Following policy shifts from institutional based care to 'care in the community' women in particular took on much in terms of hidden welfare work.

2.1 The roles of women and men in the welfare sector

Women are in the majority in two respects. More women than men work in the public sector and the majority of women who work, work in the public sector. (National Statistics, 2006a). Women are also statistically more likely to be working with young children, the elderly and mentally disabled, or in a secretarial capacity and to be working part time (Department of Health, 2004).

In the home too there are significant differences. In 2001, 16% of those aged 16 and over in Britain were caring for a sick, disabled or elderly person, 28% of those for over 20 hours per week (Mahler and Green 2002, xi). Women are more likely than men to be carers and are also numerically dominant in the sub-groups with the largest commitments (Mahler and Green 2002, 2). Gender differences can also be detected in the types of caring work carried out and women are more likely than men to provide care in the form of personal care (National Statistics 2006b). Figures charting the work of unpaid carers are particularly important as indicators of gender roles in the welfare sector when it is realised that 59% of those being cared for in this way do not receive visits from health, social and voluntary services (Mahler and Green 2002, xi). Women also spend more time caring for their children than men, a figure that holds even when comparing full time workers. While the age of the

youngest child clearly affects a mother's role in the labour market, the same is not true for her male counterparts.

2.2 Equality and Gender Equality

Issues of gender equality are generally addressed in terms of individual rights and are frequently one part of a blanket approach to combat discrimination in society. Changes to parental leave rights in recent years are part of the government's wider 'Welfare to Work' programme, a policy with an explicit emphasis on encouraging women of working age into the labour market. This marks a major change in policy. Despite this, Rake argues that there is an implicit gender bias built into the current framework with its focus on paid employment as the basis for citizenship (Rake 2001, 226), while the rights of women are often addressed within the sphere of the family. While parental leave is based on individual rights, maternity leave at 26 weeks, plus optional additional 26 weeks of unpaid leave, is significantly longer than the 2 weeks paid paternity leave available to fathers. Pensions are also based on individual rights and the amount of basic state pension received on retirement depends on the number of years the individual has made national insurance contributions throughout their working life. In addition, contributions can be made to other pension schemes, but here there is often no automatic right of inheritance for a spouse. This system, therefore, means a double discrimination for women, who distanced from the labour market by family policy, are also penalised by loss of pension. In contrast, tax credit available to families with children is allocated to families rather than individuals.

Two pieces of legislation in Great Britain make provision for discrimination on the grounds of sex. These are the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and the Equal Pay Act 1970. Both acts apply to men and women of any age (including children). The SDA makes direct and indirect sex discrimination unlawful in employment, education and the provision and sale of goods, facilities, services and premises. The Equal Pay Act gives an individual the right to the same pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the individuals are doing like work.

2.3 Challenges to the welfare system

The welfare system has been under considerable strain in the decades following its conception due to a number of demographic and social factors. The first of these is an aging population. Households with one or more members over the age of 60 now represent 30% of the total and there are also large numbers of the very elderly who require significant amounts of care and resources. In addition, differences can also be seen in working patterns. Unemployment amongst men is much higher than it was 50 years ago, women now make up nearly half of the workforce (30% in 1948) and more people work part-time and in a self employed capacity. In sum, the capacity of the labour market to support the welfare state has shrunk.

Family and household composition have also changed dramatically testing a system based on male employment that could have important consequences for a system, which relies on informal care provided by family members. Household size has shrunk and lone parents now represent 25% of families with dependent children (ONS 2001, 16 Table 3.2). This is of particular significance when noted that lone parents are much more likely than their married or cohabiting counterparts to be dependent on state benefits (Bradshaw et al. 2003, 18f). This alongside factors, such as upwards trends in the use of health services, have contributed to a situation where government funding of social services has risen significantly since the conception of the welfare state (ONS 2001, 7).

2.4 Issues in current debate

The organisation and funding of the healthcare system in the country is probably the most debated issue in the media today. This includes issues of funding levels in general, but also of allocation and concern that individuals' access to health care is determined by the area in which they live, as funding and services available differ from region to region. These debates include issues of finance, as well as, of human resources and availability of care in deprived areas. Connected to this is also the issue of human resources in the health sector, the lack of workers, low levels of pay and issues connected to the import of trained professionals from outside the UK, not least many former colonies.

Over and above this focus on healthcare in general there is much debate concerning the situation of elderly people in Britain today. The availability of appropriate and good quality

care and support is questioned, as is the funding of care and the adequacy of pensions, as well as, the sustainability of the pension system in the longer term.

Poverty in general and child poverty in particular is also a key issue and this is connected to factors of multiple deprivation. The fact that areas with high levels of poverty often also have large minority ethnic communities has in turn raised issues of the relation between policies of integration, multiculturalism, community cohesion and welfare provision. Discussions of issues of poverty also have a particular gender dimension and the problems faced by lone mothers and by ethnic minority women in particular, both of which are less likely to be in paid employment than their peers (Women and Equality Unit).

Many other issues that are high on the agenda in public debate in general also have a gender aspect, such as the care of very elderly people, the majority of whom in Britain today are women. Also hotly debated issues are the lack of accessible affordable childcare in the country (Clasen 2003, 576), flexible working and parental leave. Finally one issue, which is highlighted particularly with reference to women, is that of violence against women, particularly forced marriage and domestic violence. Despite new legislation covering domestic violence in 2003, a national study concluded that the scale and impact of domestic violence on both individuals and society as a whole have both been underestimated (Walby 2004, 97).

