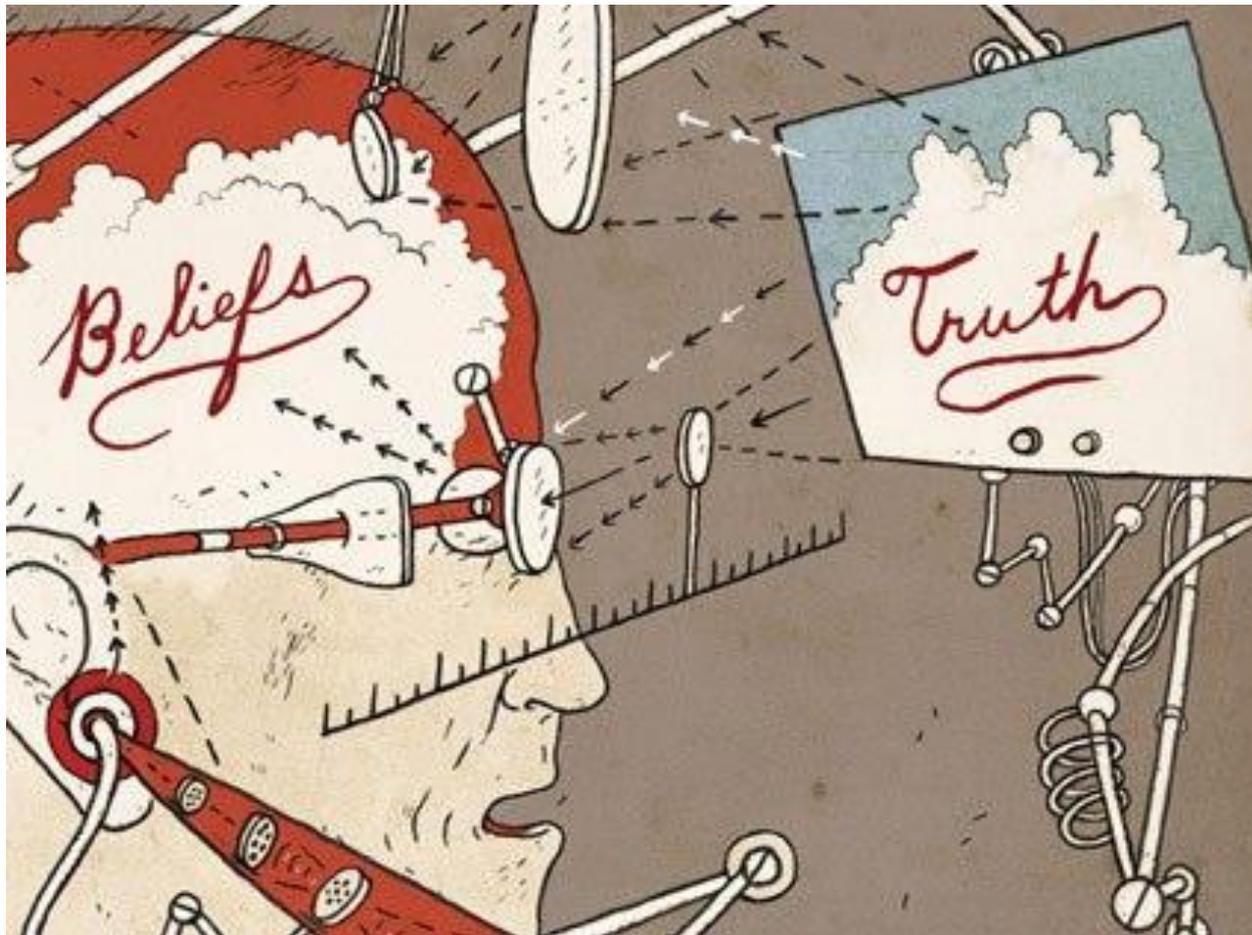# When Only the Other Side is to Blame:

Order Effects and Motivated Reasoning in Judgments of Free Speech, Inciting Violence, and Sexual Assault Allegations

Becky Hofstein Grady, PhD candidate at UC Irvine
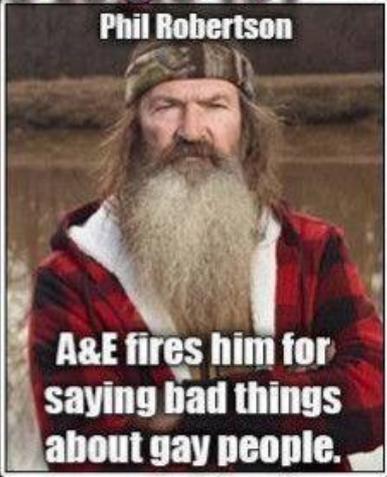Co-Authors: Ashley Thomas, Peter Ditto

PAPOR 2018 Presentation
San Francisco, CA   12.6.2018
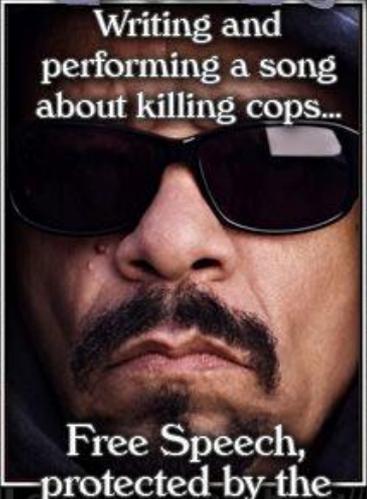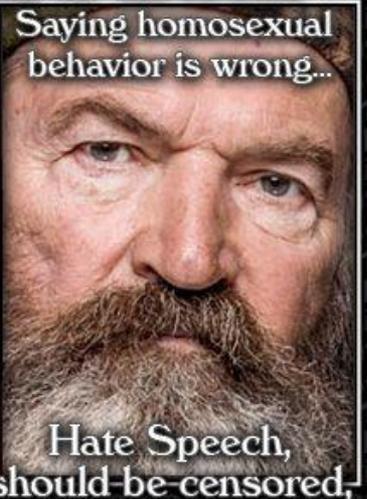
Motivated Reasoning Affects Judgments

