

Adolescents' Evaluations of Political Leaders: The Case of President Donald Trump

Aaron Metzger<sup>1</sup>, Lauren Alvis<sup>2</sup>, Katelyn F. Romm<sup>1</sup>, Laura Wray-Lake<sup>3</sup>, and Amy K. Syvertsen<sup>4</sup>

West Virginia University<sup>1</sup>

Baylor College of Medicine<sup>2</sup>

University of California, Los Angeles<sup>3</sup>

Search Institute<sup>4</sup>

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### Abstract

The current study explored youths' views of President Donald Trump using quantitative ratings and open-ended responses from a diverse sample of 1,432 U.S. adolescents from three geographical regions. Adolescent demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, race, geographic location) were systematically associated with their views about Trump. Open-ended responses demonstrated substantial variability in youths' rationales for approving or disapproving of the president. Adolescents' attitudes were informed by knowledge of the president's leadership attributes, political views and policies, and their own experiences. Findings indicate that adolescents draw upon and synthesize a broad range of information when formulating their political views and coordinate this knowledge with their own opinions and experiences when evaluating political figures.

### Adolescents' Evaluations of Political Leaders: The Case of President Donald Trump

In countries organized by democratic principles, officials are elected into political office by voting citizens, and these elected officials enact and enforce laws and policies on behalf of the country's people. To effectively participate in political elections, voters must evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of potential candidates and decide whether the candidates will support policies that align with the individual's views and beliefs (Krosnick, 1988). Beyond elections, an informed and engaged populace continues to appraise and monitor the activities of elected officials, and national polls regularly provide information on extent of approval of elected officials throughout their terms (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2018b). An extensive body of political science and sociological research provides insights into the factors underlying adults' appraisals of political figures (Lau, Kleinberg, & Ditonto, 2018). However, less is known about how young people who cannot yet vote evaluate political leaders. National polls will occasionally solicit youth's views of leaders such as the president (Pew Research Center, 2019), but little research has examined demographic correlates of youth ratings or explored what considerations undergird adolescents' appraisals. Exploring youth's attitudes toward current politicians and their rationale for those attitudes can provide important information about adolescents' developing understanding of politics at a crucial point in development, and offer insights into individual differences in youth's political views. The current study utilized a large geographically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse sample and a mixed methods approach to examine adolescents' attitudes toward the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Donald Trump.

In the United States, as in many countries, citizens are not allowed to vote in national elections until they turn 18. However, research on youth civic development suggests foundational civic cognitive competencies take root earlier in adolescence (Wray-Lake, Metzger,

Syvertsen, 2017). Research has assessed numerous aspects of adolescents' civic reasoning, including knowledge of government and political processes (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007), civic beliefs (e.g., conceptualization of civic obligation; Metzger & Smetana, 2010), and social responsibility and sociopolitical values (Oosterhoff, Ferris, & Metzger, 2017; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011). Studies have also examined how adolescents define democracy and conceptualize different systems of government, such as democracies, meritocracies, and oligarchies (Flanagan, Galloway, Gill, Galloway, & Nti, 2005; Helwig, 2008). Empirical work has explored late adolescents' and emerging adults' budding political ideology (e.g., liberal vs. conservative ideology; Settle, Dawes, Christakis, & Fowler, 2010), and charted trends in youth's views of various social and political issues such as environmentalism, abortion, and race relations (Altshuler, Gerns Storey, & Prager, 2015; Oosterhoff, Wray-Lake, Palmer, & Kaplow, 2019; Wray-Lake, Flanagan, & Osgood, 2009). Taken together, findings indicate that adolescents are capable of evaluating and making judgments about politics and social issues. Such reasoning is an essential facet of civic development that is in need of greater study (Metzger & Smetana, 2010; Wray-Lake, 2019).

Less research has examined how adolescents evaluate political leaders (Patterson, Pahike, & Bigler, 2013). A few national polls have asked adolescents whether they approve or disapprove of national political leaders such as the president (Pew Research Center, 2019). Whereas Pew, CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, <http://civicyouth.org/>), and others offer keen insight into demographic differences in the political views and behaviors of young adults (18 and older), little research has examined demographic correlates of adolescents' ratings. Political views and voting patterns among adults systematically vary by numerous demographic and contextual variables including socioeconomic

status, geographic location (Kinsella, McTague, & Raleigh, 2015), race/ethnicity, and gender (Cordova & Rangel, 2017). These attributes are consistently predictive of adults' views of politicians. For instance, Trump receives more support from male and White voters, and less support from female, Black, and Latinx voters (Pew Research Center, 2018c). In addition, Trump received a larger percentage of votes in rural areas compared to larger cities.

Importantly, demographic characteristics are not merely proxies for static individual differences, but instead are inherently tied to different types of developmental experiences (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Pritzker & Metzger, 2011; Quintana et al., 2006). For example, Latinx youth may disapprove of Trump because his election has created a developmental context of fear and anxiety about how they and their families are treated in society, regardless of their immigration status (Wray-Lake et al., 2018a). Rural White youth may be more approving of Trump, given a developmental context that emphasizes religious, conservative values (Dillon & Savage). Examining demographic correlates of adolescents' approval ratings can shed light on the ways in which youth's experiences are associated with their nascent political views.

Adolescents' reasons or justifications for their ratings allow us to explore thinking behind quantitative approval or disapproval ratings. Political scientists have argued that individuals' ratings of politicians involve cognitive processing of knowledge of the political candidates, assessing alignment between the candidate and individuals' own attitudes, and weighing the relative strengths/weaknesses of the candidates (Krosnick, 2001). Thus, approval of a political leader requires the coordination of two distinct civic cognitive processes: civic knowledge and subjective evaluation. Civic knowledge has been considered foundational to political participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008), particularly voting (Hart et al., 2007). A great deal of research has focused on adolescents' civic knowledge, generally operationalized as

comprehension of features of American democratic process, including government structure and voting procedures (Galston, 2004). Evaluating a political leader requires more specific knowledge about the politician's policies and agenda or personal attributes (Lau et al., 2018), but less research has examined youth's knowledge of political leaders.

