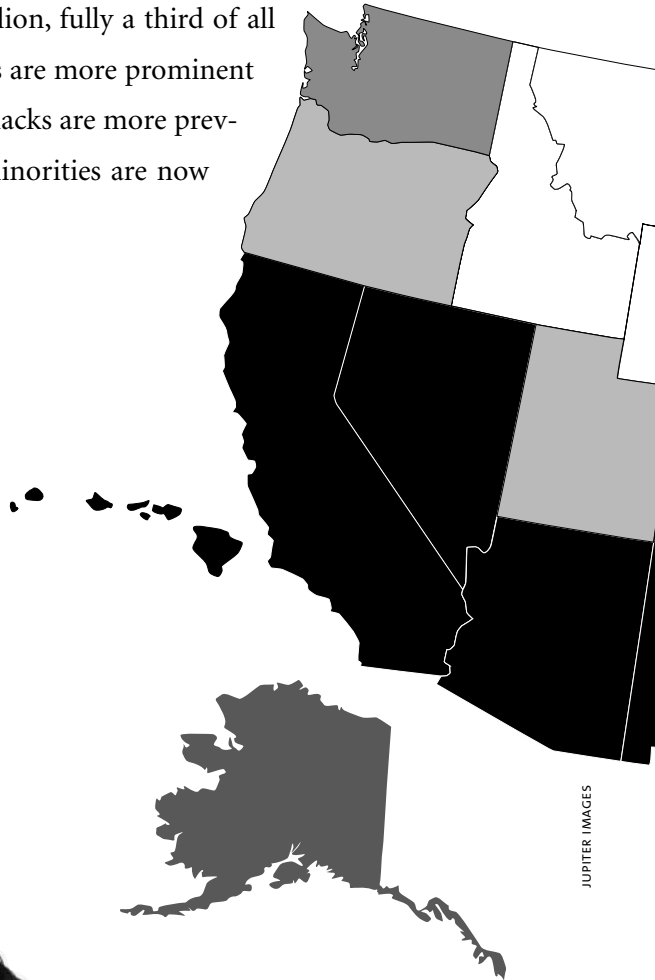


BY WILLIAM H. FREY

**Signs of** America's growing racial and ethnic diversity – sometimes celebrated, sometimes condemned – are everywhere. Indeed, the nation's combined minority population has reached 100 million, fully a third of all residents. And while Hispanics and Asians are more prominent in Los Angeles than in Des Moines, and blacks are more prevalent in Atlanta than in Salt Lake City, minorities are now noticeable in most parts of the country.

What is less well understood is that a “racial generation gap” is developing between young minorities and older whites. Four out of 10 children and young adults are minorities, compared with three out of 10 baby boomers and only two out of 10 seniors. New-immigrant minorities are more heavily clustered in their childbearing years, so they are both younger and more likely to have children than the native white population.

This reality has strongly influenced America's youth culture, validating interracial dating and cross-cultural tastes in music and food. And in places where the divide is most evident, it has increased competition for public resources. Should funds be steered to schools and playgrounds, or to outdoor lighting, walking trails and senior centers? Such



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generational competition has always had the potential to become testy; now it has a racial and cultural overlay.

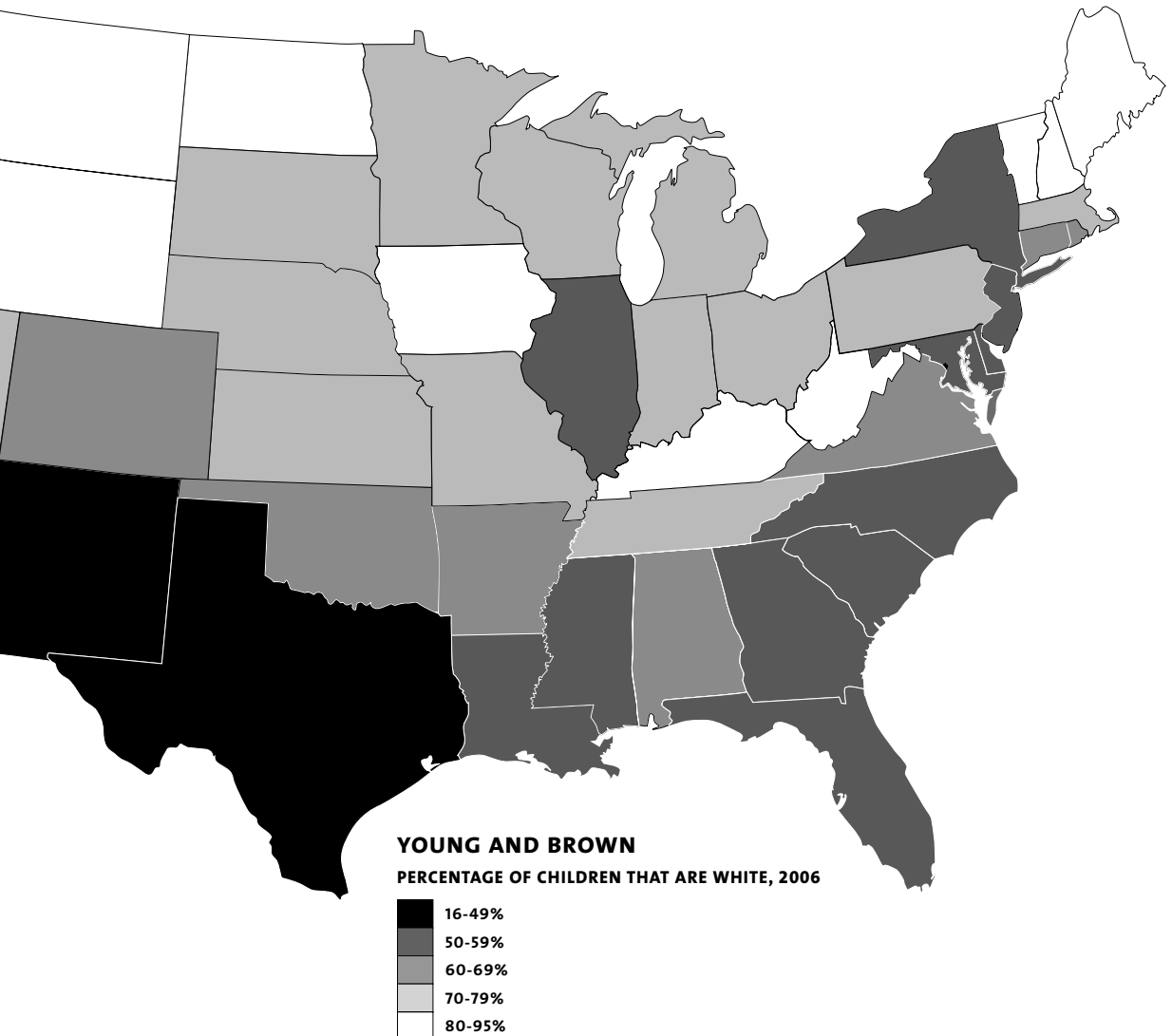
Of course, the gap varies from state to state. In California, long a melting pot, the child population is only 31 percent white, in contrast to a senior population that is 64 percent white. Hispanics alone account for almost half of California's youth.

In much of the heartland, the racial gener-

ation gap is barely evident; today, seven states (including DC) have more ethnic minority children than white. However, by 2025, the number will likely reach 18. America is once again becoming a melting pot, and children are leading the way. **M**

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**SOURCE:** William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census 2006 population estimates