Free Speech vs. Hate Speech

Bias Blind Spot in Both Groups and Individuals

Ditto et al., 2018, "At least bias is bipartisan," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*
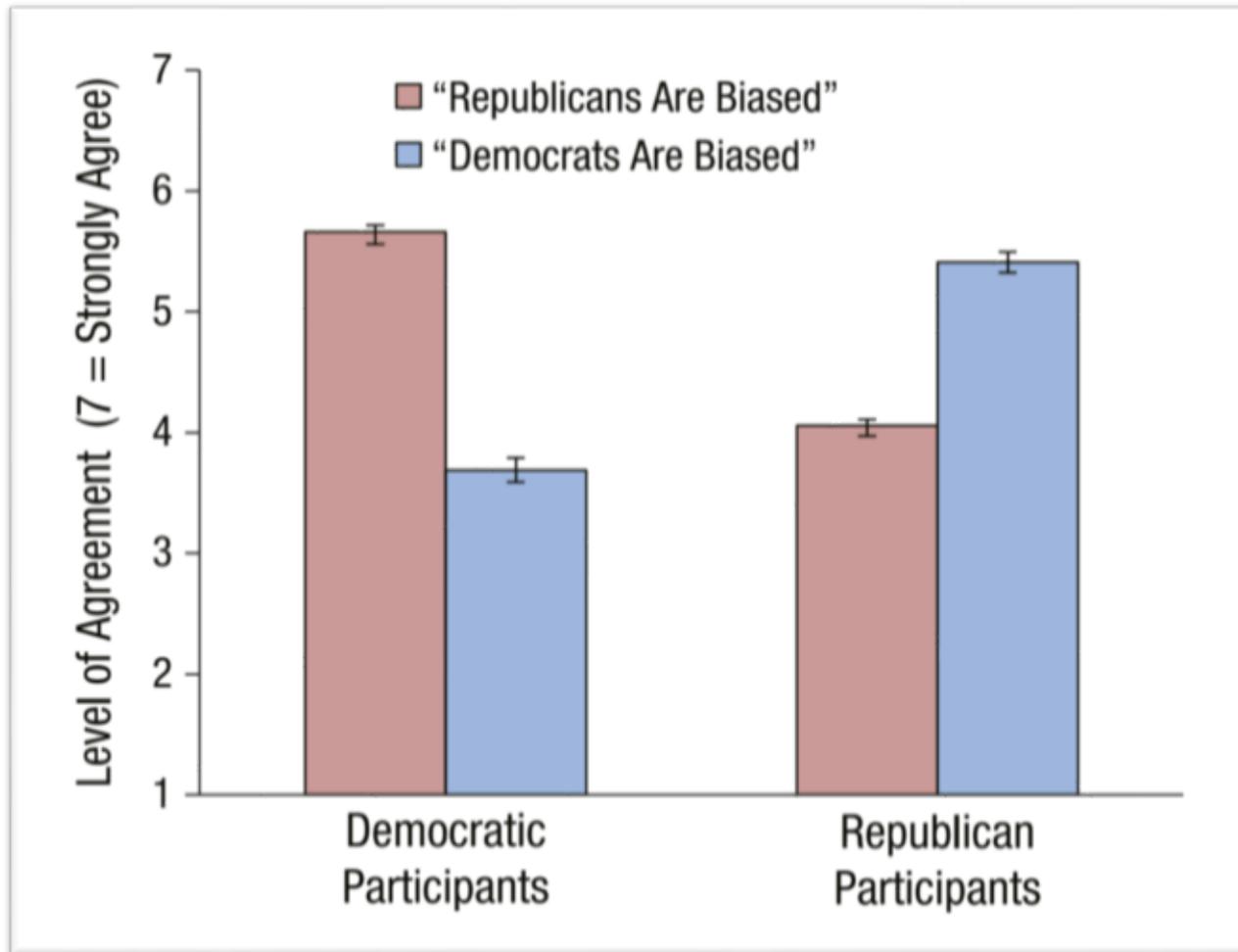
Order Effects in Public Opinion Surveys

More Endorse Working Together When Asked Second

Asked first	Should Rep. leaders...	%	Should Dem. leaders...	%
	Work with Obama	**66**	Work with Rep. leaders	**82**
	Stand up to Obama	28	Stand up to Rep. leaders	13
	Don't know	6	Don't know	5
		100		100

Asked second	Should Dem. leaders...		Should Rep. leaders...	
	Work with Rep. leaders	**71**	Work with Obama	**81**
	Stand up to Rep. leaders	21	Stand up to Obama	15
	Don't know	8	Don't know	4
		100		100
N		744		756

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 2008 Post-election survey.

Research Questions

❖ Will people rate outgroup politicians as more responsible for violence than ingroup politicians?

❖ Will this polarization be mitigated if people answer questions about the other politician first?

❖ Will this polarization be mitigated if people affirm relevant general principles before making specific judgments?

❖ Will answering questions about specific politicians affect more general questions about the issue?