To assess adolescents' knowledge of a political leader such as President Trump, one strategy would be to examine adolescents' justifications for approving or disapproving of Trump to see if themes emerge that are consistent with the president's actual political stances and rhetoric. For instance, immigration continues to be a hotly contested policy issue during the first years of Trump's presidency. Since becoming president, Trump has consistently voiced criticism of existing immigration policies, most notably epitomized by his campaign promise to construct a wall along the US-Mexico border (Trump, 2016). Recent research indicates that Latinx youth were highly aware of Trump's campaign messages about immigration, as well as statements about immigration since becoming president, leading to more negative views of Trump (Wray-Lake et al., 2018a). However, Republicans, who are more likely to support Trump, viewed illegal immigration as the biggest problem facing America (Pew, 2018c), so we might anticipate that immigration policy will be a focus of both youth who approve and disapprove of President Trump. Beyond immigration, youth may approve or disapprove of Trump based on his views on abortion, environmental protection, and economic issues (Pew Research Center, 2019). Alternatively, individuals may rely on knowledge of his leadership style, experience, or personal attributes. Donald Trump was a historically unique presidential candidate in that he had never held any political office prior to his election. Trump is also unique in his extensive use of social media platforms such as Twitter (Keith, 2016). Perhaps awareness of such personal attributes may inform adolescents' views of president Trump. By examining adolescents' justifications for

ratings of president Trump, the current study seeks to provide valuable insights into adolescents' political and current events knowledge. Examining the breadth of responses will also provide a greater understanding of variability in adolescents' political knowledge.

Beyond political knowledge, evaluating a political leader also requires that individuals coordinate their political awareness of a leader's political agenda and attributes with a subjective evaluation of those policies and attributes (Krosnick, 1988). In other words, two different individuals may be cognizant of a specific leadership trait or policy stance held by the leader, but their own experiences or values may lead them to either approve or disapprove of the president based on that knowledge. In addition, this subjective step may entail prioritizing some factors in their evaluation over others (e.g., personal attributes vs. policy). Civic researchers and theorists, have argued that adolescents' may possess the cognitive skills to conduct such evaluations at a similar level as adults. For instance, school-based programs have demonstrated adolescents' successful participation in "Youth Vote" programs in which students participated in mock-voting events (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000). Hart and Youniss (2018) point a large literature indicating that adolescents are similar to adults on a large number of cognitive and decision-making capabilities.

While little research has investigated adolescents' subjective assessments of leaders, political scientists have long been interested in adult voters' decision-making prior to elections. Voters rely on a variety of decision-making factors, which can be divided into three broad categories: focus on policies and agenda, personal attributes of the leader, and personal experiences of the individual voter (Lau et al., 2018). Adolescents may rely on the same factors when rating a political leader. For instance, personal concurrence with proposed policies of the politician is an important deciding factor for many adult voters (Jessee, 2009), so adolescents

with strong beliefs about a specific political issue may base their rating of the president on the degree to which they view Trump's policies as aligned with their own attitudes on the issue. Political scientists have found that voter behavior is also influenced by a politician's perceived personal attributes including character, competence, and integrity (Rahn, 1993). Thus, we anticipate that some adolescents may focus on whether they have favorable views of Trump's leadership and communication style when rating the president. Finally, voters are influenced by their own experiences and considerations of self-interest (Sears & Funk, 1991). Similar to adults, adolescents may estimate the potential for a politician's policy or agenda to affect them personally, which may greatly impact how adolescents evaluate that politician. Some Latinx youth included such personal experiences as fundamentally guiding their opinions of president Trump (Wray-Lake et al., 2018). Based on these findings and the adult political literature, we expect some adolescents to include stories about how president Trump may impact themselves, their families, or other people where they live.

The current study sought to provide unique insights into adolescents' developing political attitudes and understanding by examining how adolescents evaluate a specific political leader: President Donald Trump. We asked adolescents to quantitatively rate their approval of President Trump and then explain or justify their rating via an open-ended written response. We first examined demographic correlates of adolescents' quantitative approval ratings, hypothesizing that demographic predictors of approval and disapproval of Trump would be similar to the correlates seen among adult voters. We hypothesized that youth who self-reported being male, White, or living in a geographically rural area would report higher approval ratings of Trump, whereas disapproval would be higher among female, ethnic minority, and larger city-dwelling youth. Next, open-ended responses were qualitatively analyzed to explore variability in



adolescents' reasons for their approval or disapproval. Based on political science research utilizing adult samples, we anticipated that youth's reasoning would be influenced by an awareness of broader social and political issues, beliefs about the essential attributes of effective political leaders, and adolescents' own personal experiences. We also examined whether adolescents' reasons for approving or disapproving of Trump varied by geographic location. Finally, we explored intersections between adolescents' knowledge about president Trump with their subjective evaluations by exploring associations between the quantitative ratings and open-ended justifications.

## **Method**

### **Research Design and Sample**

This study used open-ended responses and self-report survey data provided by 1,432 adolescents ages 14-20 years-old ( $M = 16.03$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; 56% female) enrolled in grades 9-12 from ten public high schools in suburban California (50%), urban Minnesota (28%), and rural West Virginia (22%). Data were collected between February-May 2017, shortly after Trump's inauguration in late-January 2017. These data come from wave 4 of a longitudinal study of civic development in children and adolescents, in which youth who were surveyed in a previous wave were recruited to participate (wave 4 retention rate = 70%). Adolescents were originally recruited through classrooms selected in partnership with school staff to achieve a sample that was representative of each school's student body. Parental consent, youth assent, and youth consent (for 18+ year olds) were obtained prior to participation.

Adolescents self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx (43%), White (34%), Black/African American (13%), Asian (6%), or another race-ethnicity (4%). A small percentage identified as first-generation immigrants (8%), with more identifying as second-generation immigrants (46%).

Adolescents reported their family's level of financial strain (Roehlkepartain, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2002): 10% indicated their family has a hard time buying things they need; 36% indicated their family has just enough money for things they need; 46% indicated their family has no problem buying things they need and can sometimes buy special things; and, 7% indicated their family has enough money to buy almost anything they want. Participants also reported whether their parent(s) completed high school or less (43%), some college (16%), or were college graduates (29%). Adolescents reported on parents' political ideology, responding to a single item asking whether their family is: very conservative (8%), mostly conservative (12%), evenly conservative and liberal (27%), mostly liberal (13%), or very liberal (7%); 33% reported they did not know. Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the sample. The demographic make-up of our sample was consistent with the characteristics of the specific counties in which our participating schools were located in terms of race and ethnicity and parents' education (census.gov/quickfacts). The sampled regions enabled us to capture youth residing in politically diverse communities as indicated by the 2016 election results for the specific counties containing our participating schools. County-level data indicated that Trump won 75% of the popular vote in the West Virginia county, 29% of the vote in the Minnesota county, and 23% of the vote in the California county (Federal Election Commission, 2017).

### **Closed- and Open-Ended Election Metrics**

Participants were asked three questions about the election: two open-ended questions, followed by a close-ended approval rating question. The questions were presented with the following prompt: "Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. We would like to know what you think about this. Please take at least 5 minutes to respond to the questions below. Your views are important." Then, participants were asked: (a) "Describe your feelings about

Donald Trump being president. Be as specific as you can. Positive and negative views are equally valued.” (b) “What is it about Trump being elected president that made you feel this way?” The items were written to broadly capture any reaction youth wanted to share. The open-ended questions were followed by a single item approval rating question: “Some people approve of Donald Trump as president, and other people disapprove of him. How do you feel?”