2.5 The UK in an EU perspective

While perceptions of welfare issues, such as levels of unemployment and poverty, have a relative dimension even within a national context, this is even more evident when subject to European comparison. Unemployment in the UK is, for example often referred to as high in national discourse, but, as Eurostat statistics show, total unemployment is well below the EU 25 average of 8.0% at 5.4% (figures for summer 2006, Eurostat 2006b). Long-term unemployment rates for both men (1.3%) and women (0.6%) are also well below the EU 25 averages (men 3.7%, women 4.5%) (Jouhette and Romans 2006, Table 7). These figures can, however, be deceptive in that unemployment is only defined as those without employment, but who are seeking it. Figures for those who are 'inactive' in the labour market are much higher than for those unemployed, particularly for women. Levels of female inactivity are nearly 19 times higher than female unemployment. This is interesting when seen in

comparison with Sweden, for example, which has similar levels of unemployment as the UK. In Sweden levels of female inactivity are only about 9 times higher than female unemployment (Jouhette and Romans 2006, Table 2).

The percentage of the population aged over 65 was 16% in 2005, close to the EU 25 average of 17%. Employment rates amongst the over 60s were, however, 42%, well above the EU 25 average of 26.7%. Figures for expected healthy life years after the age of 65, however, paint a less positive picture, particularly for men. In the EU 15 countries the average man can expect 10.1 healthy life years after 65, but the average UK male can only expect 8.2. The figures for women in the UK are 9.6, much closer to, although below the EU15 average, of 10.7 (Eurostat 2006a). When compared with figures for general life expectancy, the figures are also revealing of a gender related health inequality: women in the UK may have a longer life expectancy of 81 years as compared to 76 for men (EU 25 average 81 and 75 years respectively) (Eurostat 2005, 81).

In terms of poverty and social inequality, the UK is an interesting case. Inequality in the UK grew faster than in any other industrialised country except New Zealand between 1977 and 1990 (Hornsby-Smith 2006, 209). Up to 18% of the population are at risk of poverty, with an income below 69% of the national median after social transfers. This is in comparison with the EU 25 average of 16%. These figures may not seem to indicate that the rate of poverty in the UK is particularly high, but it is considerably higher than the lowest rates in the EU of 8% in the Czech Republic and 10% in the Scandinavian countries (Eurostat 2005, 125). What is particularly striking about the UK, however, is the poverty gap in the country. Measures taking into account the distribution of income within the country (Gini coefficient) where 0% represents perfect equality and 100% all wealth concentrated in the hands of one person, shows that while Slovenia, which has a similar poverty risk rate as the UK, has the lowest coefficient of 22% in the EU 25, the UK shares the highest figure of 35% with Greece (EU 25 average 29%). For most EU countries the Gini coefficient places the countries in a similar place on a comparative EU poverty risk scale as measures that calculate the difference (ratio) between the richest and poorest quintiles in society, but this is not the case for the UK. The UK's relative ranking is more favourable when based on this second measure. This shows that it is global inequality over large sections of society that is the major issue for the UK, rather than the gap between the very rich and the very poor (Guio 2005, 3).

3. Religious composition in the country

The following table shows the population of Great Britain by religion.

Table 1: Population of Great Britain by Religion in April 2001ⁱⁱ

	Total Population (%)	Non-Christian religious population (%)
Christian	71.8	
Muslim	2.8	51.9
Hindu	1.0	18.3
Sikh	0.6	11.0
Jewish	0.5	8.7
Buddhist	0.3	4.9
Any other religion	0.3	5.2
All non-Christian religious population	5.4	100
No religion	15.1	
Religion not stated	7.8	
All population	100	

The Christian category covers almost two thirds of the population (41 million) and includes all Christian denominations in the country. The next largest group is those who declare that they have no religion.ⁱⁱⁱ Muslims comprise about half of the non-Christian religious population in Britain and at 1.6 million make up 3% of the total population. Hindus make up about 1% of the population and people who affiliate with Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism comprise groups, which represent less than 1%, but at least 0.3% of the population. The remaining 0.3% are affiliated with non-Christian religious groups, which do not fall within the religions above. In England and Wales 151,000 people fitted into this category by selecting the category 'other religion' on the Census form. The largest of these groups were Spiritualists (32,000) and Pagans (31,000), followed by Jain (15,000), Wicca (7,000), Rastafarian (5,000) and Zoroastrian (4,000) (ONS: Census 2001).

The Census does not show what percentage of the Christian population affiliate with the Church of England but polls regularly produce a figure of about 50% as the table below indicates.

3.1 Christian Population of Great Britain by Denomination^{iv}

Table 2: Christian Population of Great Britain by Denomination

	Base:1,625 adults 18+ giving a voting intention	Base: 1,960 adults 18+
	20-24, March 1992 (%)	17-22, May 2001 (%)
Church of England	57	49
Roman Catholic	12	11
Church of Scotland	6	6
Non- Conformist/ Free Church (Methodist/Bapti st etc)	6	6
Other Protestant	2	1
Muslim	*	2
Hindu	*	1
Orthodox Greek/ Russian	*	*
Buddhist	*	*
Jewish	*	*
Other	4	2
None	13	18
Don't know	0	1

0.5%, but greater than zero.

