



Diverse Issues

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Diversity in People: Hats, Scarves, and Beards



Even before the events of September 11th there was a growing recognition of the increasing population of Islamic peoples in this country. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Muslim men and women is their manner of dress and personal appearance. Head coverings and loosely fitted garments for women and head coverings and beards for men have led to stares, questions, and misunderstandings. In some instances, dressing differently has resulted in removal from schools and loss of employment. The purpose of this article is to provide some background and understanding for particular aspects of Muslim dress.

Dress of Muslim Women

Wearing of the *hijab* is one of the most practiced customs of Muslim women. *Hijab* refers to the headscarf, which is large enough to cover the head, neck, and chest. The term can be extended to include the larger concept of an overall modest form of dress for Muslim women. The term *hijab* literally means “to hide from view” or “to conceal.” Muslim women are required to cover everything except the face and hands when in the sight of anyone other than their immediate family. Still others suggest that the meaning of *hijab* refers not only to dress, but also to behavior, manners, speech, and appearance in public (Ali, M. C., 2001).

The basis for this particular style of dress is to promote modesty, decency, chastity, and respect

as indicated in the Qur’an (the Islamic holy book). Dressing modestly is a requirement for Muslim women. Most Islamic scholars agree on the following rules or requirements for women’s dress (Palmer, A. I, 2001).

1. Clothing must cover the entire body except for hands and face. No adornment, including jewelry and make up, may be visible.
2. The fabric should be thick enough so that one cannot see through it. Neither the skin color nor the form of the body should be discernable.
3. The clothing must hang loose to hide the shape and size of the body beneath it.
4. The fabric cannot contain bright colors, bold designs, or shiny reflective material that would attract men’s attention to the wearer. Only muted, somber colors are appropriate.
5. Women’s clothing must not resemble the clothing of men.
6. Women’s clothing should not resemble the clothing worn by non-Muslims.

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7. Women's clothing should not be worn as a status symbol or an expression of wealth or vanity. Neither should clothing be in poor enough condition to gain the wearer admiration for appearing humble.

While many Westerner's believe that requiring women to wear the *hijab* in public is a form of subjugation, some Muslim women argue that this modest form of dress actually requires men to pay attention to women's minds and personalities rather than to their physical attractiveness. The modest dress discourages unwanted sexual attention from men.

Whether or not the *hijab* requires the entire face to be covered varies among people within the Muslim world. While some Muslims believe the entire face should be covered, others do not consider it a requirement. Face covering varies from the entire face uncovered, to only the area between the forehead and the nose unveiled, to a total covering from head to toe with only a three-inch opening covered with mesh to allow for vision. This latter form of clothing is called the *burqa* and is worn in more conservative communities.



Dress of Muslim Men

While less restrictive, Islamic men are also expected to follow a dress code. The clothing of Muslim men should be modest, neither tight nor provocative. The area between the navel and the knee should be covered from all people except the wife. Men are not allowed to wear gold or silk.

Perhaps the most visible distinction is the beard worn by many Muslim men. For many, the beard is symbolic of religious devotion to Islam. Some references to the writings and teachings of Islam dictate that while moustaches should be trimmed, beards should be worn no shorter than fist-length (Elias, M. A, 2001). The beard has been at the center of a number of lawsuits when Muslim men have been fired for refusing to shave their beards. If it is a safety issue, the employer has strong legal grounds to enforce the requirement. Where safety is not an issue, employers are generally expected to make reasonable accommodations for the religious practices of their employees.

Additionally, some Muslim men wear a head covering. Head coverings include caps (*galansuwa*), and/or turbans (*imama*) of various lengths. Reference to wearing turbans can be found in Islamic religious writings and as modeled by historic Islamic prophets. (Questions, 2001). Still others wear head coverings to visually distinguish themselves from non-Muslims.

It is important to note that specific traditions of dress found in some Muslim countries are often the expression of local customs rather than religious principle (Abuzaakouk, Badawi, & Douglass, 1999).

Sikhs

Another group of people who may be mistaken for Muslims because of their hair covering is Sikhs. Sikhism is a religion with its beginnings in India, where the majority of Sikhs still live today. (For more information about Sikhism, refer to Kauer-Singh, K. (1995). *Sikhism*. N.Y.: Thomas Learning.)