Responses were recorded on a 6-point Likert-type scale: *Strongly Disapprove* (1), *Disapprove* (2), *Somewhat Disapprove* (3), *Somewhat Approve* (4), *Approve* (5), and *Strongly Approve* (6).

Participants were also given the option of selecting *I don't have an opinion*.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The open-ended responses were analyzed together using a coding scheme developed inductively (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To generate the coding scheme, three members of our research team independently reviewed and generated codes for a random selection of responses. From these notes and resulting discussions, a list of open codes and their definitions were determined. Reliability training involved five researchers independently coding random selections of responses in several rounds. After each round, the team met to further operationalize codes, discuss discrepancies, and reach consensus. Cohen's kappa ranged from .75-.90 across the ten pairs of coders; a kappa of .60 or above is considered to indicate “good” agreement (de Vries, Elliott, Kanouse, & Teleki, 2008). After achieving reliability, each of the five researchers independently coded one-fifth of the remaining responses. Unclear responses were presented to the full team and discussed until a consensus was reached. Participants' entire open-ended response received a score of either *Absent* (0) or *Present* (1) for each coding category. Codes were applied using Dedoose software (Dedoose, 2018).

### **Results**

### **Adolescents' Ratings of Trump**

Perhaps not surprisingly given the specific counties from which youth data were collected, a large percentage of youth reported some degree of disapproval in their rating of President Trump: 46% strongly disapproved, 18% disapproved, and 12% somewhat disapproved. In contrast, 8% of youth indicated they strongly approved, 8% approved, and 9% somewhat approved of President Trump.

### **Sociodemographic Differences in Adolescents' (Dis)Approval Ratings**

A series of bivariate analyses tested associations between sociodemographic characteristics and adolescents' (dis)approval rating of Trump. There were no significant differences in adolescents' ratings of Trump based on age or grade in school. However, boys ( $M = 2.74$ ) reported stronger approval than girls ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $t(1227) = 6.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ). White youth ( $M = 3.24$ ) were more likely to approve of President Trump than Latinx ( $M = 1.88$ ), Black ( $M = 1.95$ ), Asian ( $M = 2.38$ ), and youth who identified as another race/ethnicity ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $F(4, 1229) = 48.61$ ,  $p < .011$ ). First-generation ( $M = 1.92$ ,  $t(1222) = 3.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and second-generation immigrants ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $t(1221) = 9.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ) reported stronger disapproval of Trump compared to youth who did not identify as immigrants ( $M = 2.44$  and  $2.79$ , respectively). Lower levels of SES as indicated by higher financial strain and lower parent education were associated with moderately stronger approval of President Trump ( $r(1228) = .11 - .12$ ,  $ps < .001$ ). Adolescents residing in West Virginia ( $M = 4.07$ ) reported stronger approval of Trump than adolescents from California ( $M = 1.95$ ) and Minnesota ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $F(2, 1232) = 203.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, youth who identified their parents as more politically liberal also reported stronger disapproval of Trump ( $r(862) = -.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

To further elucidate associations among these demographic variables and (dis)approval ratings of President Trump, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Certain demographic variables could not be included in the regression due to multicollinearity. For example, geographic region and immigration status were too highly correlated with race/ethnicity in our sample and were therefore excluded from the models.

Sociodemographic variables (gender, age, parent education, financial strain, race/ethnicity, youths' report of their parents' political ideology) were examined as predictors of the (dis)approval scale. Boys reported stronger approval of Trump compared to girls ( $B = -.61$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ ). White adolescents reported stronger approval of Trump than Latinx ( $B = -1.25$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Black ( $B = -1.18$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Asian adolescents ( $B = -.64$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and youth who identified as another race/ethnicity ( $B = -.72$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, adolescents who rated their parents as more politically conservative reported stronger approval of Trump compared to adolescents with more politically liberal parents ( $B = -.57$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Adolescent age, parent education, and financial strain were not significantly associated with (dis)approval rating.

### **Adolescents' Reasons for Ratings of President Trump**

In their open-ended elaborations about how they feel about President Trump, participants offered a wide range of responses. These were coded into approving (Table 2) and disapproving (Table 3) parent codes with underlying subcodes. Tables 2-3 provide frequency of each code along with operational definitions and illustrative quotes. The frequency count reported for each parent code represents the number of participants who mentioned that code at least once. The percentages reported for the parent codes were calculated based on the total number of participants who approved ( $n = 390$ ) or disapproved ( $n = 1,061$ ), respectively. Analyses of open-

ended narratives revealed three overarching themes that cut across approving and disapproving codes: (a) social and political issues, (b) qualities of a leader, and (c) personal experiences.

**Social and policy issues.** Many adolescents critically evaluated Trump's plans to address social and political problems in America and also considered the broader impact that Trump's presidency will have on America. Immigration, Trump's plan to build a wall between the United States and Mexico, and the travel ban were "hot button" issues for many youth. A 17-year-old White male from West Virginia who strongly endorsed Trump's policies put it this way: "We will finally get a WALL!!!! that we need to get these illegal aliens out of our United States." Likewise, a 15-year-old Latino from Minnesota wrote "Everyone calls [Trump] a racist but I think he's only trying to help by deporting illegal immigrants." Other teens viewed the issue in terms of national security: "...you don't know what those immigrants could do or bring with them" (15, Asian female, California). Some teens expressed more tempered and nuanced views, such as this 17-year-old White male from Minnesota who stated, "I agree with the idea of building a wall or fortifying our borders, but I disagree with the deportation of all illegal immigrants in the country. While I do see the downsides of keeping so many immigrants, there would be many benefits if they were given citizenship." Conversely, many adolescents strongly disapproved of Trump's immigration policies. For instance, a 14-year-old Latina from California described feeling disgusted by Trump's presidency due to "the horrid, disgusting fact of building a wall between USA and Mexico." Another 17-year-old Latino teen from California considered the negative impact these immigration policies might have on the children of undocumented immigrants: "Donald Trump just wants to deport people back to their country 'cause they are not citizens in the United States and that is messed up because the kids will feel alone because they don't have a parent." A 17-year-old African American female from California put it this way:

“He talks about getting the immigrants out, but isn't his wife an immigrant? If he wants to get rid of immigration problems he needs to send his wife back to wherever she came from. He talks about building a wall, but what will that do? There's always going to be ‘bad’ people in America regardless of all the walls we build.” Many youth defended immigrants’ value to society: “America is built on immigrants...immigrants are the reason America will be great. If you take out all the immigrants, you're taking away all the hard working people trying to make their life just a little bit easier” (18, Asian female, California), or “I just don't understand how that would make us great again. Because America is made up of immigrants so it wouldn't be America if he didn't allow immigrants” (15, White female, Minnesota).