An '*' indicates a finding of less than

4. The Characteristics of the majority Church

The Church of England is an Established Church, although England has no written constitution and the nature of establishment is rather defined through the series of relationships, which Church and State have to one another expressed both as privileges and restrictions. The Queen is the Supreme Governor of the Church and is thereby obliged to be in communion with the Church and is crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but has no spiritual role. The Church has responsibility for religious services for important events in national life and 26 senior Bishops sit as members of the House of Lords, the second chamber

of parliament. This structure is, however, currently under review and proposals under discussion would, if accepted, reduce the number of Bishops, change the manner in which they are appointed and introduce representatives of other faiths (Sunday Times 2006). Various modifications in Church state relations over the past hundred years have, however, resulted in a situation where parliament has handed over most of its legislative authority in internal ecclesiastical affairs, such as doctrine and worship, to the General Synod of the Church. Nonetheless, final authority continues to rest with parliament which, when a measure has passed through all of its stages, must either accept or reject it.

In practice the connection between Church and state also has implications for the work of the Church at a local level. The network of parish churches in England is ancient and many rural parishes correspond to local administrative areas. The clergy of a parish have a pastoral responsibility for those resident in the area regardless of whether they are baptised members of the Church.

Church of England funerals represent 45% of all deaths in England (Archbishops' Council, 2004, 11). In 2001 Church of England/ in Wales marriages made up 24% of all marriages performed. Attendance levels at these services are not recorded, but a survey from 2003 indicates that 59% of the population attended a funeral in a church/place of worship in that year, 49% a wedding and 37% a baptism (Church of England 2003, Table 10). The number of children, young people and adults being baptised has remained fairly stable at around 46,000 per year since the beginning of the 1990s, but there is a steady decline in infant baptisms, as current figures represent a rate of 181 infant baptisms per 1,000 live births (18%). The total number of Church of England Baptisms and thanksgiving services for the birth of a child as a percentage of live births is, however, closer to 28% (Archbishops' Council 2004, 8).

The parishes of the Church are the key units in both its structure and ministry. Parishes are run by elected Parochial Church Councils (PCC) that run the parish in collaboration with the Priest. PCCs also send lay representatives to deanery and diocesan synods, the area and regional units of the Church. The Deanery synod, which coordinates activity in the local area, also functions as the electoral body to the General Synod for both clergy and lay people. These representatives join the Bishops of the church in governing the national church.

This does not, however, tell the whole story. In 1999 the Archbishops' Council was set up with the task of giving a sense of direction to the Church nationally and support the Church locally. It does this by working with the General Synod (to which it reports), the House of Bishops, the national boards and councils of the Church, the dioceses and a number of other bodies.

The Church is, therefore, governed by its Synod, but is led by its Bishops and ultimately by its two Archbishops. The Archbishop of Canterbury is also Primate of All England and the figurehead of the Church. The 43 dioceses in the Church of England are in turn each led by a Bishop, who is responsible for all those living within his diocesan boundaries.^v At a national level, the Bishops make up one of three houses of the General Synod (the House of Bishops)^{vi}, which takes responsibility for developing the position of the Church on issues of the day. Like the boards and councils of synod who produce reports for ratification by Synod, the House of Bishops produces reports and statements, which are statements of their common mind and intended as guidelines for the Church.

Funding to support the work of the Church of England comes from investments and independent giving. The Church Commissioners manage the assets of the national Church, but following financial losses in the early 1990s, which forced a review of the entire system, the parishes now fund two-thirds of the Church's total expenditure, around £850 million per year (Archbishops' Council 2003b, 10). Formally most clergy in the Church of England do not receive a salary, but are given a stipend to meet living costs (on average £16,910 p.a. in 2001), housing and a pension on retirement. In 2001 there were 0.17 full time stipendiary clergymen and women per 1000 inhabitants in England (Archbishops' Council 2003a, 3), a figure that reveals that, although the funding for such posts represents 44% of the Church's annual expenditure (Archbishops' Council 2001, 5), the Church could not function as it does without the work of other categories of church workers, many of whom are not paid (Archbishops' Council 2003a, 10).^{vii} In addition to ministry costs, expenditure seen nationally covers: worship and buildings 32%, support and administration 18% and the community 6% (Archbishops' Council 2003b, 10).

4.1 Official Statements made by the Church: Social and ethical issues

The Church of England frequently responds to consultation documents and reports/legislation from Government. This is done via official responses from the Archbishop's Council or Boards of the General Synod or in comments in the press by individual Bishops. In addition, the Church publishes reports on issues of concern and individual Bishops make statements in speeches and sermons. The broad nature of this approach means that it is impossible to discern any one 'church line'. The fact that the Church is asked to and actively responds to government policy consultations is, however, interesting and over the past couple of years the Church has submitted official comments or commented publicly on issues such as Civil Partnership (Archbishops' Council 2003c), Charities and Charitable Status (Archbishops' Council 2002), Drugs Policy (Church of England 2002b), Employment Regulations (Church of England 2003) and Asylum, Immigration and Citizenship (Church of England 2002a).