Sample Characteristics

Study 1

N = 873
SurveyMonkey Audience
Completion rate: 86%

Democrat: 50%
Republican: 33%
Other/Non-Lean: 17%

Age 18-29:   21%
Age 30-44:   31%
Age 45-59:   30%
Age 60+:   18%

Female: 69%

Non-Hisp White: 71%

Study 2

N = 970
SurveyMonkey Audience
Completion rate: 87%

Democrat: 51%
Republican: 30%
Other/Non-Lean: 19%

Age 18-29:   26%
Age 30-44:   26%
Age 45-59:   33%
Age 60+:   16%

Female: 72%

Non-Hisp White: 70%

Study 3

N = 911
SurveyMonkey Audience
Completion rate: 89%

Democrat: 51%
Republican: 33%
Other/Non-Lean: 16%
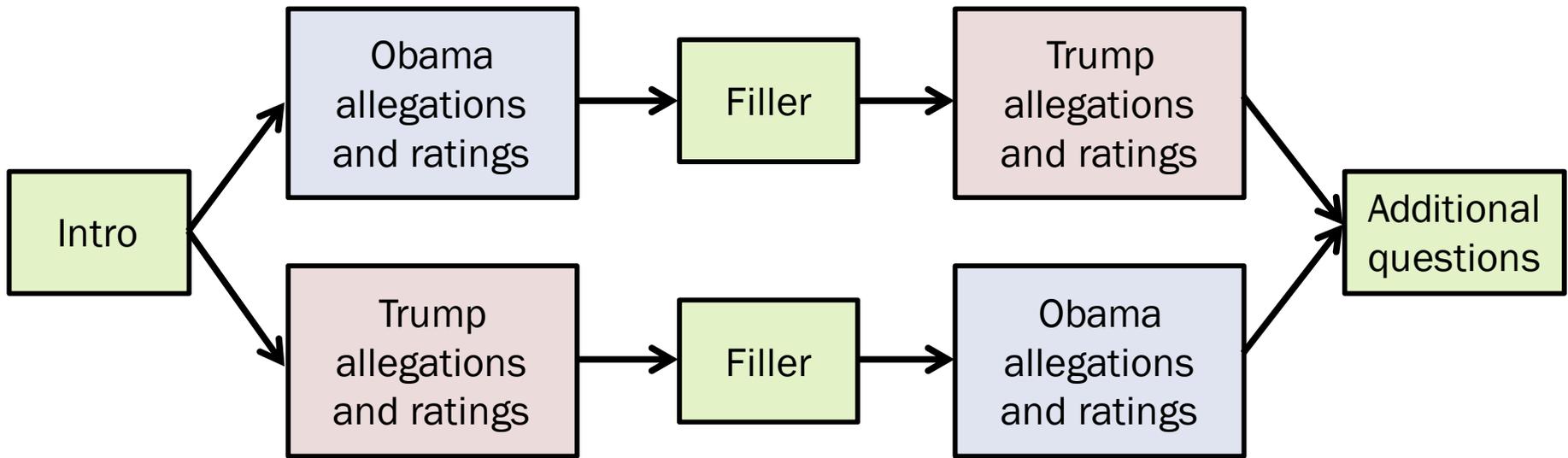
Age 18-29:   16%
Age 30-44:   18%
Age 45-59:   31%
Age 60+:   35%

Female: 65%

Non-Hisp White: 78%

Study 1 Design

Study 1 Politician Materials

In his official speeches, Barack Obama often paints police officers in a negative light: questioning their judgment, implying dangerousness in their culture, and emphasizing the role they play in violent attacks on African-Americans. Some people believe that this kind of speech is dangerous because it has the potential to incite anti-Police violence.

To what extent do you think Barack Obama's comments about police officers have the potential to incite anti-police violence?

o Not at all likely --- Extremely likely

If someone commits violence against police officers after listening to Barack Obama's speeches, how responsible do you think Obama is for it?

o Not at all responsible --- Extremely responsible

In his campaign speeches, Donald Trump often paints Muslims in a negative light: questioning their patriotism, implying dangerousness in their religion, and emphasizing the role they play in violent terrorist attacks. Some people believe that this kind of speech is dangerous because it has the potential to incite anti-Muslim violence.

To what extent do you think Donald Trump's comments about Muslims have the potential to incite anti-Muslim violence?

