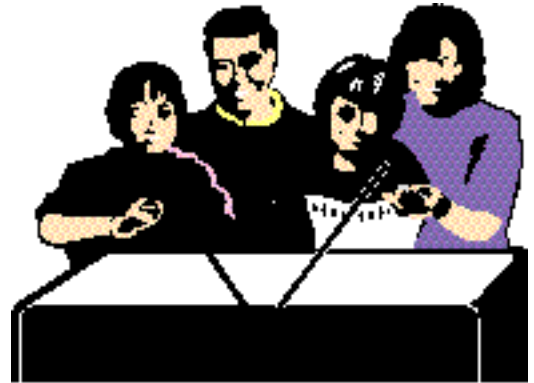




***Diversity in People: How Do You Define Family Today? Answers Can Be Diverse***

For many in this country, the term “family” has traditionally brought to mind the picture of a mother, a father, and their offspring. The “ideal” family has been considered to be one in which the father is the primary breadwinner and the mother is a full-time homemaker and childcare provider. This picture of family is becoming increasingly unrepresentative of families in this country today.



While nontraditional families have always existed, their rates have increased significantly from a few generations ago. Today, the majority of families are anything but “traditional.” The traditional family has become the exception.

In addition to the working father, stay-at-home mother, and their children, other types of families include: dual-earner families, single-parent families, step-families, blended-families, two-parent adoptive families, single-parent adoptive families, foster families, intergenerational families, lesbian and gay families, biracial and multiracial families, and families with no children. Since 1972, the percentage of people who are not married and have no children has increased while those who are married with children has declined (Irvine, 1999). Additionally, during this time period, the percentage of children living with single parents rose from 4.7% to 18.2% (Irvine, 1999).

And regardless as to whether the mother is single or married, she is likely to be working outside of the home. This includes mothers with children under age 2 (52%) and mothers with children between 6-17 (75%). According to the U.S. Department of Labor in 1991, married mothers with children under the age of 2 were more likely to be working outside the home than were single mothers with young children. Although still considered a deviate family type by many social scientists, families with working mothers are currently the norm.

In addition to dual earner families, and single parent families, let’s take a brief look at some of the other less frequently discussed types of families.

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## Intergenerational Families

There are 3.2 million children in this country living with their grandparents or other kin. This represents a 40% increase since 1980 (Minkler & Roe, 1993). The increase in this family structure is due, in part, to the increase of drug and alcohol addicted parents. Other reasons include imprisonment, mental illness, and death of young parents. Whatever the reason, it is usually a crisis situation that causes grandparents to become parents a second time around. Grandparents raising their grandchildren is not limited to poor or urban families. This trend spans every segment of our society, including rich and poor, black and white, Asian and Hispanic, urban and suburban (Doucette-Dudman & LaCure, 1996).

## Stepfamilies and Blended Families

The stepfamily is the fastest growing family type in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). According to Glick (1989), approximately 17% of all families headed by a married couple with children under 18 are stepfamilies. Stepfamilies may result from a divorce and remarriage, death of a spouse, or marriage to a previously unmarried parent. As the divorce rate has grown, so has the number of stepfamilies. Furstenberg (1988) suggests that one out of every ten children will experience at least two divorces of their residential parents before turning 16. When both parents bring children to the new marriage, the result is a blended family with multiple new relationships.

Formation of stepfamilies brings both benefits and challenges. Positive life changes, new resources, and opportunities for loving and fulfilling family relations may contribute to the well-being of parents and children. However, forging new relationships and adjusting to new people in the household takes time. The younger the child at the time of obtaining a stepparent, the easier the transition is likely to be. And studies have found that boys are more

likely than girls to make a smoother transition to the addition of a stepfather (Amato & Keith, 1991). Most families should be prepared for some level of difficulties when a stepparent is added to a family with adolescents. The most difficult relationship seems to be that between the adolescent girl and the stepfather.

## Families Headed by Lesbian and Gay Parents

The very notion of family itself has generally presumed parents to be heterosexual. More recently, research has begun to focus on lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children. Some researchers estimate that between one and five million children in the United States have lesbian mothers who had children within a heterosexual relationship and later assumed a lesbian identity (Clinus & Green, 1995). A similar pattern is reported for gay men. Some gay and lesbian parents are choosing to become biological parents after “coming out” through donor insemination and surrogacy.