Those bishops who sit in the House of Lords in particular have the opportunity both individually and collectively to make their voices heard and directly influence legislation. One recent such example was a debate in May 2006 on assisted dying for the terminally ill, where a number of senior churchmen including the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke (Archbishop of Canterbury 2006a).

One report produced in the 1980s is also worth mentioning. The Church Report 'Faith in the City' (1985) was explicitly titled as a 'A call for Action by Church and Nation' showing the Church's own belief that its place is to make recommendations not just for the Church, but also for the Nation as a whole (Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas 1985). The twentieth anniversary of its publication also saw the formation of a Commission on Urban Life and Faith, instigated by the Church but with a broad membership base representing the diversity in urban communities. The report of this commission demonstrates not least the Church's own view of itself as a key opinion former on issues of social justice (Archbishops' Council – Commission on Urban Life and Faith, 2006). At the time of the publication of the report the Archbishop even instigated a debate in the House of Lords on the contribution of churches to civic life (Archbishop of Canterbury 2006b).

Further examples of the Church contributing to public debate on social issues are debates in General Synod on issues such as social justice and Asylum. Its 2001 debate on social justice and on asylum in 2004 were both based on or resulted in commissioned reports

(Reed (ed.) 2001 and Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, 2005). Both led to calls from members for the need both to debate the issue within the church; encourage further reflection and practical action and to put pressure on government (BSR 2001; Reed 2001; General Synod July 2001; General Synod of the Church of England 2004, 470- 491).

4.2 Interfaith relations

The Church works ecumenically on a wide range of issues and this applies to interfaith relations as much as other fields. In 1981 the General Synod endorsed the *Four Principles of Inter Faith Dialogue* agreed ecumenically by the British Council of Churches, which focus on fostering dialogue, mutual trust and cooperation in service to the community (Church of England 2004) The Church employs Inter Faith Relations Advisers at national and diocesan levels and through its clergy and lay people is involved in several national and international interfaith initiatives.^{viii} At parish level many congregations are engaged with the other faith communities in their neighbourhoods although the extent and manner of this varies. The tone of debate in the Church and the national church's commitment to interfaith issues can also be seen in a report produced in 2005. In focusing on the situation at local level, it encourages continued cooperation and dialogue (Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, 2005).

Finally, in its role as national church with particular responsibility for the coordination of a religious presence and pastoral care in a number of areas of national life the Church increasingly works in cooperation with representatives of other faiths. Concrete examples of this are in hospital and prison chaplaincy. The Church has also spoken out on a number of occasions on issues relating to freedom of religion, representing not only its own position, but also that of minority religions in the country. One example of this is in the Church's response to a government consultation *Preventing Extremism Together: Places of Worship* (Church of England, 2005).

4.3 The role of the Church in the national welfare system

The Church has no official role in the welfare system as regards welfare provision, over and above the pastoral responsibility of priests for their parishioners and apart from the education sector where there are several types of Church schools, but neither are there formal

restrictions to involvement. Rather the Church acts in the welfare sector as and alongside other voluntary bodies. Much of the work that the Church does in terms of welfare provision, therefore, takes place at a local level and many parishes are active in providing welfare services, both on their own and in partnership with local authority and voluntary organisations. There is, however, no national monitoring of such work.

Welfare services that local churches provide can usually be divided into two categories: (i) informal welfare provision, such as visiting the elderly, which is mostly focused on members of the congregation, and (ii) more organised welfare provision, often larger project based initiatives, which are open to all and usually focused on the geographical parish and its inhabitants, which in some areas includes minority groups.

5. Welfare, Religion and Gender

5.1 Church and the formation of the roles of women and men in society

Callum Brown's analysis, which places the de-christianisation of British society as a process that dramatically accelerated in the late 1960s in direct relation to factors in the modernisation of society including the changing roles of women (Brown 2000), is contested. However, whether or not the hypothesis holds, his study reveals important evidence of the place of the wife and mother in British society in past generations as preservers of Christian discourse. Women have been responsible for both grassroots involvement in the church and the education of children into the faith for many generations.

As women gained more rights during the Victorian era and fought for the right to vote they also gained roles outside the home, within the Church mainly as philanthropists. However, as the doctrine of subordination was both preached and accepted even by many of those women who sought a role for themselves, the influence of the Church meant that women's talents remained limited to a motherly role, which it was believed came naturally to them (Heeney 1988, 13 -14). This perception of the role of women as primarily a domestic one may well not be due entirely to the Church, but its influence is by no means insignificant as an informal legitimator of a traditional role. Despite changes to the perceived role of women that came about as a result of the tasks taken on by women during the First World

War, this perception of women's work as in a different sphere from that of men persisted well into the twentieth century.

5.2 Church stance on gender issues

For the past decade the Church has ordained women to the priesthood and in this way has gone some way in supporting more equal gender roles in society. The process was, however, controversial within the Church and concessions made to those opposing the ordination of women continue to bar women from the episcopate and limit their opportunities (Middlemiss 2004, 196-7). This cautious ambiguity mirrors the Church's general reluctance to speak out on such issues in the interests of holding together a broad church. A recent report of the Doctrine Commission, for example, makes only passing reference to the gender issue despite the fact that it explicitly addresses the themes of power, sex, money and time (Doctrine Commission 2003). Where the Church has spoken on gender issues it has concentrated on the family in Church and society (Board for Social Responsibility 1995, 93). In so doing it highlights its position as the established Church by claiming a 'special position' for marriage 'within the social and legislative framework of our society' (Archbishops' Council 2003c).