Male Sikhs wear turbans and beards. Maintaining long uncut hair is a symbol of their spirituality. Male Sikhs tie their hair on top of their head and cover it with a full turban. This keeps the hair neat. Sikh women have uncut hair, which is

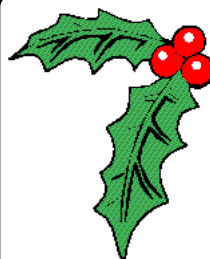
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left loose or tied neatly in a bun at the back of the head. Unlike adults, young boys often braid their uncut hair and tie it at the back of the neck. Or, they may pile their hair on top of their head and wear a small turban called a *patka*. For Sikhs, it is very important that hair should never be removed from any part of the body. Similar to Muslims, dress for both men and women should be simple and modest.

For additional information on the Muslim culture, refer to *Diversity in People: A Glimpse Into the Arab Culture, Diverse Issues, Vol. 1, No 5* at <http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/pi/Newsletters.html>.

References:

- Abuzaakouk, A. R.; Badawi, J.; & Douglass, S. (Eds.) (1999). *Discover Islam: The Reader*. No. E04-Reprint, Transcom International. (To order a copy of this publication, call 703-941-7783 or visit the Internet at <http://www.discoverislam.com>).
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Test Your Holiday Knowledge

Questions:

1. What country is the poinsettia native to?
2. Who first practiced the use of Christmas Trees?
3. True or false: The New England Puritans forbade Christmas decorations?
4. In the United States, children put stockings out at Christmas time. What do Dutch children put out?
5. Who wrote the holiday story, *A Christmas Carol*?
6. A German tradition is to hide a certain food in a Christmas tree. The first one to find it is given a special gift. What is the food?
7. Where did kissing under the mistletoe originate?
8. In Syria, how are Christmas gifts distributed?
9. What is the origin of candy canes?
10. When is Christmas Day celebrated in Guatemala?



Answers:

1. Mexico
2. Germans, in the 7th century A.D.
3. True: The Puritans considered Christmas trees and decorations to be pagan. They were outlawed in Massachusetts until 1859.
4. Shoes
5. Charles Dickens
6. A pickle
7. A Norse myth
8. One of the Wise Men's camels
9. Candy canes are modeled after a shepherd's crook. The first record dates back to 18th Century France.
10. December 25th

Look for other quiz items at these sources:

<http://www.voicenet.com/~lunar>

<http://www.familygames.com/features/quizzes.html>.

Diversity In The Workplace: Sometimes Holidays Can Be a Headache

The winter months are host to a number of important holidays. Not every holiday, however, is important to every one of us. Sometimes the joyous celebrations of one person may present a problem for another person.

The festivities typically begin with Halloween decorations in the office. However, the Wiccans disapprove of the warty-nosed witch decorations, and the fundamentalist Christians have trouble with the occult symbolism. The Jewish employee is a bit put off by the abundance of Christmas decorations from Thanksgiving through the first of January. And the atheist would prefer not to be asked to sing “*O Come All Ye Faithful*.” Still others may object to all of the commercialization associated with Christmas in the office. So when it is time to plan the Office Christmas Party, what’s the manager of an employee group to do?

Some managers have tried to address this concern by attempting to be all inclusive, reflecting bits of several different holidays and cultures at the same time. So, at the party, one corner of the room displays a manger scene and a second corner displays a menorah. In yet a third corner are the symbols of a Kwanzaa celebration, while the music features *Feliz Navidad*, the Spanish version of *We Wish You A Merry Christmas*.

Other managers have tried to address this concern by eliminating all references to specific religious or cultural holidays. Instead of having a Christmas Party the office has a Winter Season Party. And still others have given up and eliminated parties and celebrations altogether.

When addressing these issues, it is important to remember that there are no ironclad rules. Federal law obligates employers to accommodate religious practices unless doing so causes an undue hardship. Generally, this refers to providing time off to meet religious obligations. Outside of these legal requirements, much of it is common sense.



With the abundance of diverse groups and practices in our country, few managers will ever know every cultural or religious practice that

may impact every employee. Perhaps the best approach is to simply ask the people in **your** employment group what is and what is not comfortable to them. Give everyone an opportunity to communicate his or her needs. Create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable to step forward and admit that something is offensive to them. Open communication will generally resolve most issues.