## Multiracial Families

Multiracial families develop by interracial marriages and transracial adoptions. The number of biracial families has sharply increased since the Supreme Court overturned the last remaining laws prohibiting interracial marriages in 1967. In 1990, there were more than 1.5 million children living in families where the parents have different racial backgrounds. While racially mixed people in America include a variety of racial combinations, the ones with which there has been the most controversy have been those between whites and people of color. Multiracial families face ambivalence from both whites and people of color. The teenage years may be even more difficult for multiracial children than for others, as this is the time when children come face to face with having to answer the question, “Who am I?” Although multiracial children face additional challenges during this time, most become well adjusted with high levels of self-esteem (Tatum, 1997).

Minority children who are adopted by white families face similar challenges as those faced by biracial children. Special attention is needed to provide these children with opportunities to learn about and experience the culture of their racial and ethnic heritage.

### Fathers as Single Parents

In 1990, about one million divorced and separated fathers in this country were raising about 1.5 million children alone. At this same time an additional 100,000 widowers were raising children alone (Greif, 1990). While the single father raising his children alone is definitely the exception, the number of single fathers with sole custody will continue to grow. More fathers are seeking custody and more mothers are feeling comfortable with this arrangement.

Both mothers and fathers face difficulties when they are single parents. Some difficulties are peculiar to fathers. Some fathers feel discriminated against because people assume that only mothers are competent to raise children. Single fathers also experience special difficulties on their jobs. As a single parent they may find it necessary sometimes to arrive late, leave early, or miss work altogether due to child-related illness or activities. Taking time off of work can have greater negative connotations for men than for women.

Contrary to assumptions that fathers are incapable of running the household, studies show that fathers do a good deal of the housework themselves when they have custody. Few rely on outside help. As the children get older, and especially if there are daughters, fathers get more help. One result may be that the children tend to grow up a little faster because of the responsibilities all family members must accept. And while the going may be rough in the beginning, a large majority of fathers (82% in a 1988 study) are satisfied with themselves as parents (Greif, 1990).

While the types of families today may vary in many ways from the traditional family of yesterday, some things remain the same. A family, whatever the makeup, is about love and caring for its members. It is about looking out for and protecting each other. Families are the primary source of love, joy, warmth and togetherness in our lives. Perhaps the only sure way to identify a family is to recognize it when, in its own eyes, it is clearly operating as one.

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## *Diversity Activity: Who Am I? ... Who Are You?*



The following activity is appropriate for groups of young people that meet regularly over an extended period of time. This multi-purpose, multi-cultural activity helps students to provide positive feedback and develop personal regard for others. It also gives them the opportunity to create a book.

Pair off the youth in your group into pairs of opposites. Use every criterion you can think of to make the opposite distinctions .... height, weight, number of brothers and sisters, genetic characteristics, birth order in the family, race, religion, etc. Tell each student that they are going to make a book about the person they have been paired with. Each week (or other appropriate period of time) have the pairs meet for a given period of time (perhaps twenty minutes) to discuss "what's happening" in the lives of their partners. Some typical questions you might provide for youth are:

What was the best thing that happened to you this week? To your family?

What was your favorite thing to do after school this week?

What did you do out of the ordinary this past weekend?

Each week have the youth write a story based on these rap sessions about their partner's "life and times." Pictures (drawings) of fun activities can be added. Information about new weight, height, new favorites can be added over the months. At one of the last group meetings each student will have a biography to present to their partner. What better way to develop new multi-cultural understandings and close relationships?