5.3 Welfare, Minorities and Gender

As women are still so clearly identified with the family sphere and, therefore, with the operation of the welfare system in both formal and informal ways, it is perhaps unsurprising that many issues concerning welfare and minority groups in society also particularly impact upon women. Women's primary role as carers and the particular incidence of poverty amongst ethnic minority women have already been mentioned. Over and above this, however, there are issues with particular gender dimensions, which also highlight the global nature of issues of welfare in society. Research on the globalisation of the domestic aid market has shown the particular impact this has on women from ethnic minorities (Cox 1999), while research into issues of legal recognition of the legal codes of some ethnic and religious minorities has shown the impact of such issues on women (Bano1999).

As Sudbury points out, much research into issues of political and community activism has been both gender and colour blind. Ethnic minority women have often been visible as

symbols of community and of struggles for equality, but invisible as active agents (Sudbury, 1998, 54). There is on the contrary much done by such women, both through formal and less formal channels, and alternative methods of activism need to be taken into account, because both cultural and practical factors relevant to particular communities come in to play. (Sudbury 1998, 58).

6. An overview of the minority presence in the country

6.1 Immigration patterns

Britain has a long history of immigration, which has varied extensively over different periods, patterns of which can still clearly be seen in the make-up of society, as different ethnic groups have significantly different age structures reflecting patterns in immigration. The Census shows that, other than those in the white British category, those most likely to be born in the UK are people from the mixed ethnic group and from the other black group. Of non-white ethnic groups numbers born in the UK decline with age. For example, up to 83% of Black Caribbeans aged 25 to 34 were born in the UK, but only 5% of those aged 45 to 64. For some other groups such as Black Africans, Chinese and Bangladeshis, this sharp decline occurs in younger age groups, reflecting their later immigration (Annual Population Survey 2004 and Census 2001, 2006a).

The immigration of ethnic minority groups is bound up with the history of the colonies. From the 1500s until 1833 the slave trade drove immigration, but with the abolition of slavery in 1833 numbers coming to Britain from the colonies decreased at the same time as immigration from the rest of Europe increased.

Following the Second World War, labour shortages in Britain led to a period of increased immigration both from other countries in Europe, particularly Poland and from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan. At around the same time, the British Commonwealth Act (1948) gave residents of the Empire and Commonwealth the right to enter and reside in Britain as they wished sparking immigration from the West Indies in particular (National Archives 2006). This was the start of mass immigration to Britain, but it was not until the 1970s that political pressure led to a series of revisions of immigration laws designed to curb immigration. By 1972, legislation meant that a British passport holder born overseas could

only settle in Britain if both members of a family had a work permit and proof that a parent or grandparent had been born in the UK. This slowed immigration, but didn't stop it and around 83,000 immigrants from the Commonwealth settled in the UK between 1968 and 1975. In particular a large number of African Asians came in 1972 following expulsion from Uganda.

By the 1980s, decline in manufacturing work and the fact that work permits were harder to obtain without professional qualifications meant that the largest immigrant groups were Americans (to banking and industry), Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans making use of family-ties entry rules, and South Asian men and women with medical qualifications (BBC 2002).

A final period of immigration to the UK can be said to have begun with the fall of the Iron Curtain, although it is perhaps too early to say whether the enlargement of the EU in May 2004 can be seen as a contribution of this period or will merit a separate reference in the future. A significant growth in asylum seeker applications from the late 1980s onwards contributed to a growth of immigration taking it to new levels between 1990 and the current day, at the same time as both the channels of immigration and people's reasons for movement have increased so that the process has become more complex (BBC 2005b).

6.2 Religious minority groups

As we have seen 41 million Britons identify themselves as Christians and of these 40 million describe their ethnicity as white. So, while nearly seven in ten can be described as white Christians, there are considerable minorities both of other faiths and other ethnic origins. The majority of black people and those from mixed ethnic backgrounds describe themselves as Christian showing a black Christian population of 815,000 (71% of the total black population) and a mixed ethnic Christian population of 353,000 (52% of the total mixed ethnic population).

Amongst other faiths there are also clear patterns. Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are even more religiously homogeneous than the above named Christian groups as 92% of each ethnic group are Muslims. The largest non-Christian faith groups as categorised by ethnicity are Pakistani Muslims (686,000), Indian Hindus (471,000), Indian Sikhs (307,000), Bangladeshi Muslims (261,000) and white Jews (259,000). The Indian group is religiously

diverse (45% Hindu, 29% Sikh and 13% Muslim), but while not all Indians are Sikh, nearly all Sikhs are Indian (91%). This pattern of a faith community concentrated in one ethnic group is also clear within the Jewish population as 97% of Jews describe their ethnicity as white. Other faiths, such as Buddhists are more widely spread across ethnic groupings (Census 2001, 2005).

Ethnicity and religion are clearly connected, but cannot, however, be used as proxy measures for one another. The majority of the British Asian community does not, for example, identify with one religion (Home Office Research 2004, 8). Indeed it can be said that each of the different religions in the country can be regarded as a religious minority, but that within this broad spectrum the groups can be further divided along lines of belief and ethnicity.

