

- The rights of gay students to express their sexuality freely are more important than the rights of religious groups who teach that homosexuality is wrong. **(Identity based on individual lifestyle is more important than identity based on shared tradition.)**

A **social conservative** argues:

- The family is the bedrock of society, and the best way to bring up children; there is nothing wrong with celebrating traditional ways of living above how a minority of people live. **(Social cohesion is a higher good than diversity.)**
- It is not right to impose values on communities who may not share those values, e.g. making a school in a majority Muslim area teach gay rights. **(Community values are more important than universal values.)**
- Religious objections to teaching gay rights should be respected, because the great world faiths have a greater depth and strength than contemporary fashions. **(Tradition is more valuable than modernity.)**

3. This house would ban the wearing of the niqab in public

Social conservatism supports the proposition; **social liberalism** supports the opposition.

A **social conservative** argues:

- Women who wear the niqab shut themselves off from mainstream British society. **(Incomers have a responsibility to adapt to the shared values of the society they come into.)**
- The wearing of the niqab is a public demonstration of the oppression of women. **(Sub-groups within society do not have the right to promote values that contradict those of the community as a whole; social cohesion is a higher good than tolerance.)**
- Britain's culture is based on different values to those of Islam; public celebrations of Islamic culture threaten our national identity. **(The preservation of shared values is a higher good than diversity.)**

Diversity or solidarity?

A **social liberal** argues:

- People should be allowed to dress how they like. **(Acceptance of diversity is a higher good than conformity to shared values.)**
- Banning ways of dress associated with certain ethnic groups opens the door to racism. **(Tolerance is the highest good.)**
- British values are in fact based on tolerance and openness, and we should therefore accept and celebrate different ways of dressing. **(An open society is a good society.)**

I think it's fair to say that most British people under the age of 25, particularly those either at university or likely to go to university - in other words most debaters - are more likely to identify with the values of social liberalism than with those of social conservatism. That makes it all the more important to understand that there is another way to see the world, which is not necessarily stupid or evil.

I hope you can see now how useful the Big Ideas are. They apply to a surprising number of debates. Once you start seeing motions through the lens of a Big Idea, you can analyse them much more effectively and create better arguments. During a Big Ideas debate, keep the Big Idea in mind, constantly pulling the rope of the discussion back towards your end of the clash, talking up the values of your side and exposing the failings of the values of the other side.

Tradition or modernity?