Keep the following suggestions in mind:

Not everyone shares the same assumptions about what “the holidays” are all about.

Not everyone from the same religion or ethnic group celebrates a holiday in the same way.

Not everyone celebrates Christmas.

Not everyone can eat the foods we might serve due to cultural or religious restrictions. And some may not be allowed to eat at all during the time of the celebration.

Ask employees in your work group to identify the holidays that are important in their lives. Make an effort to recognize these events and be sensitive to needs related to these important holidays.

Reference: Infante, V. D. (2000). Holiday Headaches. Workforce, 79 (12), 48-53.

Diverse Activity: Lookism

When the word “diversity” is mentioned, several terms are likely to come to mind. Among these include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, physical and mental abilities, income, education, and sexual orientation. One dimension of diversity that does not always immediately come to mind is appearance. Bias based on appearance may be referred to as lookism. Consciously or unconsciously, we often make judgements about people



based on the way that they look.

The following activity is designed to help us think about the concept of lookism.

Objective: To identify how appearance affects bias.

Time: About 45 minutes

Equipment: Flipchart and markers for each group

Instructions:

1. Divide the class into small groups - about four learners to a group and issue each group a flipchart and markers.
2. Each group will make two flipcharts. One will be titled, “How prejudice and bias focus on the physical characteristics of people,” and the other will be titled, “How prejudices and bias focus on the dress and make-up of people.”
3. Under each title they will list how people are hindered for not meeting a group’s or organizational standards (norms).
4. Coach the groups as they work their way through the exercise. These are some of the items that could be listed:

Physical Characteristics

- Too short
- Overweight
- Too light or too dark
- Too young or too old
- Disfigured
- Not graced with “good looks”
- Features that are less desirable than social or cultural norms

Dress and Make Up

- Dresses out of fashion
- Body piercing
- Hair length
- Informal dress
- Impression of informality
- Expression of cultural, ethnic, religion, generational, or personal standard.

5. After the small groups have worked on the activity for about 25 minutes, bring the groups together and have each group present their findings.
6. Discuss what is fair and legitimate to ask of people when it comes to work-place norms about physical characteristics and appearance.
 - Ability to do the job
 - Loss of customers and money due to how an organization’s personnel look
 - Safety requirements
 - Loss of personnel because of bias about appearance

This activity is appropriate for adults and older youth. It can also be adapted so that step #6 focuses on inclusion in school, social groups, and other settings more relevant to the participant group.

This activity was created by Donald R. Clark. It is reprinted with permission from the author. Visit his Web site at <http://nwlinc.com/~donclark/leader/appear.html>.

Diversity Around the State: College Staff Assistants Participate in Diversity Training



The Cooperative Extension Staff Assistant Statewide Conference was held at University Park October 25 - 26, 2001. The conference included two concurrent sessions entitled, *Working with Diverse Clients*. Dr. Annette Bookter, Coordinator of the Diversity Support and Education Center, facilitated these sessions focusing on the following objectives:

- To discuss more about the diversity of clients within extension and how to better serve them.

- To describe communication principles for working with diverse populations.

- To identify personal actions for meeting diverse clients' needs.

Participants had many opportunities to discuss their own diversity characteristics, as well as the characteristics of their clients. Guidelines for communicating with diverse clients were discussed and strategies were identified for improving customer service.

General strategies for dealing with the vast array of clients include:

- approaching every client as an individual, understanding that diversity exists in many different forms,
- acknowledging our own stereotypes and assumptions about others,
- considering how we can be more cognizant of the ways in which these assumptions influence our behavior, and
- respecting both the similarities and differences in people.

Participants found the workshops to be very informative and worthwhile. The sessions provided an open atmosphere to discuss diversity issues within the context of customer service. Participants identified a variety of personal actions to use on a daily basis for improving customer service to diverse clients.

