



65 Personal Identity Examples

By Chris Drew (PhD) / December 23, 2022



Personal identity refers to a sense of self that a person develops over their life. Your personal identity is a mix of how you see yourself and how others perceive you.

Key examples of personal identity include your personality, achievements, gender, ethnicity, social status, social class, beliefs, values, and culture. Combined, these features (along with others – see below) make us all unique individuals.

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Real Life Personal Identity Analysis: Queen Elizabeth II

As the longest-serving ruler of England, Queen Elizabeth II will be a character remembered through the history books for many hundreds of years.

There are some interesting aspects of the Queen's personal identity that make her a good case study. No one is quite like her.

She has some features that overlap with many other people. But she has some that are remarkably unique.

Let's start with the more common identity features of the Queen

Personal Identity Of The Queen

1. Gender

The Queen was assigned female at birth and accepted this as her gender identity throughout her life.

Her gender affected her life profoundly. For one thing, she would only have been able to become the Queen because she did not have any brothers who, at the time, would have overridden her claim to the throne because they were male.



In smaller ways, her gender affected her personal identity. For example, the way she would dress was normal only for women and not men (she wore many famous flowing dresses, for example).

2. Race/Ethnicity

The Queen is of a white Western European ethnicity. She has Germanic, English, Scottish, Hungarian, French, and Irish blood.

Clearly, the Queen was of privileged social status. Her family's race would, in history, have been a prerequisite for them ruling England. Today, the white European British ethnicity remains an ethnicity of privilege in Europe.

3. Social Class

The Queen was at the very tip of the social class hierarchy. Born into wealth and high social status, she was seen as being of the upper class.

This influenced her personal identity from a very young age. The Queen's posh accent, for example, developed from her cultural surroundings. Similarly, she never experienced financial hardship or the need to go out and seek a trade (although, interestingly, she did serve as a mechanic during the 1940s).

4. Marital Status

The Queen was married to Prince Phillip. Her marital status would likely have been central to her sense of self.

The Queen would not only have seen herself as a wife, but also a mother. Like most married parents, these two identity features were probably at the core of her sense of self.

Most people's status as a husband, wife, or parent, can affect how they think (always keeping their loved ones in their thoughts when they make decisions) and act (for example, many people insist they can't quit their job because they have family who rely on them!).

5. Ascribed Status

Ascribed status refers to a social status that you were given at your time of birth. Of course, for Queen Elizabeth, she was ascribed her royal status by birthright.

In fact, the queen almost *had to* become the queen. She could have abdicated her right, like her uncle did, but this is highly frowned upon in Royal circles. Her uncle left Britain and moved to the United States to get away from his ascribed status!

6. Achieved Status

Achieved status refers to your personal accomplishments in life.



For the Queen, this includes being the longest ruling British monarch in history. She wasn't born with this status, she achieved it through her life.

Similarly, the Queen might claim her ability to unite England, Wales, and Scotland under her for over 70 years as an accomplishment of sorts.

Normal people would often identify things like a university degree or their profession as their personal accomplishments.

7. Family Role

The Queen also has a very interesting family role which underpins her personal identity.

In Western Europe, women did not traditionally take the family role of decision maker and authority figure. But the Queen's unique status as Queen meant that she became the matriarch of her family.

Famously, all family decisions had to be passed through her, and she even had the authority to decide which family members could (and couldn't) use the royal title and get money from her personal trust fund.

Definition Of Personal Identity

A personal identity is the collection of unique identifying factors that a person develops over time that make up who they are.

Your personal identity is unique to you because no one has the exact same [mix of features](#), memories, habits, emotional dispositions, and knowledge that you have.

Personal identity is similar to social identity, but personal identities are about all of your unique features whereas your social identity usually only counts your sociological categorizations ([social identity examples](#) include: gender, race, social class).

How We Develop A Personal Identity

Your personal identity begins to be formed even before you were born.

Everyone is born with a history: who their parents are, genetic factors, and socially ascribed status features that are assigned at birth (e.g. gender).

As we enter **middle childhood**, our sense of self emerges in earnest. We start learning about our personal tastes, preferences, and hobbies.

As children, we also get feedback from our surroundings (other children's reactions to us, our parents disciplining us) which shape who we are as well. Some children meet these identity challenges and develop self-confidence and independence, while others may be scarred by their early rebukes and setbacks.



Into **adolescence**, we start to develop [aspects of our identities](#) like mindsets, ideologies, philosophies, and romantic relationships that will underpin our futures. Adolescents often explore different [subcultural](#) and [countercultural identities](#) to 'try on' ways of behaving.

The identity features that resonate with any individual may become a lifelong identity feature (e.g. 'a lover of rap music' or 'a long-distance runner').

In **adulthood**, our personal identities come to revolve around career and family status. We become concerned with creating a legacy and making a sustainable and happy life for ourselves and our loved ones.

Why Is Personal Identity Important?

Developing a sense of who we are is essential for developing self-efficacy, morality, and happiness.

[Self-efficacy](#) refers to belief in yourself. People who grow up to be competent, optimistic, and self-reliant have high self-efficacy. These people can navigate challenges and obstacles they face in everyday life. It sets them up well for success, builds resilience, and prevents burnout or social withdrawal.

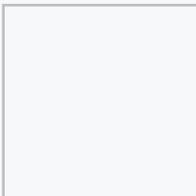
[Our morality](#) refers to our sense of right and wrong. When you know who you are and what your personal standards are, then you're able to set boundaries about what you will and will not do. Morality comes in part from our family and culture, but it's also developed through our own thought processes as we move through adolescence and adulthood.

Happiness will often come from having a clear sense of who we are, what we want out of life, and whether we have achieved it. People who don't know who they are and don't have purpose in life will often be unhappy. This is because they don't have a clear moral core. By contrast, people with a clear sense of their own personal identity will often be able to find happiness by taking up pursuits that fulfil their sense of purpose.

Conclusion

There are countless factors that influence our personal identity. Above, I've outlined some of the most important elements that people might point to when trying to define what's unique about themselves.

Developing a personal identity can make you confident and self-assured. When you know who you are and are comfortable with that, you can begin to develop happiness and contentment.



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