The connection between ethnicity and religion is, however, important in terms of the perception of religious minorities in the eyes of the law. British legal protection for minorities is focused on race and ethnicity and so there is little recognition for groups whose self-identification is non-racial, a situation which impacts particularly on Muslims (Statham, P., et al. 2005, 434). The Race Relations Act (1976) does not generally afford rights to religious groups and several tests of this have failed to extend rights to Muslims under this law (Lewis 2002, 250). The ethno-religious groups of Sikhs and Jews have, in contrast, received protection under the law since 1983. The one legal provision relating directly to religion in the country, however, the blasphemy law, which has been used in recent times with relation to Christianity, was also interpreted in the Rushdie case in the 1990s as not applying to Islam (Statham, P., et al. 2005, 434). This has, however, come under renewed debate as The Racial and Religious Hatred Act made its way through the parliamentary process. This extends measures making it an offence to stir up racial hatred to encompass religious hatred (Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006). The measures are, however, by no means uncontroversial and have sparked public debate on freedom of speech and freedom of religion (BBC 2005a).

There also exist significant differences between groups as to what extent religious affiliation is seen as an important aspect of identity and this varies both by ethnicity and by religion (Home Office Research 2004, 19). In short, the only religious group in England with distinct legal status and subsequent protection is the Church of England. Other Christian denominations and faiths are treated in the eyes of the law as voluntary associations. There is,

however, some argue, a change taking place in the British legal system with relation to religion, namely towards the protection of individual religious rights (Sandberg 2006).

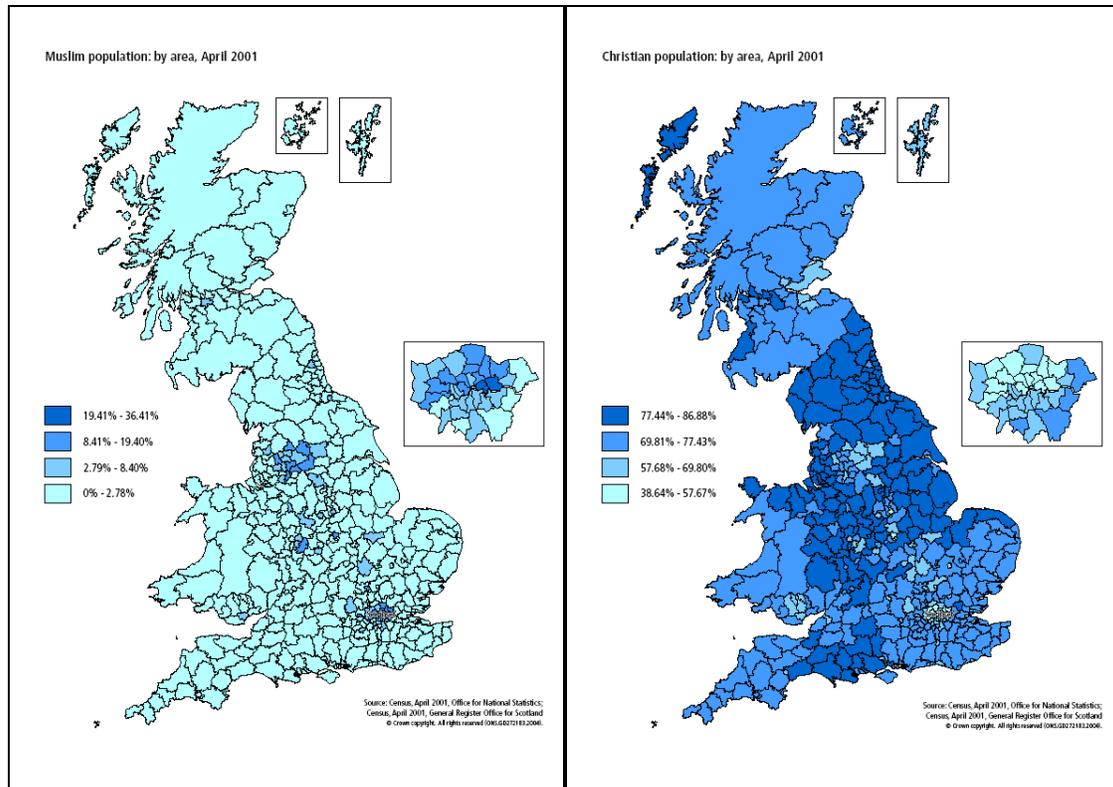
Generally speaking, religious minority communities present in the UK have created some form of representative body (bodies) regardless of whether this is a natural phenomenon for the religion or not. Without such forms of representation the groups would find it much harder to make their voices heard in political and legal systems and in the media. The large number of varied types of organisations that are member bodies of the Inter Faith Network for the UK gives an indication of the nature of such bodies and the complexity of the situation with many religions represented by several bodies, not necessarily in agreement (www.interfaith.org.uk).

6.3 Geographic spread of minority groups

While Christians and those with no religion are fairly evenly dispersed throughout the country, those from the minority religions are concentrated in London and some other large urban areas following patterns that also appear when looking at the geographical spread of ethnic minority groups.