Many adolescents offered up reactions to Trump’s approach to national security and foreign affairs. One 16-year-old White male from Minnesota shared that he respects Trump as the president because “[Trump] made a great decision in the Syrian chemical attack.” Likewise, another teen responded: “I feel good about Trump becoming President...He will be stronger on foreign policy and make sure other countries stay in their place” (14-year-old, Asian male, Minnesota). In contrast, other youth expressed concerns about how Trump handles foreign affairs, such as this 17-year-old male from Minnesota who said, “I don’t believe in the way [Trump] is treating our treaties, Germany has already left us as an ally, on top of that we just pissed off Russia by bombing Syria... All of this is making others more avid to leave these alliances. ...I feel like he may cause another war through his inability to create allies.”

Adolescents discussed other social and political issues as well, like the economy, welfare reform, healthcare, gun rights, abortion, and policies against gay marriage. An 18-year-old White male from Minnesota listed several policy issues: “Trump is going to do many things such as lower taxes, repeal Obamacare, and try to institute the travel ban...He also is not going to be a

gun control freak.” Similarly, a 17-year-old African American female from California had to “give [Trump] some credit because he is against abortion and gay marriage.” Many adolescents felt that Trump would “create more jobs for the American people” and that he can “turn this country back on track financially.” Among anti-Trump responses, other policy issues were salient including human rights and environmental concerns. For example: “I don't believe in [Trump's] policies on foreign policy, immigration, regulation, education, or civil rights. I don't agree with Vice President Mike Pence on his LGBTQ rights stance...The man denies scientific evidence of global warming” (18-year-old, White female, West Virginia).

Other adolescents framed their discussion of social issues in broader terms. Some adolescents who approved of Trump described the potential for Trump's presidency to bring about positive change for America, stating that Trump will “make America great again” and “fix things in this country.” For instance, a 15-year-old Latino from California stated “I am happy that there will be a change in this country. I am very happy about the changes that are going on within our government.” Likewise, one 15-year-old White male from West Virginia said, “[Trump] has already improved this country and has reversed most of the last eight years of bad policies. Trump is also saying that America will no longer be stomped on any more. Make America Great Again.” In contrast, some youth who disapproved of Trump described the possible deleterious long-term costs of Trump's presidency and fear that his policies may erode American values and reputation, as well as lead to a more toxic or hateful environment for racial and ethnic minorities. A 15-year-old White female from Minnesota wrote: “[Trump's] administration has created fear not only in our community, but across the country and this is extremely toxic. I have people in my school feeling targeted because they wear hijabs, because they're Black or Latino, or women... People believe that they can get away with more ignorance



and more hate crimes because they see their hate reflected in the President.” Others worried that America may now be viewed as intolerant and discriminating: “America is slowly becoming a country that allows minorities and those of different beliefs to not get their unalienable rights...America is not the country where people are supposed to be abused and oppressed. It is supposed to be the place where people run from oppression and slander” (17-year-old, White female, West Virginia). In addition, many were concerned about the country becoming more socially and culturally divided, such as this 16-year-old Latina from California: “I feel like our country will fall apart and there will be disunity everywhere because that is what [Trump] is creating.”

**Qualities of a leader.** When reasoning about their approval or disapproval of Trump’s presidency, adolescents mentioned a wide array of experiences, skills, and qualities that they value in a president. For example, a 16-year-old White female from Minnesota who approved of Trump said, “We need a President who knows something about money and provides jobs for many Americans.” Some youth described the president’s business experience as a strength, such as the 17-year-old Latina from California who wrote “I feel that [Trump] will bring more jobs to the economy since he is a businessman”, or the 16-year-old White female from West Virginia who believed “Trump will do great things for this country” because “politicians have a specific way of running things and we need to break out of that circle and start something new. That we have a new type of person running the country and he isn’t a politician. He’s a business man.” In contrast, many adolescents who disapproved of the president remarked that Trump’s business experience was an indication of his lack of political experience, with statements like: “he is a just a businessman” who “was never involved in anything to do with politics and may not know how what to do with a country as big as The United States” (18-year-old, Latina, California). One

teen who disapproved of Trump said that “It is terrible that [Trump] is elected” because “He will run America like a business, not a country” (16-year-old, Asian male, Minnesota).

Other leadership skills and qualities adolescents valued included decision-making skills and goal attainment. A 16-year-old Latino from California stated, “Trump is perseverant...and wants to make America great again...he knows what he wants and proves that he can and will accomplish them.” Another youth said Trump will “be very decisive as president” (18-year-old, White male, West Virginia). Some adolescents who approved of Trump appreciated the president’s willingness to share his opinion outright: “I believe that Donald Trump is a smart, confident and strongly opinionated individual” (16-year-old, White female, West Virginia). In contrast, some youth who disapproved of the president were concerned about Trump’s decision-making abilities and disliked his overreliance on his own personal opinions. For example, “Donald is not educated enough and does not have the mental capacity to make national security decisions. The president has a short temper and is quick to react...He uses his opinion more than his knowledge to make decisions” (16-year-old, White female, West Virginia). Similarly, a 15-year-old African American female from California worried that “[Trump’s] radical and impulsive decisions will put America in undesirable situations. I believe he will cause unnecessary trouble as well as not focus on the most important situations in our nation

A wide array of personal attributes and characteristics also informed youth’s views of the president such as honesty and communication style. One adolescent female who approved of Trump mentioned, “Unlike other presidents, Trump does not hide what he really feels and his thoughts. He portrays the ways in which the government truly is but tries so hard to hide” (16-year-old, Latina, California), or “He said he’ll do it and he backs up his promises” (16-year-old, White male, West Virginia). In contrast, other adolescents expressed concerns with how Trump

handles misinformation and lies as reasons for their disapproval: “He is always being caught up in his own lies and tries to cover them up by saying they are ‘alternative facts.’ He is never willing to admit he is wrong regardless if his reputation goes down with it” (17-year-old, Asian female, California). Some youth defended Trump’s moral character with statements like, “[Trump] is very kind-hearted on the inside, he may not look like it or act like it on the outside, but he is” (17-year-old, White female, West Virginia), “he’s a good guy with strong moral values” (17, White, male, West Virginia), and “he wants the best for our country” (17-year-old, Latino, California). In contrast, some youth who disapproved expressed concerns with Trump’s treatment of women and minority groups and described him as “offensive”, “unfair”, and “bigoted.” A White 17-year-old West Virginia female proclaimed that “[Trump] not only objectifies women, but also people of color, disability and different sexuality.” Another teen shared that they perceived Trump as “prejudice, antagonistic... [Trump is] misogynistic and sexually offensive...he's inconsiderate and offensive, going so far as to make fun of a disabled man in front of national television” (18-year-old, White female, West Virginia). Many teens justified their disapproval of Trump based on specific concerns about racism: “When Trump says ‘Make America Great Again,’ it sounds like ‘Make America White Again’” (18-year-old, Asian female, California), or “He is racist and sexist and only has bad things to say about women and other people who are not white” (18-year-old, African American female, California).

