

# Assess the view that traditional class identities

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Assess the view that traditional class identities are no longer important.

Social class refers to the divisions within society. Each group shares the same characteristics, for example they may work within the same type of occupation, therefore meaning they share the same economic status. These groups are the working class, middle class and upper class. However now some believe there isn't this social class division within society and that everyone is equal. People that would agree traditional class identities are no longer important are postmodernists.

These have the view that class no longer really matters in modern Britain and that now people no longer identify themselves according to their class background. Clarke and Saunders (1991) would agree with the view of postmodernists. They suggest that classes have become fragmented into many different groups and now they have been replaced with other influences such as gender and lifestyles. Although there is some evidence which suggests these ideas are exaggerated.

Marshall's survey into how people view themselves showed people still see social class as a source of identity. The traditional working class was a group of people that was developed after the industrialisation when there was a need for large amounts of manual workers. This group formed a strong sense of culture and identity. These were strong moral values, having men as the breadwinner and women as housewives and believing getting a job is more important than having an education.

The traditional working class also saw the labour party as the party for the working class as it represented their interests, as pointed out in item B. Although now many people in the working class vote for different parties as

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they don't all agree on what is important now in society, supporting the idea that traditional class identities are no longer important. Now also the manufacturing business has changed a lot, this means now they aren't the same jobs available as they would have been before as they have been replaced with things such as machines that can do a faster and cheaper job.

Therefore the working class has had to change the sort of jobs they do over time which may be a reason for the change in characteristics, and therefore making the traditional class identities now no longer important. Diamond and Giddens agree with this as they argue that the working class is no longer important because of the change in the economy that has led to the decline of manual labour jobs, and that the working class isn't now the only class which experiences economic and social deprivation. The new working class is now seen to have little loyalty to others within the same class, more emphasis on consumer goods, high levels of home ownership, and women likely to be employed. There is also now a larger section of the working class, this may be down to some working class jobs now becoming more skilful therefore getting higher pay, while others become less skilful and get lower pay, meaning people in the same class may identify themselves very differently.

However there are sociologists that believe traditional class identities are still very important, for example Marxists. They believe social class is still hugely influential in shaping our identities. They also believe social class is identified by your income, and that leisure wouldn't define your identity as you would need the disposable income to afford it. The British Attitudes Survey supported this idea, because in 2007 it found still 94% of people still identified themselves with a social class, whereas only 6% didn't.

Overall the importance of traditional class identities are seen every differently by different people. Views which agree and disagree to the importance of traditional class identities still being important have both positives and negatives so it's hard to just believe one view point is the truth and the other doesn't matter. Therefore I believe both viewpoints have sufficient evidence and that traditional class identities are still important to an extent, however now there is also other factors that can make up our identity other than just our social class.