*Adapted from an exercise by: Tom Sloan, Teacher, Wharton Jr. High*

*You're  
Invited*

**...to suggest diversity-related topics that you would like to see discussed in this newsletter. Send your suggestions to Patreese Ingram at the snail mail address or email address listed on the back page.**

# **We've Moved**

**Visit us at our new web address:**

**<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/pi/pimenu.html>**

## *Diversity in the Workplace: Are White Men Being Left Out of the Picture?*

*My workgroup looks like the United Nations. There are guys from Taiwan, India, and Mexico. Two of the women come from the Philippines. In fact, there are only two people in the whole group who were born in America. Just ten years ago there were only white guys. Managing was a piece of cake because we were all like family. All that's different now. Every day there is a new problem. With the incredible mix of people, it's not surprising. It feels like a whole new ball game to me, but it isn't baseball or any other game I've ever played.*

Nick Moakley, Manager in a Midwestern Factory (Esty, Griffin & Hirsch, 1995, p. xi)

While most workplaces today are not nearly as diverse as the one described above, many companies and organizations are indeed making efforts to increase the diversity of their employees. The focus is on women, people of color, people with physical and mental challenges, and those of various ages, religions, nationalities. With so much concern about other groups, some white males are feeling left out. Some have serious concerns about the impact of diversity on their careers.

Some fear that, in the name of diversity, white men are moving backwards. Fears that they will be passed over for well-deserved promotions, that seemingly harmless remarks can lead to complaints of sexual harassment, and that 'white male' is becoming the newest swear word in America cause some white men to feel under attack. There is a sense that the rules are changing faster than they can keep up. Some may feel like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz,



*“Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.”*

In reality, diversity programs in most companies and organizations have not resulted in massive changes. Some companies and organizations have, however, taken significant strides to diversify the workplace. Here, white men are finding that they have to compete against people they may not have taken all that seriously as rivals before – mainly women and people of color. Whereas, historically, most white men expected they would be able to get a well-paying job reasonably easily and keep it for life, the same is less true today. Why?

### What are the Facts?

Good, well-paying jobs are not as easy to get or keep today as in the past. Much of the limited opportunity, however, is a result of economic pressures, downsizing and restructuring, not diversity programs. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been eliminated in recent years and many forms of job security have disappeared. Not only has downsizing meant fewer jobs, it has also resulted in a reduction in earnings for many. Federal government data, analyzed by researchers at Harvard University and MIT show that the income of college-educated males aged 45-54, the overwhelming majority of them white, fell by 17% (adjusted for inflation) between 1986 and 1992 (Esty, Griffin & Hirsch, 1995). This was the first time since World War II that people who graduated from college suffered a drop in wages. Those in skilled labor positions have not escaped a similar decrease in earnings.

What has been the impact on white males?  
Today, white men are still the largest single

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## *Diversity Resource: The Christmas Holiday Season Celebrations Around the World*

The Christmas holiday season is celebrated in many countries around the world. A variety of different foods, decorations, and activities make the season special. The following are glimpses of ways in which the season is celebrated in several different countries.

### ***Poland***

The Polish begin Christmas Eve with a strict 24-hour fast. The fast is broken on Christmas with a huge feast that cannot begin until the first star of the night appears. This practice is in honor of the star of Bethlehem. In fact, Christmas is often referred to as Gwiazdka, which means "little star." The feast begins by sharing a specially blessed rice wafer broken into pieces. This is followed by a 12-course feast, one course for each Apostle. An extra place is set at the table, ready for a stranger or the Holy Spirit.



### ***Iran***

Christians in Iran start the season with a fast from animal products beginning on December 1<sup>st</sup>. This fast ends after church service on December 25<sup>th</sup> with a Christmas dinner feast. A traditional dish is chicken stew. Children get new clothes to wear on Christmas Day. Iran, then Persia, is where the Three Wise Men are believed to have lived when Jesus was born.



### ***Finland***

In Finland it is important to clean the house in preparation for the three holy days - Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day. Rice porridge and plum juice are traditional foods the morning of Christmas Eve. Children receive presents on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day includes a traditional dinner, and for many families, a visit to the cemeteries and graveyards to place candles on the graves of family members. The people of Finland believe that the northern part of their country is where Santa Claus resides.



### ***Mexico***

In Mexico Christmas is celebrated with a reenactment of Joseph and Mary's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. For the nine days prior to Christmas, Mexicans travel from house to house seeking shelter and are refused each time. Finally, they reach a house where a nativity scene is displayed and they are admitted. After a traditional prayer, the celebration begins with food and drink. The children take turns trying to break open pinatas. The poinsettia flower is native to Mexico and is believed to be where it was first connected with Christmas.