**Personal experiences.** Youth shared personal stories and experiences that influenced their views of Trump. A 14-year-old White female from West Virginia stated: “I am happy Donald Trump is our president because my dad works for a power company and that is how we made the majority of our money. Without his job we would have a hard time buying medicines and taking care of everyone in my family. [Trump] said he is going to keep power plants and

bring coal back.” Among youth who disapproved of Trump, personal stories of fear related to safety, immigration, and family concerns were common. A 15-year-old Latina from California wrote: “I am very scared he [Trump] will harm my family. My parents are not from this country but they do the best they can to be here with us and have us live the American dream. My father is not a rapist nor a criminal. He is the most hardworking man I know. [Trump] doesn't care if he splits up a family with many children who only have their parents to depend on.” Other responses focused on the ways in which Trump’s rhetoric has targeted their own marginalized group. A 15-year-old White female from Minnesota responded, “With Donald Trump’s presidency I am afraid for myself and other women for our safety, it is now more likely that we will get raped or assaulted and nothing will be done, because even our own president is doing it. #NastyWoman.”

### **Geographic differences in youth reasons for approving/disapproving of President Trump**

The percentages of youth who provided different reasons for approving and disapproving of president Trump are presented in Table 4. Given the findings reported above on geographic differences in quantitative approval ratings, it is not surprising that a higher percentage of youth in West Virginia gave approval reasons. In particular, West Virginia youth were more likely to note personal/leadership, policy issues, and change as reasons for supporting Trump. In contrast, youth in Minnesota and California provided more reasons for disapproving of Trump, with a large percentage of those reasons concentrated in either discrimination or personal qualities/leadership style. However, a higher percentage of California youth listed immigration issues as their reason for disapproving of Trump, while a higher percentage of youth in Minnesota listed policy issues as a reason for their disapproval. Fewer youth in Minnesota and California provided reasons for approving for Trump; approval of Trump ranged from 5-6% in

these locations. There were fewer disapproving youth in West Virginia, over all, yet 6-10% of West Virginia youth gave reasons for disapproving of Trump. Additional analyses examining associations between youth reasons and both race/ethnicity and immigration status are included in the Supporting Table. However, the pattern of findings was largely similar to the findings for geographic site due to the fact that these demographic variables were largely confounded with geographic site.

### **Associations among Approval Rating and Reasons**

A series of chi-square analyses explored associations between participants' approval of Trump and their justifications. Analyses were run separately for adolescents who approved and disapproved of President Trump (Table 5). Several pro-Trump and anti-Trump reasons were associated with the degree to which adolescents approved or disapproved of Trump. Within the sample of adolescents who approved of Trump, stronger approval (compared to more moderate approval) was associated with justifications related to policy issues, Trump's personal qualities, and beliefs that Trump was going to bring about positive change for the country. Among adolescents who disapproved of Trump, stronger disapproval was associated with themes of discrimination, concerns about negative implications for American values, and worry that president Trump would divide the country.

### **Youth who Both Approve and Disapprove of Trump**

Twelve percent of adolescents mentioned both pro- and anti-Trump comments in their responses. This pattern was not anticipated prior to the study, but specific examples of youth who held these conflicting views are presented here. These responses demonstrated adolescents' ability to balance their views and acknowledge both positive and negative aspects of Trump's presidency. For example:

Donald Trump gives me positive and negative feelings. I'm confused on what party I am, whether I'm democratic or republican, because in some cases I agree with both. What I don't like about our president is how he performs himself, describing his perspective on other cultures, like how he was being racist, etc. also on how high his ego is, he seems like an arrogant man, but I think he will raise the economy and put us in less debt since he took away Obamacare, and made our military more powerful than it already is. I don't like the fact that he is deporting many illegal people, because I myself have parents who aren't legal, I see why he does it but I'm afraid. I'm in a tough spot honestly. I also don't like how he plans to build more factories, because Trump doesn't really seem to care about the environment.

This illustrative quote from a 15-year-old Latina includes several justifications from pro- and anti-perspectives, such as personal qualities, immigration, and policy issues. Many pro- and anti-Trump adolescents mentioned disapproving of Trump's personal qualities and discriminatory treatment of others while approving of Trump's policies, such as this 18-year-old Latina from California who said, "Although he's a terrible man, I do agree with some of the things he says. I agree with some of the gun laws but that's mostly it. The way he speaks about other races and the female population disgusts me." Other youth focused specifically on positive and negative aspects of Trump's policy issues like this 14-year-old Asian male:

My mom is Liberal and my dad is libertarian (conservative) so I have almost equal views. I feel the economy will rise which is a good thing but he isn't interested in the environmental conditions which I am very passionate about. The wall I think is a big waste of money but a good idea to help US economy and save lives.

One 16-year-old Latina from California voiced ambivalence based on Trump's potential to benefit America and fear about his immigration policies: "I guess due to his work in business and finance, [Trump] could help America become a better place, but on the other hand he needs to stop all the deportation he's doing. He's causing many children to be left with no parents. Including me, I felt worried and scared due to the fact that neither my mom nor I were born in the US."

### **Discussion**

An informed and active electorate is essential to the continuation of democratic institutions. However, until the age of 18, citizens in the United States are not allowed to directly participate in elections. The current study provides a "snapshot" of youth's views at a certain point in history, but also provides information on how youth think about and evaluate political leaders. Findings provide important insights into adolescents' developing political knowledge, awareness of current events, and developing opinions concerning their political world. Though youth are commonly portrayed as being uninformed or apathetic (Sloam, 2012), adolescents' responses indicated that many are not, and that many, indeed, had some degree of knowledge of President Trump's policy goals and individual characteristics and were able to subjectively evaluate whether they approved or disapproved of him as the president.

Overall, the majority of youth in the current study reported some level of disapproval for President Trump, which is not surprising given that a majority of the sample was collected from districts that did not support Trump during the 2016 election. However, youth's ratings, collected across a socioeconomically, racially, and geographically diverse sample, represented a wide range of views of the president from strong support to firm disapproval. The variability of youth's views mirror the range of political attitudes held by adults in the United States. Younger

people are often assumed to have more liberal views and there is some evidence from national polls that fewer younger voters approve of President Trump compared to older voters (Pew Research Center, 2018a). However, this study points to considerable heterogeneity in adolescents' political views. In fact, the associations between adolescents' approval ratings and select sociodemographic characteristics like gender, race, and geographic location were similar to those documented in national approval polls of adults (Pew Research Center, 2018b). Male youth who were White, poorer, and lived in rural contexts provided more favorable ratings of Trump compared to females, youth of color, and youth living in more urban areas, though socioeconomic status did not remain a significant predictor in multivariate models. Contextual and identity experiences such as living in a rural community (Scoones et al., 2018), socioeconomic status (Naumann, Benet-Martinze, & Espinoza, 2017), gender (Xiao & McCright, 2013) and race/ethnicity (Hutchings & Valentino, 2004) have long been theorized to influence political ideology. Thus, while younger voters are often assumed to have, on average, more ideologically liberal views, the same cultural and geographic experiences that influence adults' attitudes seem to also play a role in shaping youth's opinions of the president. These demographic and contextual variables may play a stronger role in shaping how youth evaluate political leaders than simply being younger. However, it is equally important to note that sociodemographic variables were not redundant with youth ratings or reasons, indicating there is considerable heterogeneity in youth political views within and across demographic categories.