The Jewish population is the most heavily concentrated in London (56%) and even within London is concentrated in one borough, Barnet. A similar pattern can be seen in the Hindu (52% live in London), Sikh and Muslim populations (38%). As with the Jewish population, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim populations are concentrated in smaller areas of the regions where they can be found. For example, 7% of Hindus live in Leicester in the East Midlands, where they comprise 15% of the population. The smaller numbers of representatives of other minority religions in Britain also follow the patterns for the other religions shown above. Of the 149,000 Buddhists living in Britain, 36% live in London with the rest dispersed across the country (Census 2001, 2004).

The following two maps illustrate the contrast between the spread of the Christian population of Britain and that of the religious minorities, represented here by the Muslim population.^{ix}



7. Religious minority-majority relations

7.1 Rights and access to public welfare

National welfare policy and regulations concerning discrimination dictate that all citizens and legal residents should have equal access to welfare services and in addition have the right for their individual beliefs and needs to be taken into account. There is, however, recognition that, although all have the same rights to services, needs are different so, for example, as Muslims in general live in areas of high deprivation, they have greater need of a number of services than the population on average (Home Office 2004, 15) and as occupational patterns often vary along lines of ethnicity and religion so do opportunities for accessing welfare services (Home Office 2004, 14).

Government awareness of these issues coupled with interest in the potential, which faith communities can have to impact positively upon neighbourhood renewal projects, have led to the development of guidelines for local authorities in cooperating with faith communities, (Home Office Faith Communities Unit 2004 and 2005; Local Government Association 2002; Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2004).

Equal access to welfare services does not, however, always function in practice. Ethnic differentials exist in terms of the incidence of common physical and mental disorders, use of services and social and support networks (Sproston and Nazaroo 2002). While patient surveys also show that people from ethnic minority groups are significantly more likely than average to report unfavourably on their experiences of health services. Several key issues impact on the rates by which different ethnic groups use health services including: user ignorance, language difficulties and location of services (Commission for Racial Equality 2006).

In addition to these above named factors, the issue is sometimes complicated by the fact that concessions for religions within the systems of the public sector have been formed with the Church as a model. One example being the prisons system, by law Prison Chaplains must be clerics of the Church of England. So, although ministers of other faiths may be appointed as religious ministers within prisons, the overriding responsibility for a prisoner's spiritual welfare is held by an Anglican priest. This Chaplain therefore holds an ambiguous double role of minister of his own religion and facilitator of that of others. (Beckford, 2001, 39 – 53).

7.2 Current media debates

Race relations and social cohesion have become important issues in recent times and race relations are now seen as the second most important issue facing Britain. Surveys show that in the public mind race relations and immigration are in the top six issues facing Britain, where as a few years ago, it barely registered as a concern (MORI 2006a). In a poll of British adults in September 2005, which asked for spontaneous answers to the question: "What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?", 17% named race relations and immigration and a further 32% named it as another important issue facing the nation in answer to a follow-up question (MORI 2005c). There is less direct attention paid to religion in the media, but polls focused on issues such as terrorism often also touch on issues of religion. One survey for the Greater London Authority in October 2005, which otherwise focused on democracy and police response to the 7 July attacks, showed that while 56% of Londoners support the banning of discrimination of people because of their religion, 32% oppose such measures (MORI 2005d). In a poll carried out following the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in a number of newspapers in Europe, however, 72% felt that British papers were right not to publish the images and 82% agreed with the statement that people in

Britain are generally more tolerant of other people's religions than people in other nations (MORI 2006b).

Newspaper readership in particular has a significant influence on opinion on issues such as immigration (MORI 2005b). A recent report shows that the British press currently has a hostile tone towards immigrants, but also that this is nothing new in the British context (Greenslade 2005). Other research concludes that a majority group is twice as likely to be written about in the British press than a minority group, but also that majority groups are represented more positively than minority ones (Gardikiotis, A., Martin, R., Hewstone, M., 2004, 643). This is particularly true of the Muslim population where positive stories are practically unknown and negative stories about Muslims more common than those about other faith groups (Greenslade 2005, 11-12).

7.3 Faith schools

One issue, which has been well aired in public debate, is that of faith schools. The debate is a wide one encompassing as it does questions on the status of the large number of Church controlled and aided schools, as well as, the wishes of minority religions in the country for faith based education for their children. Tensions here surround the nature of faith-based teaching, the respective ability of different religious traditions to provide 'neutral' religious education, and the risk of segregation that the spread of faith schools may entail (Johnston, Wilson and Burgess 2004). This debate is frequently focused on the Islamic community, which has been the most active of the minority faith communities in lobbying for faith schools so as to gain access to Islamic education for their children. Not least important here is the gender issue as debate frequently includes the issue of single sex schools for girls. Where such schools are not available some women have set up their own nursery schools and a national self-help network (Abdel Haleem 2003, 101). By 2001 there were about 60 Islamic schools in Britain, although to date a maximum of 9 of these are state schools. The issue of state control and funding of faith schools has in itself become a significant political issue. Proposals to introduce compulsory quotas forcing faith schools to draw 25% of their pupils from a different faith background were rejected, but have raised the profile of the debate in the public eye. The debate has also highlighted the overwhelming Christian dominance of the faith state schools sector. Of about 7,000 state faith schools, 4,646 are Church of England,

2,041 Roman Catholic, 37 Jewish, 2 Sikh as well as 9 Muslim schools and 1 Hindu school currently in the process of becoming state schools (BBC 2006f).

