*https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/being-able-to-negotiate-our-racial-identity-is-important*

Being Able to Negotiate Our Racial Identity is Important



*The existence of people whose racialization and racial identity are not fixed does not render race irrelevant, but it does provide the opportunity to redefine races in a way that better represents our experiences.*

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“Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, look at these,” I overheard a boy on the playground taunt my sister while pulling at the corners of his eyes. This is my earliest racial memory, as a 7-year-old; I was upset and confused. I wondered why my sister, with whom I was raised practically as a twin with rhyming names and matching outfits, would be targeted in this way when I wasn’t. I thought we were the same; but our classmates didn’t.

My sister and I are multiracial, Japanese-American and white American but throughout our lives we have been perceived and treated differently from each other because of our coloring. I look white, and she is racially ambiguous. Her experiences are similar to many mixed race people, who are racialized in different ways depending on the context. Seen as Mexican one day, Hawaiian the next and Turkish the next, for example.

This fluidity extends from being racialized by an onlooker to our own racial identity formation. Multiracial individuals may have a racial identity that changes over time or in different settings; we may simultaneously identify with more than one monoracial group and/or with a [multiracial identity](https://www.drmariaroot.com/doc/BillOfRights.pdf). It is important for us to negotiate racial identities that reflect our heritage, culture and experience, which includes how we are perceived by others.

The existence of people whose racialization and racial identity are not fixed does not render race irrelevant, as evidenced by many examples of systemic racism including the fact that black Americans are still disproportionately targeted by [police violence](https://mxgm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/we-charge-genocide-FINAL.pdf), and the anticipated increase of multiracial people over the next 50 years won’t either. But it does provide the opportunity to redefine races in a way that better represents the lived experiences of mixed race people.