o Not at all likely --- Extremely likely

If someone commits violence against Muslims after listening to Donald Trump's speeches, how responsible do you think Donald Trump is for it?
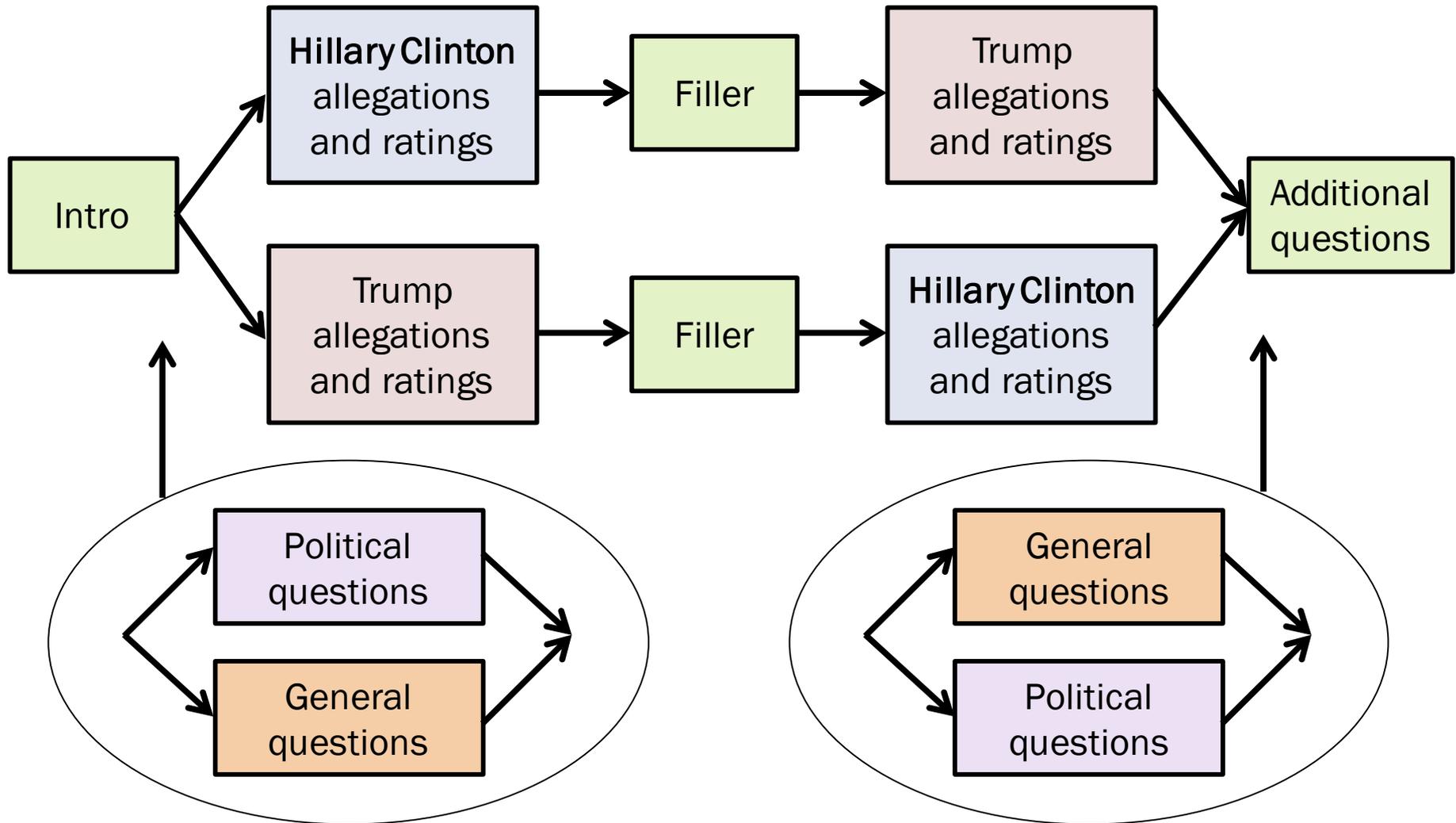
o Not at all responsible --- Extremely responsible