Multivariate models provided more nuanced insights into the correlates of youth (dis)approval ratings. Indicators of socioeconomic status were no longer significantly related to approval ratings of the president. Instead, family political ideology emerged as a consistent and significant predictor of youth attitudes. Youth who described their parents as being more



politically conservative provided stronger approval ratings, while youth from more liberal families gave stronger disapproval ratings. While not necessarily surprising, this pattern provides further evidence for the importance of family and parental socialization on youth political attitudes. An extensive body of research has found that parents have a considerable impact on the political development of their children, and there is a strong correlation between parents' and adolescents' political beliefs and ideology (Jennings, Storker, & Bowers, 2008). Our research likewise suggests that the family environment also relates to how youth evaluate political leaders, although parent and children's similar political ideology can also be due to shared environment.

Several demographic variables remained significant predictors of youths' ratings net of socioeconomic status and parents' political ideology. Adolescent boys reported higher approval ratings than girls, and White youth reported greater approval ratings compared to all other race/ethnicity groups. As multiple developmental theorists have argued, race/ethnicity and gender are not merely demographic characteristics, but instead are tied to distinct developmental experiences (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Quintana et al., 2006). These unique experiences help to shape adolescents' developing understanding of their environments. Thus, youth are forming views about their political world that go beyond their parents' views and reflect their own individual experiences as an ethnic minority or as a male or female (Flanagan, 2013).

Although the quantitative ratings give key insights into the variability and correlates of youth's views of a specific political leader, an examination of the open-ended responses allowed for a more thorough exploration of the reasoning that undergirded youth (dis)approval ratings. In open-ended responses, adolescents generally demonstrated reflective opinions that were informed by specific knowledge of the president's leadership attributes and political views and

policies. Adolescents' responses were also influenced by their own unique experiences, as youth described the ways in which the president's proposed policies would directly impact their own lives, their families, and their communities (both positively and negatively). In addition, some youth relied on their perception of Trump's personal and leadership characteristics to inform their ratings, evidence of developing capacity to evaluate and prioritize the characteristics of effective political leadership. Finally, many adolescents demonstrated a stout understanding of Trump's social and political policy agenda, and this knowledge intersected with their own values and political opinions in their appraisal of the president. These broad factors that formed the foundation of youth (dis)approval ratings align with those identified by an extensive body of political science, which has found that adults' views of politicians are rooted in their understanding of the politician's policies and agenda, evaluation of their personal attributes, and linked to individual's own personal experiences (Lau et al., 2018). Thus, the processes and factors underlying youth's ratings of political leaders may mirror those seen among adult voters. By implication, the capacity to effectively evaluate political leaders does not miraculously appear when an individual turns 18, but rather essential assessment skills and political knowledge are present in many adolescents long before they reach legal voting age.

An evaluation of the particular justifications that emerged in youth responses can give additional insight into youth's developing civic reasoning, as well as their understanding of their political world at a specific point in time. Rather than being uniform or relying on a few singular points, youth showed great variability in the specific information they mentioned as a rationale for their evaluation of president Trump. Adolescents used similar types of information for both approval and disapproval ratings. For instance, a focus on personal attributes was the most prevalent justification among both approvers and disapprovers. Similarly, a focus on particular

policies or issues either supported or opposed by the president informed the justifications for youth who both approved and disapproved of the president. Policy issues and individual attributes are common to all political leaders, so these sorts of responses may be expected to appear regardless of historical period or a particular leader. Previous research has found that adolescents and adults do not differ in their knowledge of political leaders' political ideology (Chan & Clayon, 2006). The current study builds on those findings by indicating that many youth are both aware of a specific political leader's policy agenda and that this knowledge plays a role in whether they approve of their leadership. Indeed, the relative strength of youth's approval and disapproval ratings was significantly associated with specific justification categories.

Other commonly used justifications by youth may be more specific to the current political climate and president. For instance, given that immigration policy was key to President Trump's 2016 campaign (Trump, 2016) and debates about immigration policy continue to be central to Trump's presidency (Pierce & Selee, 2017), we had anticipated that youth would mention immigration when justifying their ratings. Immigration was mentioned by many students on both sides, though it was a more common theme among youth who disapproved of Trump. In fact, immigration was mentioned by nearly a third of youth who disapproved of Trump, with a high percentage of those youth bringing up personal stories about how Trump's proposed immigration policies would affect them or their families. Previous research has found that such themes are especially prevalent among Latinx youth, who tend to have especially negative views of Donald Trump's immigration policy (Wray-Lake et al., 2018). However, among youth who disapproved of Trump, another consistent theme emerged: discrimination. Over half of the youth who disapproved of Trump discussed topics related to discrimination

including negative treatment or statements about groups of people with most youth comments focusing on ethnic minorities and women. Recent polls of youth indicate that many adolescents view discrimination as an important issue (Pew Research Center, 2019), and this vigilance may lead many adolescents to negatively evaluate political leaders they perceive to be biased. In addition, issues of gender and race were central to the campaigns of both Trump and Hillary Clinton, and an analysis of the 2016 election indicate that racism and sexism may have played a role in how voters viewed Trump (Schaffner, Macwilliams, & Nteta, 2018). Adolescents in our study appeared to be highly aware of these issues, and for a large percentage of youth, issues related to discrimination played a substantial role in their overall evaluation of President Trump as a leader. Youth's focus on issues of race and discrimination may ebb and flow depending on sociohistorical events, but recent research has found that concerns around racism were especially high for youth at times when racial tensions were higher in society (Oosterhoff et al., 2019). Our findings add to evidence that youth are aware of current political discussions and that they consolidate this information into their evaluation of current political leaders.

Our study also provides insight into variability in adolescents' political reasoning across different geographic locations. In the United States, there are significant differences in the political views and voting preferences of adult voters living in rural and urban contexts (Scala & Johnson, 2017). Similarly, rural youth in our study (West Virginia) differed from youth living in more densely populated areas (California and Minnesota) in their appraisals of President Trump with youth in West Virginia supplying significantly more reasons for approving of Trump. Rural settings provide different opportunities for civic engagement and sociocultural beliefs which may affect developing political views and evaluations of political leaders (Kelly & Lobao, 2018; Pritzker & Metzger, 2011). However, while our samples across sites were fairly similar

socioeconomically, they differed along a number of key variables beyond rural/urban location, including race/ethnicity and immigration status. Thus, both individual and contextual factors contribute to unique developmental contexts that inform adolescents' developing political views and evaluations of political leaders. Furthermore, while context was associated with adolescents' reasons, youth across sites expressed both approval and disapproval of president Trump.