Thanks to Beth McLaughlin, Manager, Staff Development, for sharing this article.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Years Around the World

Afrikaans	<i>Geseende Kersfees</i>
Armenian	<i>Shenoraavor Nor Dari yev Pari Gaghand</i>
Bulgarian	<i>Tchestita Koleda; Tchestito Rojdestvo Hristovo</i>
Chinese	<i>Sheng Dankuai Le (Mandarin)</i>
Croatian	<i>Sretan Bozic</i>
Czech	<i>Prejenne Vam Vesele Vanoce a stastny Novy Rok</i>
Danish	<i>Glaedelig Jul</i>
Dutch	<i>Vrolijk Kerstfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar!</i>
French	<i>Joyeux Noel</i>
Finnish	<i>Hyvaa joulua</i>
German	<i>Froheliche Weihnachten!</i>
Greek	<i>Kala Christouyenna!</i>
Hawaiian	<i>Mele Kalikimaka</i>
Hebrew	<i>Mo'adim Lesimkha. Chena tova</i>
Hindi	<i>Shub Naya Baras</i>
Hungarian	<i>Kellemes Karacsonyi unnepekert</i>
Icelandic	<i>Gledileg Jol</i>
Indonesian	<i>Selamat Hari Natal</i>
Irish	<i>Nollaig Shona Dhuit</i>
Italian	<i>Buone Feste Natalizie</i>
Japanese	<i>Shinnen omedeto. Kurisumasu Omedeto</i>
Korean	<i>Sung Tan Chuk Ha</i>
Navajo	<i>Merry Kashmis</i>
Norwegian	<i>God Jul</i>
Polish	<i>Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia</i>
Portuguese	<i>Feliz Natal e Pr - spero Ano Novo!</i>
Russian	<i>Srozhdestovm Kristovim</i>
Spanish	<i>Feliz Navidad</i>
Swahili	<i>Kuwa na Krismasi njema</i>
Tagalog	<i>Maligayan Pasko!</i>
Thai	<i>Sooksun Wan Christmas</i>
Turkish	<i>Noeliniz Ve Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun</i>
Ukrainian	<i>Razhdast'sya</i>
Vietnamese	<i>Chung Mung Giang Sinh</i>
Welsh	<i>Nsdolig Llawen</i>
Zulu	<i>Sinifisela ukhisimusi omuhle no nyaka omusha</i>

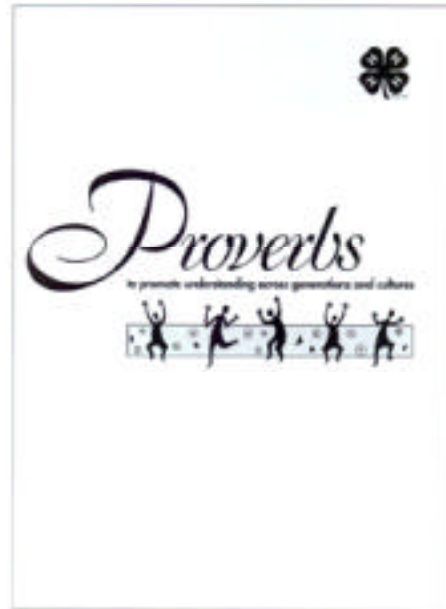
Visit <http://www.travlang.com/languages/christmas.html> for additional languages, and to view information, maps, and flags related to the languages.

Diversity Resource: Two Recent Diversity Publications

Add two recent publications to your collection of diversity resources.

An Overview of Diversity Awareness is a new publication that provides an overview of the topic of cultural diversity. This publication discusses the meaning of diversity, the changing demographics of our country's population, the relationship between diversity and culture, and suggestions for increasing our diversity competence. It is written in an easy-to-read format and is appropriate for older youth and adults. It may be used as the basis for a presentation on diversity or as a supplemental resource to enhance diversity programming.

This publication is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. It will also be available in pdf format at Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences on the web: <http://www.cas.psu.edu> after December 1, 2001.



Proverbs to Promote Understanding Across Generations and Cultures is a new 4-H curriculum designed for youth ages 12-19, older adults, and intergenerational audiences. In the home and in other community settings alike, proverbs are used to pass on rich cultural traditions, to transmit folklore, and to communicate expected codes of behavior. The objectives of this curriculum are:

- to increase understanding of the process of aging,
- to increase communication and understanding of family members and others of different age groups,
- to raise awareness of cultural differences and similarities.