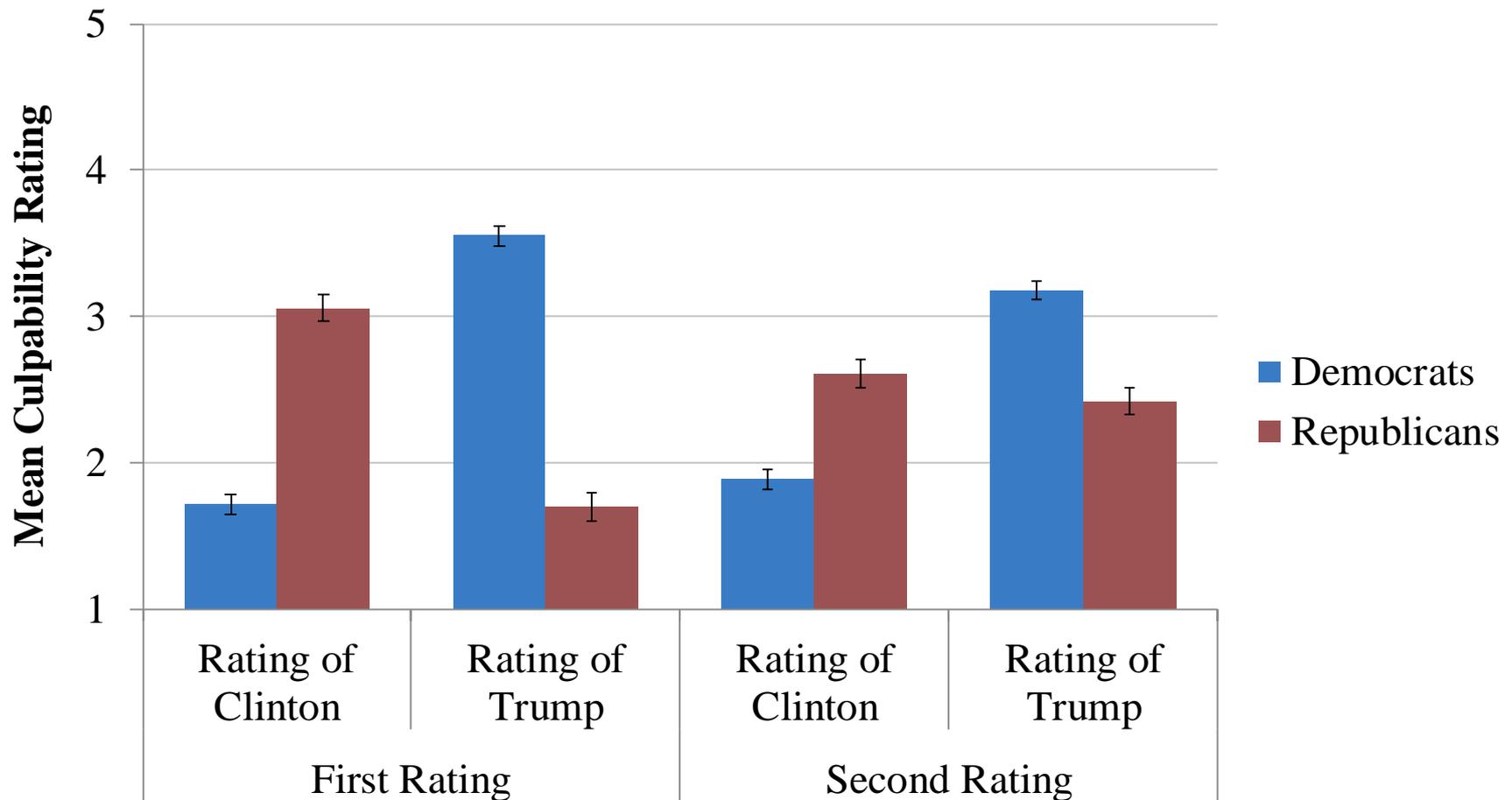
Study 1 Polarization Results
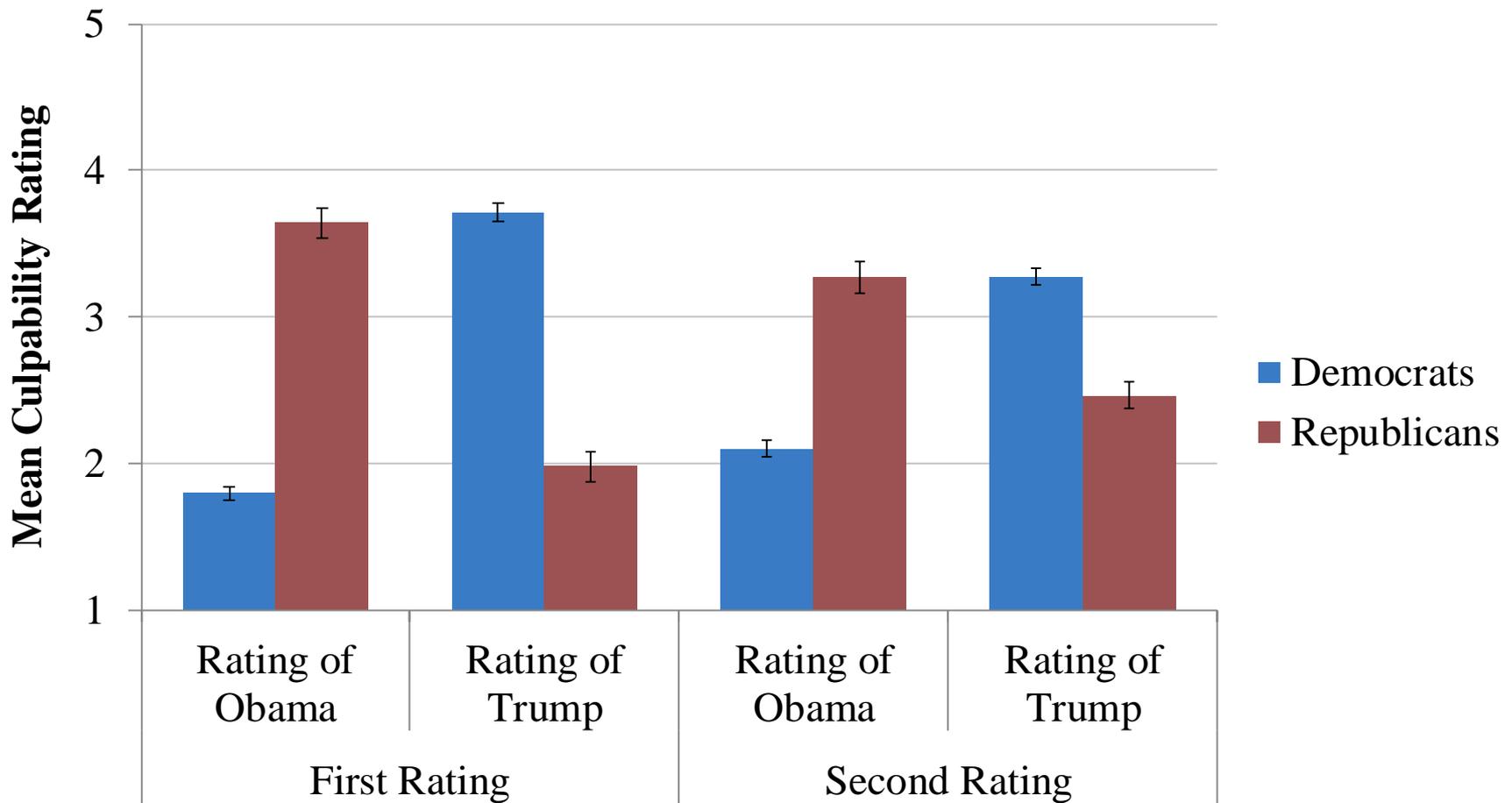
3-way mixed ANOVA interaction between party, politician, and order: $F_{(2,741)}=280.01$, $p<.001$
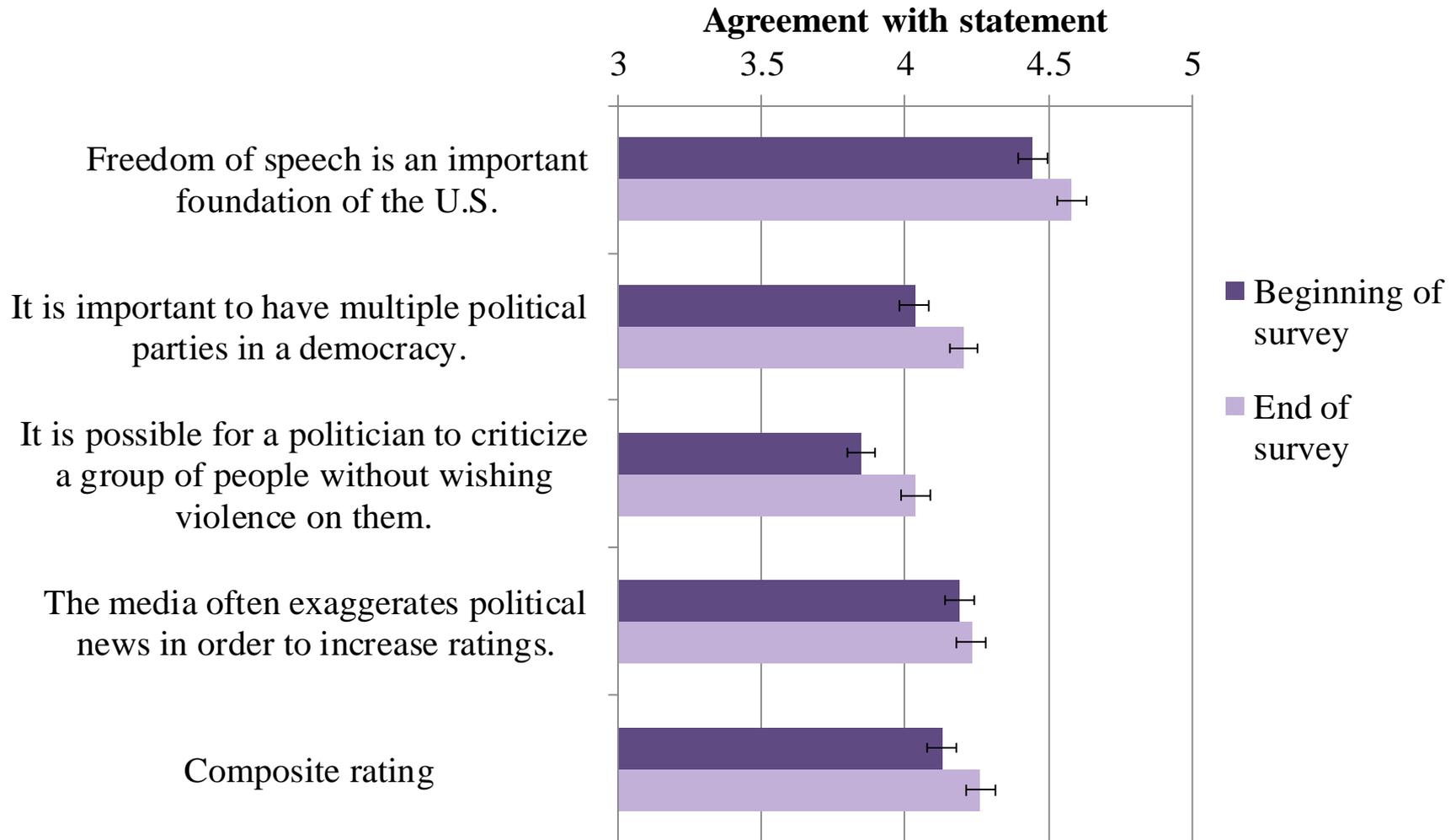
# Study 2 Design