### **Japan**

Christmas was introduced in Japan by Christian missionaries. Today many Japanese have adopted some of the Western Christmas customs. These include gift giving, decorating of the home, and turkey dinner on Christmas Day. New Years, however, is the most important day of the year. On New Year's Eve, the home is thoroughly cleaned and decorated. The family then dresses in their finest clothes. Family members, headed by the father, then march through the house throwing dried beans into every corner to drive out the evil spirits and bring in good luck.



### **Greece**

In Greece, St. Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors. His appearance reflects the importance of the sea in Greek culture. Accordingly, St. Nicholas wears clothes drenched in brine, his beard drips with seawater, and his face is covered with the perspiration of hard work from saving sinking ships from the angry sea. During the Christmas season holy water is sprinkled in each room of the house to keep away the mischievous goblins that are believed to appear between Christmas and Epiphany (January 6). Gifts are exchanged on January 1<sup>st</sup>, St. Basil's Day. This day is also called the "renewal of water" day. All water jugs in the house are emptied and refilled with new water.



### **Great Britain**



December 26 is a special part of the holiday season in Great Britain. It is Boxing Day, the feast of St. Stephen. It began in the mid-nineteenth century as the day for giving to the less fortunate. On Boxing Day the alms box in English churches were opened and their contents given to the poor. Servants were given this day off to celebrate with their families. Today, it is customary to give gifts to those who provide services to oneself or one's family. Examples might include the postman, the hairdresser, the maid, etc.

### **Australia**

In Australia, Christmas is the Summer Holiday. It is the time when students are taking exams, completing their school year, and getting ready for sun, surf, and shopping. More families are moving away from the traditional roast turkey and steamed pudding dinner to celebrations in the backyard, and picnics at the park or beach. Some things are similar to Americans. Many Australians attend a church service, decorate their homes and share gifts.



### **Source:**

*Christmas Around the World. Internet Business Marketing Solutions Network.*

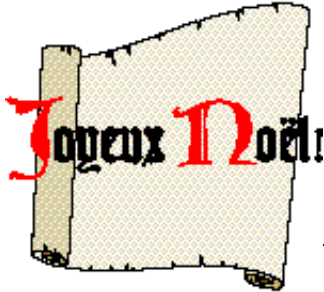
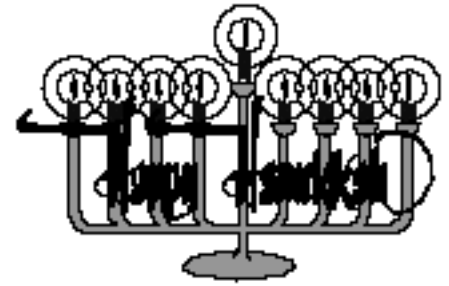
Visit the web site at <http://www.the-north-pole.com/around/index.htm> to learn about Christmas in 30 different countries.

Merry  
Christmas  
To All

*Have a Merry Christmas*

*Have a Happy Hanukkah*

*Have a Happy Kwanzaa*



*Feliz Navidad*

Feliz Navidad

*Have a Renewing Ramadan Celebration*

*(continued from page 5)*

group in the workforce, retaining most senior management positions. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of CEO's in Fortune 500 companies are white men. White men hold 70% of middle management positions (U. S. Census, 1993). They do, however, have a somewhat smaller percentage of these jobs than they did in 1983. Additionally, white men continue to earn considerably more than women, dollar for dollar. For every dollar a man makes, a woman earns only 77 cents (Esty, Griffin, & Hirsch, 1995).

Clearly, white males are not being left out. Their presence in the workplace continues to be large and powerful. However, the concerns of white men should not be quickly dismissed. The transition from a workplace dominated by white males to one that embraces all employees equally is essential if organizations expect to compete successfully in a changing marketplace. Change and transition are seldom easy. As we take this journey it is important that we are sensitive to the concerns of all employees impacted by the change. This includes white males. Two points to consider:

- Avoid assuming that all white males think just alike. While some white males are concerned about an increasingly diverse workplace, others welcome and embrace this change.
- Men are feeling pressured today from all sides. They are expected to maintain their traditional role of being successful, provide for the family, and be strong and protective. At the same time, they are also being encouraged to become more sensitive and vulnerable in a changing environment.

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