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The understanding of my beliefs attitudes and values have changed tremendously under the influence of text readings and getting to understand the applicability of several concepts relating to the topic of individual and group differences.

The changes have been particularly notable in the aspects of racial and ethnic identity. Unlike in the earlier days, I have been able to substantially relate with people of different races and I have been able to get rid of some racially inclined prejudices that I may have had before taking this unit. In the past I used to hold the belief that the United States is a country that lays its foundation on the basis of white supremacy but in the time I have spent in America I have been able to prove myself wrong. This is because racism as I have come to find out is a vice that is sneered on in the U.

S like in the rest of the world. I have been able to shake the ideology that the white Americans are at an advantage to make successful individuals of themselves by virtue of advantages accorded to them due to their skin color. I have been able to understand the causes of racism and prejudice in general and am currently in a position to identify how individuals, institutions and cultural systems contribute to the propagation of these two vices.

When it comes to institutional racism, I have been able to confirm that it does not have to emanate from the individual. Though I agree that there are manifestations of racism in the American society, I can now confirm that most of the racist tendencies I have always assumed were intentional actually present without the persons involved realizing their racist attitudes. Initially I held the belief that the color of an individual's skin influenced

whether or not they would end up on welfare. I used to believe that there are very few white people on welfare because the color of their skin could not permit them to live on handouts.

I have realized that it would be ridiculous for me to hold on to the belief that white people are bound to benefit from their skin color when they have to compete with people from other races. There are some beliefs I held before taking the unit and was able to stick to such principles after going through several items of literature on the topic of individual and group differences. One of these beliefs is the fact that the minority races in the United States have the same chances for success as their white counterparts. I am also not of the view that employers should give people of minority racial backgrounds priority over the white citizens should be upheld. On the contrary, I believe that the professional qualifications of an individual should be the ones to speak for him or her. From the kind of information I have been able to gain so far I can now competently disagree with members of my race should they happen to elicit racist tendencies. I am also in a position to convince most of the people I associate with provide them with not to judge people by the color of their skin or ethnic background. The aspect of culture has for a long time been a scapegoat for explaining unwarranted racist and tribalistic actions.

Through taking this course, I am now able to understand that cultural affiliations are but creations of human beings and as such should not be used to support vices in society.

How my understanding of human values has changed

Society is as diverse as the solar system. This is because of the human differences that arise both in terms of physical aspects and in behavioral characteristics. It is these differences that make any given society operate appropriately. The United States as country is particularly a concomitant of human differences. This is particularly because it is a liberalist society where individuals are accorded the rights to do most things as they wish.

Initially, because of my cultural background, I was not in a position to understand some of the lifestyle choices that were legal in the country. This is particularly in regards to same sex relationships. Based on my community of origin, this is considered one of the vices and it is bound to receive the toughest of punishments-death. However, coming to the United States, I have been able to understand that homosexuality is not a choice that individuals make but rather an inherent characteristic. I have been able to get rid of my anti-gay tendencies including the belief I used to hold that landlords should reserve the right to kick out of their houses individuals that practiced this alternative lifestyle. I still maintain my belief that many cultures in the world support homosexuality. This has been effectively reinforced by going through various forms of literature including publications in the form of books and websites. Various news programs have also served to enlighten me on the issue of homosexuality and its prevalence even in societies considered strict.

Though I did not think that a substantial number of homosexuals are involved in criminal activities, I can now comfortably change my viewpoint because I have come to the realization that homosexuals are fully functional

human beings and are prone to the vices that heterosexuals are predisposed to. I have come to accept that in whatever circumstance that homosexuals are forced to disclose their status, they should be regarded as different individuals and not deviants of cultural conventions. In my parent culture, sexism manifests the most severe of forms.

This is the kind of culture that still maintains that women have their own place in society and that their role is to act as servants to the man.

Residence in the United States coupled with the academic knowledge gained by taking the course on individual and group differences have served to broaden my perspective on the role of women in society. I have come to realize that gender need not be an inhibiting factor to the personal development of a human being. I actually now understand that when individuals conform to gender roles in lieu of societal expectations they are bound to not achieve their full potential. I am now a key supporter of gender equality in the employment sectors. This is because I have come to realize that if women are given the same chances that their male counterparts are given, they can perform equally as good, if not better. I also hold the viewpoint that violence against women is a serious issue in today's society and should be appropriately dealt with.

Though I did not initially understand the full implications of the term 'feminists' I can now tell that these are not women who hate men for the sake of it. This is an enlightenment I have been able to receive by taking this particular course. I now strongly support the idea of sexism being taught in schools as this will serve to get other people out of the dark. Initially, I was undecided on whether legislation should be passed to demand that

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organizations recruit women into traditionally male jobs. I have now made up my mind and I believe that it will be in the interest of everybody to make the jobs market a level playing field.

this will serve to make sure that professionalism is maintained occasioned by companies hiring competent individuals and not those who meet the gender criterion.

Steps in becoming more tolerant and aware of human differences

In order to become more aware and tolerant to human differences, I intend to make sure that I abandon the culturally-imposed views as regards different people. I will respect all people the same regardless of their gender and I will try to the best of my ability to understand people who choose to drift away from the heterosexual way of life. I will respect people of all races and I will make an effort to ensure that people from my culture also see things from my perspective. I will not follow blindly any discriminatory actions that will be demanded of me and if I see a certain action as intolerant to human differences, I will speak against it.