Study 2 Polarization Results

Interaction between party, politician, and order: $F(2,835)=222.18$, $p<.001$; no effect of introductory questions: $F(2,835)=0.114$, $p=.892$

Study 2 General Principle Results

Agreement with statement

Freedom of speech is an important foundation of the U.S.

It is important to have multiple political parties in a democracy.

It is possible for a politician to criticize a group of people without wishing violence on them.

The media often exaggerates political news in order to increase ratings.

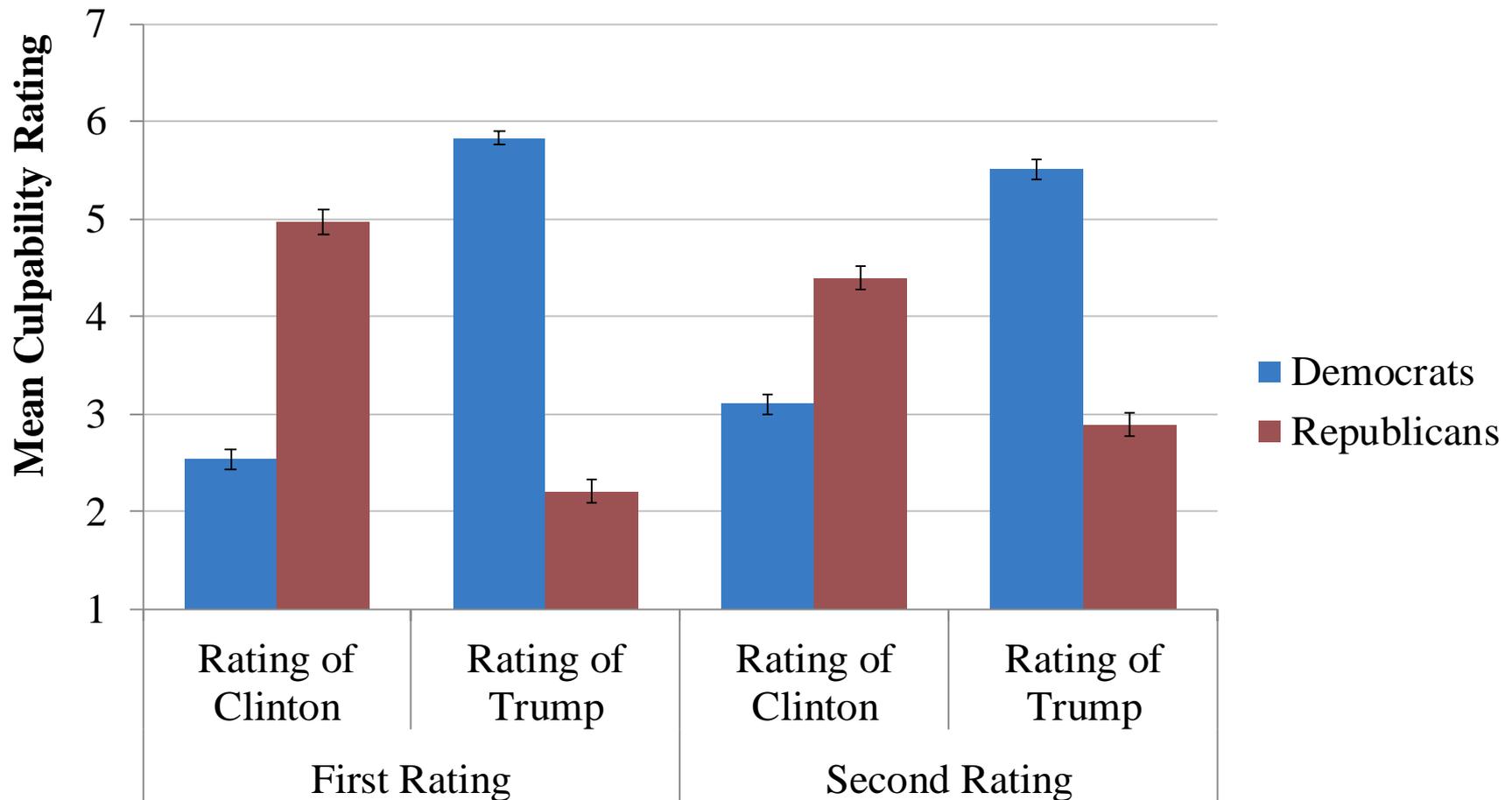Composite rating

Beginning of survey

End of survey

Main effect of general question location on composite rating: F(1,831)=4.939, *p*=.027
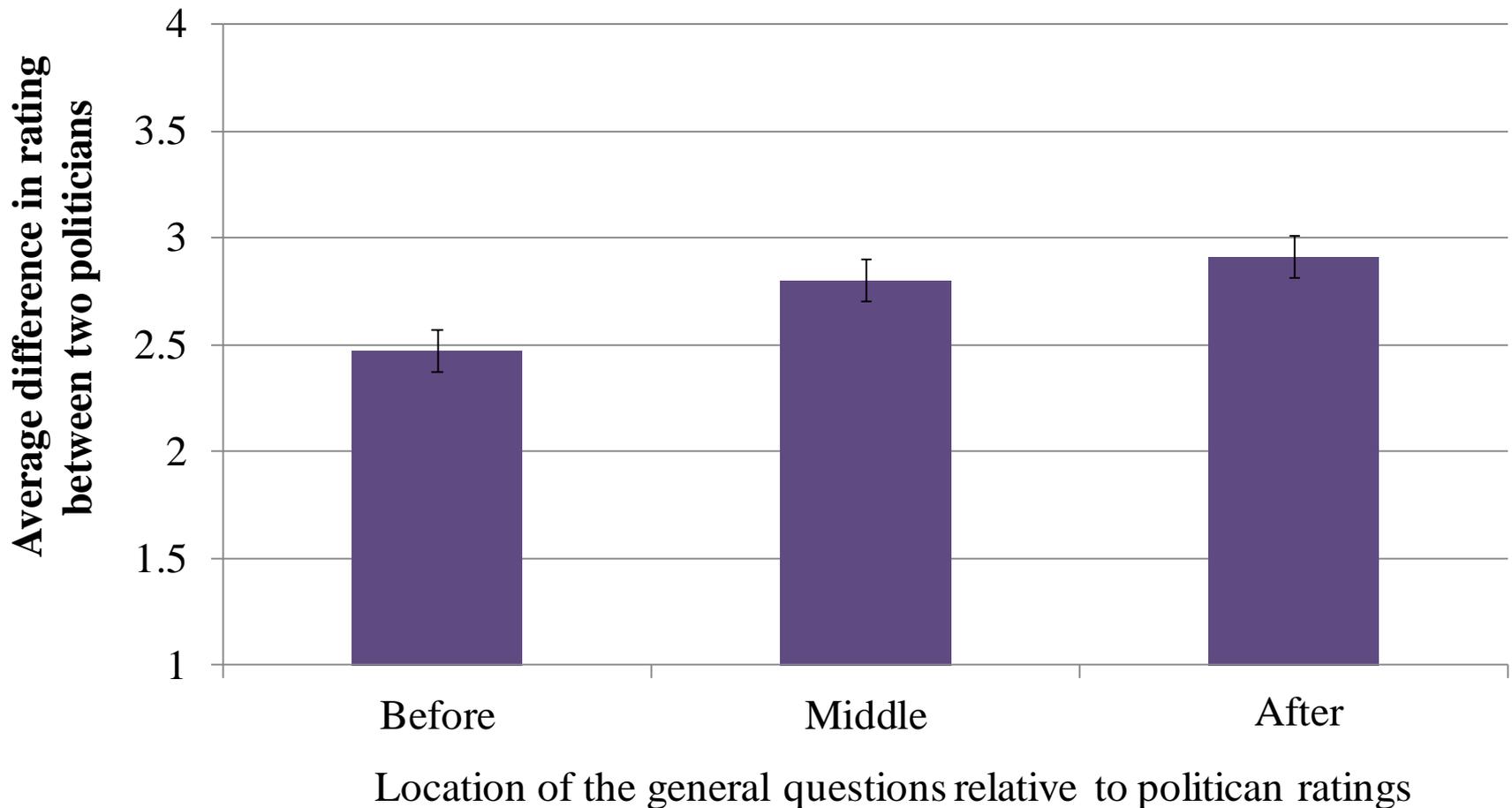
# Study 3 Design
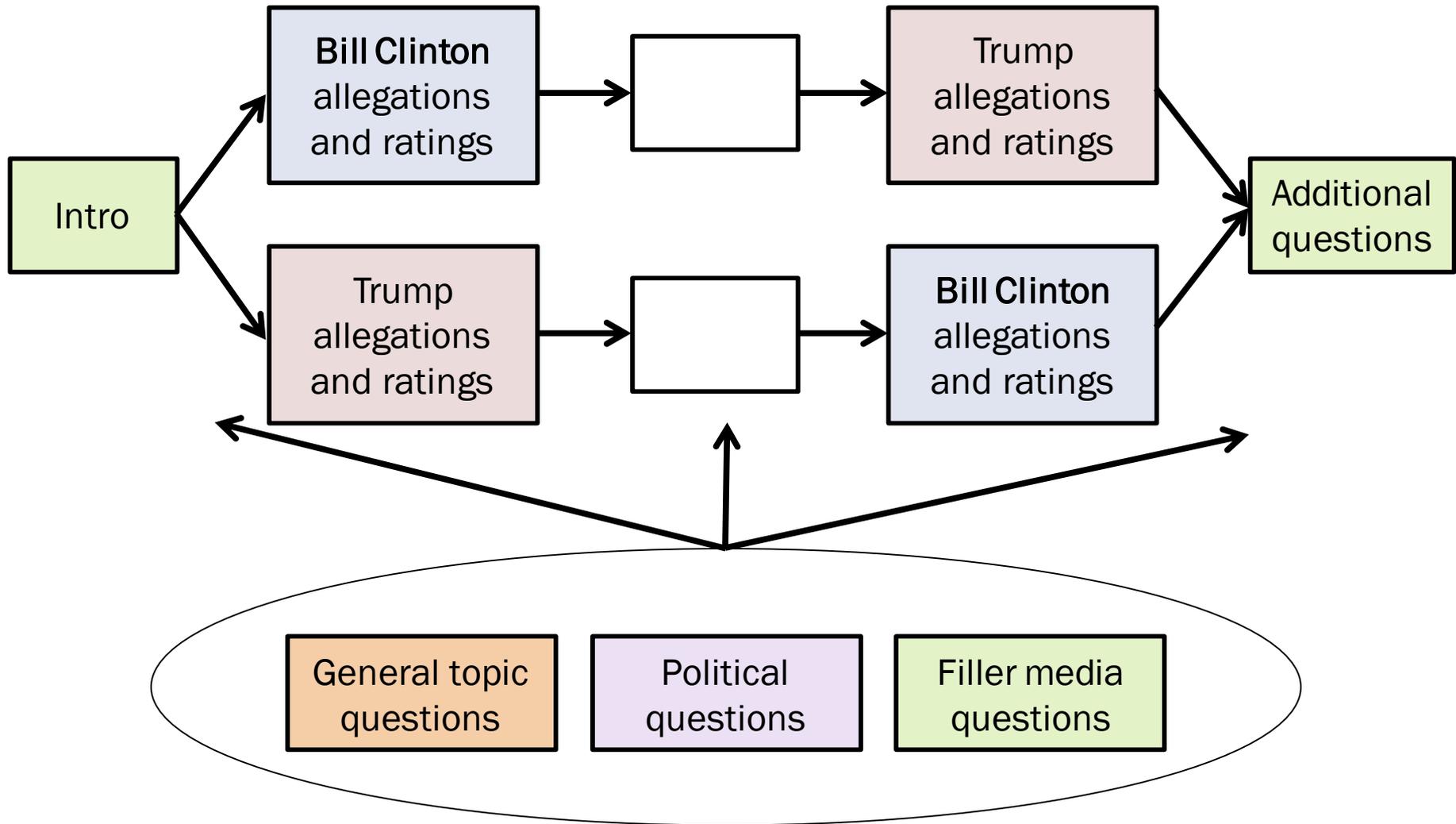
Study 3 Polarization Results