Finally, analyses indicated several significant links between adolescents' quantitative ratings and their coded justifications. These findings highlight coordination between youth's overall level of approval and disapproval and the specific justifications they utilize to support those ratings. Youth may have especially strong feelings about a leader if they rely more heavily on a specific justification than youth who focus on other information. For instance, youth who more strongly approved of Trump were motivated by agreement with his policy agenda and esteem for his personal attributes. Youth who more strongly disapproved of Trump were motivated by beliefs about discrimination and their concerns that his behavior, rhetoric, and policies were leading to a more divided country. These connections indicate youth were thoughtful in their appraisals, which were undergirded and motivated by specific factors.

Although this study provides important insights into the ways in which adolescents evaluate political leaders, as well as information on variability in youth's political views, findings must be interpreted in light of several limitations. Open-ended responses allowed youth flexibility to discuss their views of President Trump in their own way, but structured interviews could incorporate focused follow-up queries and allow participants to clarify unclear responses. Although the sample is geographically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse, responses are not representative of youth across the country and are likely skewed more toward disapproval given the specific districts sampled. The goal of the current study was to provide a snapshot of

youth's political views, so future research should consider including other individual characteristics, socialization, and context variables which may affect youth political attitudes. Additionally, documenting youth's views over short- and long-term intervals can further shed light on the events, messages, and experiences that shape youth's political views.

The current study provides important information for civic educators and policymakers. Findings suggest that students can be informed and may be capable of expressing their own budding political attitudes within class, family, and community discussions of political issues and politicians. Interestingly, the same issues and factors arose among youth who approved of Trump and youth who disapproved of Trump. This could be a sign of increased political polarization, as youth could look at the same attribute or political issue and arrive at a very different conclusion. More optimistically, these differences could provide points of common dialogue for teachers who work with youth from both sides of the political spectrum. Rather than assuming students share a common perspective, teachers should anticipate a diverse array of political views (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). In fact, 12% of adolescents included both positive and negative evaluations in their open-ended responses, a more complicated perspective pointing to the importance of political discussion that considers different vantages. Although previous research claims that adolescents may lack the "political maturity" necessary to participate in electoral process (Chan & Clayton, 2006), the current study provides evidence that many youth are aware of their political world and use such knowledge to evaluate political leaders such as the president. Political maturity does not emerge suddenly and fully-developed when youth turn 18; instead, the current study underscores the importance of investigating the developmental roots of political identity during adolescence.

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Table 1. Demographic characteristics by site.

		California ( <i>n</i> = 737)	Minnesota ( <i>n</i> = 412)	West Virginia ( <i>n</i> = 323)
Gender	% Male	39.8	49.0	42.1
	% Female	59.7	49.8	57.6
	% Other	.3	1.2	.3
	% Missing	.3	--	--
Race/Ethnicity	% Hispanic	77.61	11.41	.62
	% Black	9.36	26.46	4.33
	% Asian	6.11	8.74	.31
	% White	3.39	44.66	88.85
	% Other	2.58	7.77	4.02
	% Missing	.95	.97	1.86
Financial Strain	% Low	13.16	6.07	5.00
	% Middle	41.38	28.88	27.24
	% Upper	38.26	51.70	52.01
	% High	4.07	11.89	11.76
	% Missing	3.12	1.46	3.10
Parent Education	% HS or less	51.02	18.45	33.44
	% Some college	19.81	17.96	17.65
	% College grad	13.84	54.37	36.53
	% Don't know	13.43	8.25	9.91
	% Missing	1.90	.97	2.48
Second Generation Immigrant	% No	28.63	62.14	95.05
	% Yes	68.39	35.92	2.48
	% Missing	2.99	1.94	2.48
First Generation Immigrant	% No	87.52	87.62	95.36
	% Yes	9.63	10.68	1.86
	% Missing	2.85	1.70	2.79
Grade	% 9	14.11	7.28	26.32
	% 10	34.06	55.83	27.55
	% 11	29.85	17.72	25.39
	% 12	21.71	19.17	20.74
	% Missing	.27	0	0
Age	<i>M</i>	15.94	16.11	16.12
	<i>SD</i>	1.22	1.20	1.27

Table 2. Reasons for approving of President Trump ( $n = 390$ ).

Parent Code	Definition and Examples
<b>Personal Qualities and Leadership Style</b> 142 (46%)	<p>Approval based the president's qualifications, personal attributes, decision making, and leadership style. Subthemes included business experience (36%), direct communication/speaks his mind (25%), fulfills promises (15%), moral integrity/good values (12%), cares about people "like me" or "like my family" (5%).</p> <p>"[Trump] is the man that can make America great again...he is up front about everything. He tells people how it is and he doesn't care whose feelings he hurts in the process" -17, male, West Virginia</p> <p>"[Trump] has character and backbone and will do what he has promised to us all. He is a business man and knows how to negotiate and make money." -17, male, West Virginia</p>
<b>Policy Issues</b> 134 (43%)	<p>Support for the president's stance on policy issues. Specific policy issues included the economy (52%), national security/foreign affairs (16%), healthcare (5%), anti-abortion (4%), gun rights (4%), welfare reform (3%), and stance against gay marriage (1%).</p> <p>"Donald Trump is a republican. He is with the bear of arms and he is against welfare and wants to lower taxes which is good and can benefit us." -18, male, California</p> <p>"[Trump] cut illegal immigration by a lot. He dealt with ISIS and didn't hurt civilians. He is dealing with North Korea and other dictatorships. He is all around a good president." -17, male, West Virginia</p>
<b>Preference for Trump over Others</b> 50 (16%)	<p>Preference for Trump over other candidates in the electoral field.</p> <p>"It's great that Hillary Clinton is not in the oval office. She was the most flawed presidential candidate ever." -18, male, Minnesota</p>
<b>Change</b> 38 (12%)	<p>A desire for change or positive comments about Trump bringing about change.</p> <p>"I am happy that there will be change in this country. I am very happy about the changes that are going on within our government." -15, male, California</p> <p>"It is a good change in the US to have a businessman running a capitalist country instead of corrupt politicians." -15, male, Minnesota</p>
<b>Immigration</b> 37 (12%)	<p>Approval for Trump based on the his immigration policies. I subtheme focused on support for the Mexico-US border wall (19%).</p> <p>"In some way I do agree with [Trump] that he should kick out the people that cause a lot of damage to this country, like people that rape girls and the criminals. I think they should be deported but not other people that come here to make their life's better." -17, female, California</p> <p>"Regarding issues with immigrants and stuff, I am not completely against it, I think we should be more aware of who and what kind of people we are allowing into our country, to keep everyone safe" -18, female, Minnesota</p>
<b>Shared Negative Stereotypes</b> 7 (2%)	<p>Approval of Trump based on shared negative views of minority groups.</p> <p>"[Trump] was saying all these lies about immigrants especially about the Mexicans, but I started realizing some of these may be true." -15, female, Minnesota</p>

*Note.* To help contextualize the data, participant's age, gender, and geographic location are identified after quotations. Subcode percentages are based on the  $n$  for the corresponding parent code. When the parent code was present, responses varied in the number of subcodes present. Thus, the percentages reported for each subcode do not equal 100%. LGBT+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.