The curriculum is activity and discussion-based. It is designed as an easy-to-use guide with discussion points included for the facilitator. Proverbs can be accessed on the Internet at one of the following addresses:

<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/pi/resources.html>
<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/mk/menu.html>

Diversity Calendar

November 2001

American Indian Heritage Month

- 2nd *All Soul's Day* - Catholic Christians celebrates the dead.
- 4th *Karva Chauth* - Hindu. A fast honoring the Hindu god Shiva and goddess Parvati.
- 11th *Veteran's Day* - U.S. Honors all those who served in all the country's wars.
Birthday of Baha'u'llah - Bahai' celebration that marks the birth of the prophet-founder of the Baha'i faith. Begins at sundown.
- 14th *Diwali* . Hindu. Festival of lights, marks the beginning of the Hindu New Year.
Dutch American Day - U.S. Recognizes contributions made by people of Dutch ancestry to the United States.
- 15th *Ramadan* - Islam. The holiest month of the Islamic year. It is a time of spiritual and physical purification. Begins at sundown.
Haile Selassie's Coronation Day - The most important day of the year for Rastafarians.
Shichi go san - Japan. Seven-Five-Three. An annual day to honor all children 3 yrs. of age, all boys 5 yrs. old, and all girls age 7.
- 22nd *Thanksgiving Day* - U.S. Honors the first harvest of the Plymouth Colony. Celebrated with family gatherings and feasting.
- 27th *Hmong New Year* - Hmong, U.S.
- 30th *Guru Nanak's Birthday* - Sikh. Commemorates the birth of the founder of the Sikh religion.
St. Andrew's Day - Scotland. Celebrates the life of St Andrew, patron saint of Scotland.

December 2001

Universal Human Rights Month

- 1st *World AIDS Day* - U.N. To increase awareness and education about AIDS.
Rosa Parks Day - U.S. Commemorates the anniversary of Rosa Park's arrest in 1955.
- 2nd *Advent* - Christian. Four weeks before Christmas. A time to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ.
- 3rd *International Day of Disabled Persons* - U.N. Promotes the continued integration of disabled persons into general society.
- 5th *Saint Nicholas Day* - Netherlands.
- 8th *Bodhi Day (Buddha's Enlightenment)* - Buddhist.
Feast of the Immaculate Conception - Roman Catholic.

- 9th *Hannukkah* - Jewish. An eight-day festival commemorates the recapture of the Temple of Jerusalem from Syrian Greeks in 165 B.C.E. Begins at sundown.
- 10th *Human Rights Day* - U.N. Celebrates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.
- 12th *Fiesta de Gualalupe* - Mexico. Feast of the patron saint of Mexico.
- 13th *Santa Lucia Day* - Sweden, U.S. A winter lights festival celebrating the life of Santa Lucia, an Italian martyr.
- 15th *Eid al-Fitr* - Islam. Marks the end of Ramadan. Begins at sundown.
- 22nd *Solstice* - International. Marks the first day of winter in the Northern hemisphere and the first day of summer in the Southern hemisphere.
- 23rd *Tenno Tanjobi or Emperor's Birthday*- Japan. A national holiday celebrating the birthday of the current emperor.
- 25th *Christmas* - Christian. Celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.
- 26th *Kwanzaa* - U.S. - a seven-day celebration to honor Americans of African descent. Based on traditional African harvest festivals.

January 2002

- 1st *New Year's Day* - International.
- 6th *Epiphany* - Christian. Honors the visit of the 3 wise men to Baby Jesus.
- 7th *Christmas* - Coptic & Eastern Orthodox.
- 14th *New Year's Day* - Eastern Orthodox.
- 15th *Seijin no hi* - Japan. Honors 20 year olds.
- 19th *Epiphany* - Eastern Orthodox.
- 20th *World Religion Day* - Baha'i.
- 21st *Martin Luther King Day* - U.S.
Altagracia Day - Dominican Republic. Our Lady of High Grace religious holiday.
- 27th *Tu B'Shevat* - Jewish. New Year celebration of trees. Begins at sundown.
- 30th *Jashan Sadeh* - Zoroastrian. Mid-winter festival.



Diverse Issues is authored by:

Patreese D. Ingram

State Extension Specialist Diversity Education

Department of Agricultural and Extension Education
323 Agricultural Administration Building
University Park, PA 16802 814-863-7439
E-mail: pdi1@psu.edu.

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