Interaction between party, politician, and order: F(2,800)=366.81, p<.001

General Principles Questions Slightly Increase Politician Rating Consistency

Average difference in rating between two politicians

4

3.5

3

2.5

2

1.5

1

Before   Middle   After

Location of the general questions relative to politican ratings

Main effect of general question placement on within-subject consistency in ratings: F(2,803)=4.805, p=.008

Some General Principle Questions Varied by Location
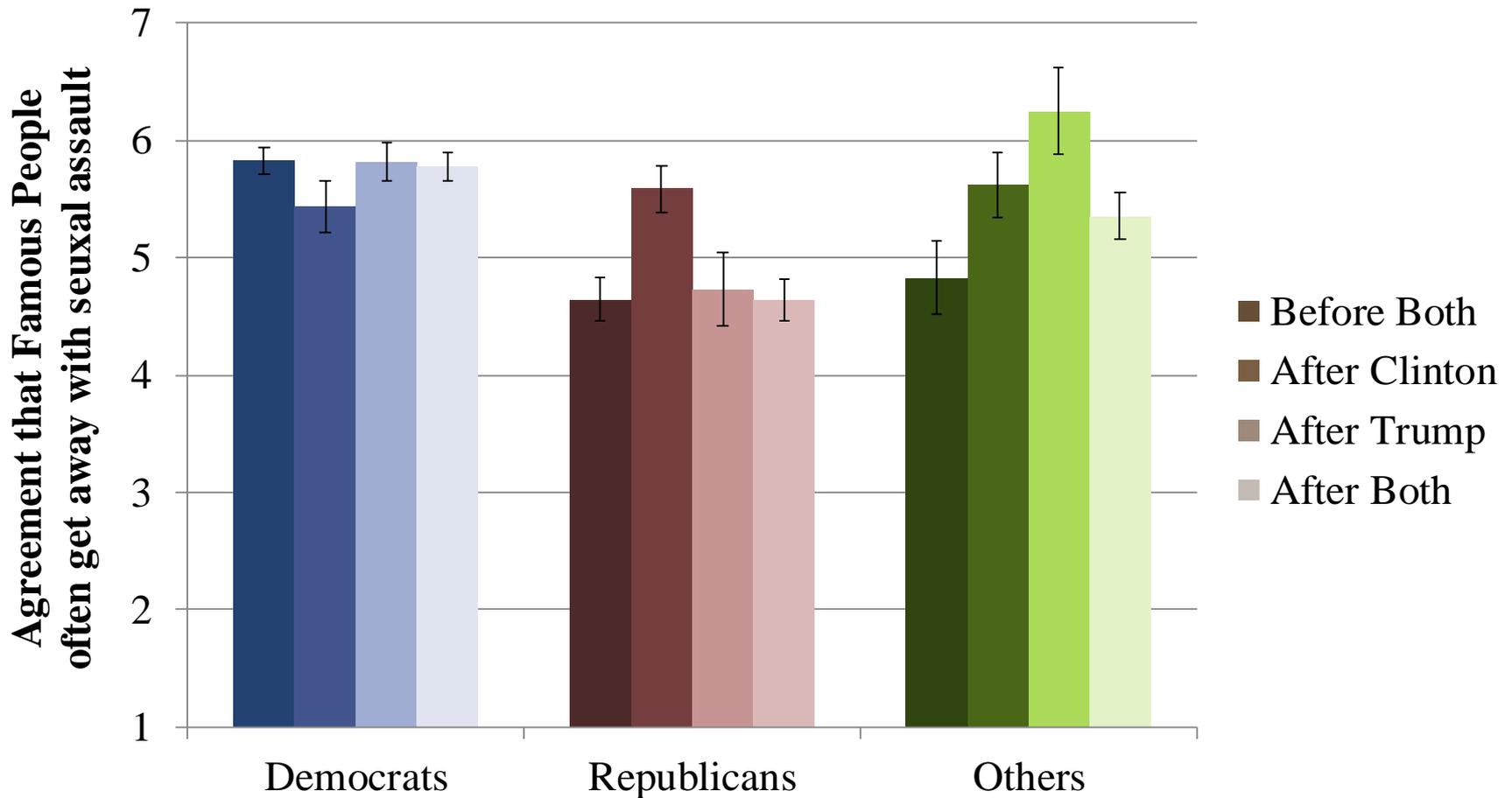
Interaction between party and general question placement: *F*(6,792)=4.103, *p*<.001

Research Questions Answered

✓ Will people rate outgroup politicians as more responsible for violence than ingroup politicians?

✓ Will this polarization be mitigated if people answer questions about the other politician first?

? Will this polarization be mitigated if people affirm relevant general principles before making political ratings?

✓ Will answering questions about politicians affect more general questions about the issue?

Future Directions

❖ Considerations of distance between judgments in surveys

    ❖ Pages between questions

    ❖ Level of (dis)similarity

❖ Further investigation into when affirming general principles impacts subsequent judgments

    ❖ Moderators and mechanisms

❖ Hypocrisy salience as a potential debiasing tool

Thank You

- ❖ Ashley Thomas

- ❖ Peter Ditto

- ❖ Lab mates

- ❖ SurveyMonkey

- ❖ PAPOR

- ❖ Questions or connections: **grady.becky@gmail.com**