Table 3. Reasons for disapproving of President Trump ( $n = 1,061$ ).

Parent Code	Definition and Examples
<b>Personal Qualities and Leadership Style</b> 586 (55%)	Negative comments about the presidents' qualifications, personal attributes, decision making, and leadership style. Subthemes included political inexperience (32%), immaturity/impulsivity (28%), lack of concern for others (20%), ignorance (17%), rude behavior (17%), immoral/unethical behavior (14%), and lying (7%). <p>"[Trump] has no experience in politics making him completely unqualified to run our country." -14, female, California</p> <p>"[Trump] is childish, hypocritical, bigoted, egotistical... doesn't acknowledge people who are different from him." -15, female, Minnesota</p>
<b>Discrimination</b> 557 (52%)	Comments about discrimination or unequal treatment of groups of people. Subthemes included negative treatment of racial and ethnic minorities (82%), women (38%), religious groups (11%), people who identify as LGBT+ (8%), and persons with disabilities (4%). <p>"[Trump] is misogynistic and sexually offensive as audio clips of Donald Trump would prove more than once...going as far to make fun of a disabled man in front of national television." -18, male, West Virginia</p> <p>"All the negative comments [Trump] said about immigrants and disabled people...The rude things he said that Mexicans are rapist and that Muslims are terrorists but he doesn't know, he's just saying those things to make us look bad." -15, female, California</p>
<b>Immigration</b> 321 (30%)	Disapproval of Trump based on his anti-immigrant rhetoric or immigration policies. Subthemes included disapproval of the Mexico-US border wall (26%), personal stories about immigration (24%), and defending immigrants' value in society (17%). <p>"I am nervous for my family who don't have papers...they might get deported and I might not see them again" -16, female, California</p> <p>"Donald Trump will not make a good president because he is trying to deport the most hard-working people of this nation even though immigrants are what built this nation." -15, female, California</p>
<b>Policy Issues</b> 203 (19%)	Disagreement with the president's stance on policy issues. Specific policies mentioned included foreign policy (44%), economic policy (13%), environmental policy (12%), and women's rights (10%). <p>"President Trump is a climate change denier. He also is in support of 'defending the second amendment' which I also believe in, however I also understand that gun violence is rampant in the United States and needs to be regulated more heavily." -17, male, Minnesota</p> <p>"With [Trump's] recent cancelling of the Obama's school healthy lunch program and Let Girls Learn program, I desperately hope that he is impeached soon." -14, female, West Virginia</p>
<b>Negative Implications for American Values</b> 136 (13%)	Belief that Trump's presidency is harmful to American values and reputation and greater public acceptance of discrimination <p>"All the hate and ugliness is being brought up again instead of being buried." -17, female, California</p> <p>"[Trump's] immigration and racist remarks might eventually lead to the downfall of the United States" -15, male, California</p>
<b>Country is Divided</b> 46 (4%)	References to greater social and cultural divides in the country as a result of Trump's presidency. <p>"[Trump] is hated by half the country... There's a reason why this country is so divided and he is one of those reasons" -16, male, California</p>
<b>Support for Other Candidate</b> 34 (3%)	Preference for other candidates in the electoral field over Trump. <p>"I think Bernie should have won because he cares about the middle class. Trump is more focused on high or middle-high class citizens than the majority of working middle class people." - 14, male, Minnesota</p>

*Note.* To help contextualize the data, participant's age, gender, and geographic location are identified after quotations. Subcode percentages are based on the  $n$  for the corresponding parent code. When the parent code was present, responses varied in the number of subcodes present. Thus, the percentages reported for each subcode do not equal 100%. LGBT+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.



Table 4. Percentage of youth from each geographic who gave each coded response supporting either approval or disapproval of President Trump

	<b>California (n = 737)</b>	<b>Minnesota (n = 412)</b>	<b>West Virginia (n = 323)</b>
<u>Approval of President Trump Codes</u>			
Personal Qualities and Leadership Style	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Policy Issues	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Preference for Trump over Others	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Change	<b>1%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Immigration	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Shared Negative Stereotypes	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<u>Disapproval of President Trump Codes</u>			
Personal Qualities and Leadership Style	<b>43%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Discrimination	<b>49%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Immigration	<b>34%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Policy Issues	<b>13%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Negative Implications for American Values	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Country is Divided	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Support for Another Candidate	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>

NOTE: Percentages within site do not total to 100% because youth's responses could be coded for multiple reasons.

Table 5. Chi-square difference tests of strength of Trump approval and disapproval adolescents' reasons.

Youth who expressed approval of President Trump							Youth who expressed disapproval of President Trump						
Parent Code	$\chi^2(2)$	<i>p</i>	Level of Approval				Parent Code	$\chi^2(2)$	<i>p</i>	Total Sample ( <i>n</i> = 911)	Level of Disapproval		
			Total Sample ( <i>n</i> = 296)	Somewhat Approve ( <i>n</i> = 107)	Approve ( <i>n</i> = 95)	Strongly Approve ( <i>n</i> = 94)					Somewhat Disapprove ( <i>n</i> = 142)	Disapprove ( <i>n</i> = 210)	Strongly Disapprove ( <i>n</i> = 559)
Immigration	4.10	.129	6%	5%	4%	11%	Immigration	5.44	.066	30%	22%	30%	32%
Policy Issues	14.29	.000	31%	18%	35%	42%	Policy Issues	4.82	.090	19%	13%	21%	20%
Personal Qualities	24.79	.000	36%	21%	35%	54%	Personal Qualities	6.93	.140	55%	46%	53%	57%
Preference over Other Candidates	0.70	.704	14%	13%	16%	12%	Support for Another Candidate	3.75	.154	27%	5%	1%	3%
Change	11.78	.003	11%	3%	16%	16%	Change	<i>Not mentioned by disapprovers</i>					
Discrimination			<i>Not mentioned by approvers</i>				Discrimination	61.52	.000	54%	27%	50%	63%
Country is Divided			<i>Not mentioned by approvers</i>				Country is Divided	8.55	.014	5%	1%	3%	6%
Implications for American Values			<i>Not mentioned by approvers</i>				Implications for American Values	17.24	.000	14%	5%	11%	17%