Over and above the debate over faith schools one discussion, which has focused around the classroom, is the issue of school uniform and conflicts between those who wish to wear particular items of Islamic dress and schools who want to apply a dress code (see Ameli and Merali 2006). This debate culminated in a House of Lords ruling in favour of one such school, which had been judged to have taken pains to accommodate Islamic dress into its dress code (BBC 2006a). In recent months one government minister's comments on the veil as a mark of separation sparked a high profile and heated debate about aspects of Islamic dress and other forms of religious symbolism worn by individuals in public (BBC 2006c and BBCd). High profile figures from politicians and Muslim organisations to the Archbishop of Canterbury have entered the debate and at an individual level both Muslims and Christians have faced dismissal over related issues (BBC 2006d, BBC 2006e and BBC 2006f).

7.4 Places of Worship

Non-Christian religions have consistently experienced difficulties establishing and expanding places of worship. Naylor and Ryan attribute this largely to three factors: firstly, the lack of formal protection for religious communities in law and secondly the fact that most applications for the construction of worship sites that are to be located in residential areas, where non-users have been able to object to the plans on the grounds that the building does not fit the character of the area. Thirdly, they argue that conflict around such sites is bound up with political interests and concerns over the effects that the presence of a non-Christian worship site can have on an area (Naylor and Ryan 2002, 39 – 40). While new patterns of cooperation between the state and minority religious groups are emerging in some urban contexts, the tendency in most planning authorities remains one of “emphasising the external impact of places of worship while simultaneously negating the need for such premises” (Gale and Naylor 2002, 405).

One related issue, the continued existence and freedom of places of worship, has also been high on the political agenda over the past year. In October 2005 the Home Office launched a consultation document to gather comment in advance of proposed changes to the law as part of the government's anti-terrorism strategy. This originated in proposals from

working groups set up following the bombings in London in July 2005 and focused on the Muslim community and the use of mosques by radical clerics. It proposed new powers for courts and the police to close down or take over control of places of worship where those with responsibility are deemed not to have taken sufficient steps to stop extremist behaviour (Home Office 2006 §17f; Home Office 2006b)

8. Conclusions

Having begun the discussion of the interconnections between religion, minorities and gender in England in a consideration of the multicultural model of Britain, it seems appropriate also to conclude there. The material presented, both in content and in terms of its abundance, shows that the question of how a plural society can develop in England today is clearly on both public and political agendas. Much of the material presented here concentrates on the situation in England within the framework of the wider British society and in that respect is very specific, but when seen within the framework of the WaVE project the similarities with other countries in Europe are striking.

Adrian Favell has argued that for too long the academic discussion of multiculturalism in Britain has been introspective and in continuing to propagate exceptionalist arguments has denied Britain the opportunity to learn from and alongside other European countries in developing new models to meet the challenges of the future (Favell, 2001). The English situation has a particularly long history of immigration, which has brought a variety of ethnic and religious groups to the country. It also has a history of a multicultural model, which has focused on group rights and diversity at this level. Finally, England continues to have an established Church with clear ties to the State and with an ambiguous function as both a religious community in its own right and as a champion of faith community interests in general. These factors may set it apart from many other countries in Europe, but the English case does share in common general discussions on immigration, on an increasingly plural society, on the Muslim presence in Europe, on significant demographic, financial and structural challenges to the welfare system and the particular situations for women in all of these.

The continuing challenge is to understand what, if any, impact England's particular history has on the lives of individuals caught up in these national and indeed international

systems today, on their welfare, wellbeing and the values expressed in these systems and by individuals in tackling them in everyday life.

Endnotes

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- ⁱ http://www.relignions.divinity.gla.ac.uk/Centre_Islam/philan.htm 20 April 2006.
- ⁱⁱ Office for National Statistics and Census, April 2001, General Registrar for Scotland. Figures compiled by Office for National Statistics and published October 2004. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954> The 2001 Census included for the first time a question about religious affiliation. Response to this question was however voluntary.
- ⁱⁱⁱ This figure includes all who ticked 'None' in the Census as well as those who answered Jedi Knight, Heathen, Agnostic and Atheist and those who ticked 'Other', but did not specify a religion. Census, April 2001.
- ^{iv} Responses to the questions: "What is your religion, if any?" (If Christian), "What denomination are you?", Figures Ipsos Mori 2006, <http://www.mori.com/polls/trends/religion.shtml>
- ^v 44 if the Diocese of Europe is included.
- ^{vi} All of the Diocesan Bishops, the Bishop of Dover and some of the Suffragan bishops elected from within their number.
- ^{vii} There are, for example, as many (unpaid) Lay Readers as stipendiary clergy working for the Church and half as many retired clergy, who still play an active role in Parish ministry. See Archbishops' Council 2003a.
- ^{viii} Including the Churches Commission on Inter Faith Relations (www.cbti.org.uk); the Inter Faith Network for the UK (www.interfaith.org.uk); the Inner Cities Religious Council (www.odpm.gov.uk); the Council of Christians and Jews (www.ccj.org.uk). Through the Network for Inter Faith Concerns (NIFCON) (www.anglicannifcon.org) the Church of England is also in touch with inter faith issues internationally as a member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion.
- ^{vii} Source: National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk
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