

# Investigating Differential Formation of Threat and Valent Attitudes

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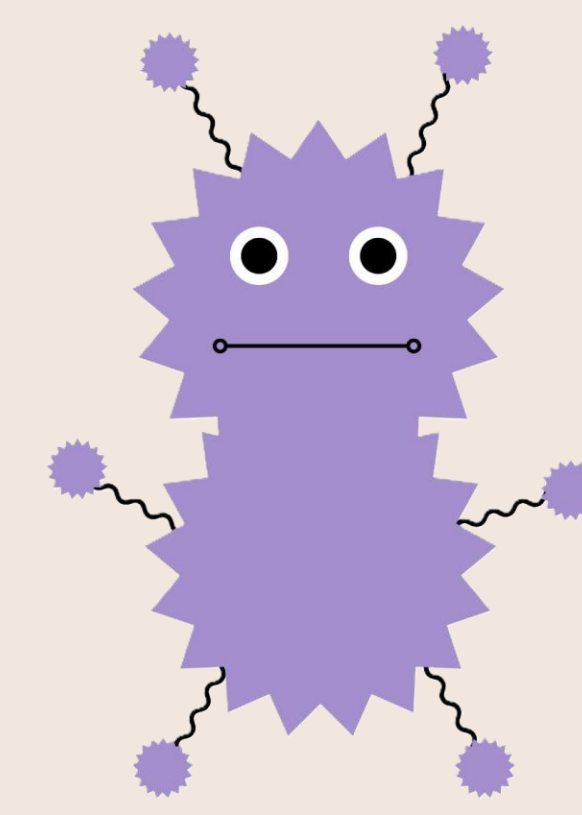
## Introduction

- Attitudes are mental associations linking an object to a *positive* or *negative* valence.
- Recent theories suggest that attitudes can exist along *both* positive/negative *and* threat/nonthreat dimensions
- The current work explored this theoretical distinction at the level of attitude formation.
- We test whether people differently form threat and valent attitudes towards novel targets depicted as (a) physically dangerous, (b) highly negative but not dangerous, and (c) neutral.

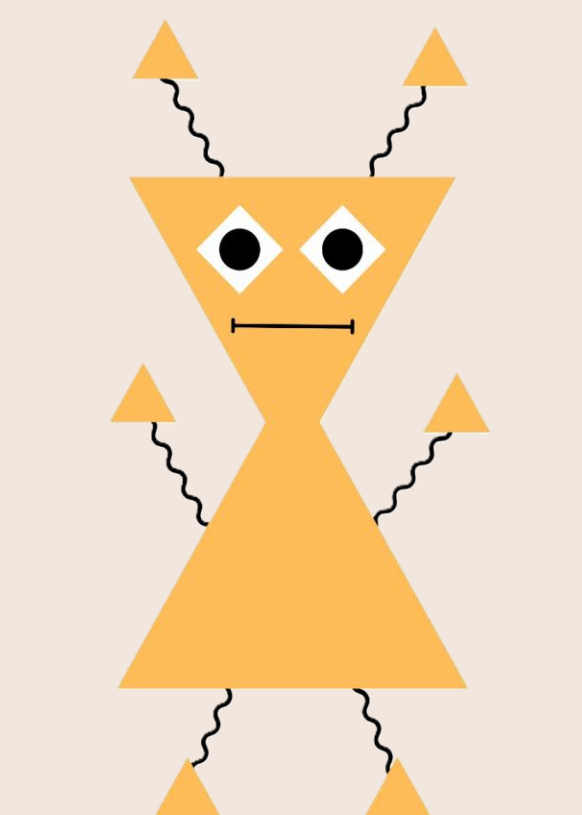
## Methods

### 1. Learning

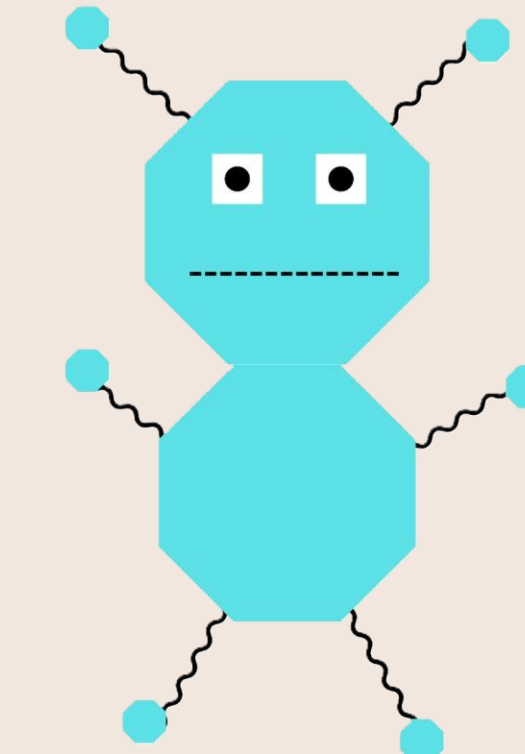
Participants read several behaviors characteristic of three alien species:



The **Purple Alien** species projects powerful toxins that seep through human skin and cause paralysis



The **Orange Alien** species engages in complex social engagements, often helping one another gather and share resources



Members of the **Blue Alien** Species often feed on their own feces leaving behind a trail of disgusting waste

### 2. Reinforcement

Participants then underwent a reinforcement paradigm testing their knowledge of each alien species.

"Select the alien species that is most likely to:  
"Build nice homes for one another on their home planet"

### 3. Attitude Measurement

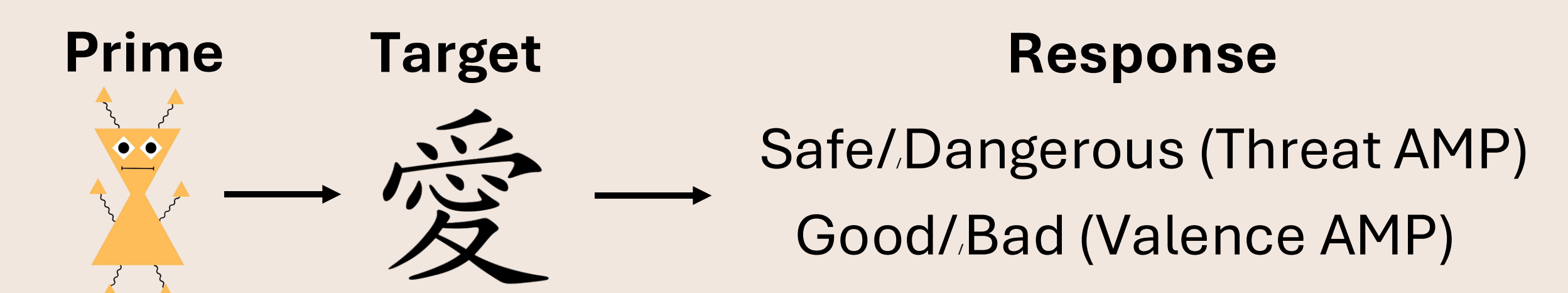
Last, participants completed explicit and automatic attitudes measures

#### Explicit Attitudes

Participants self-reported their threat and valent attitudes towards each alien species

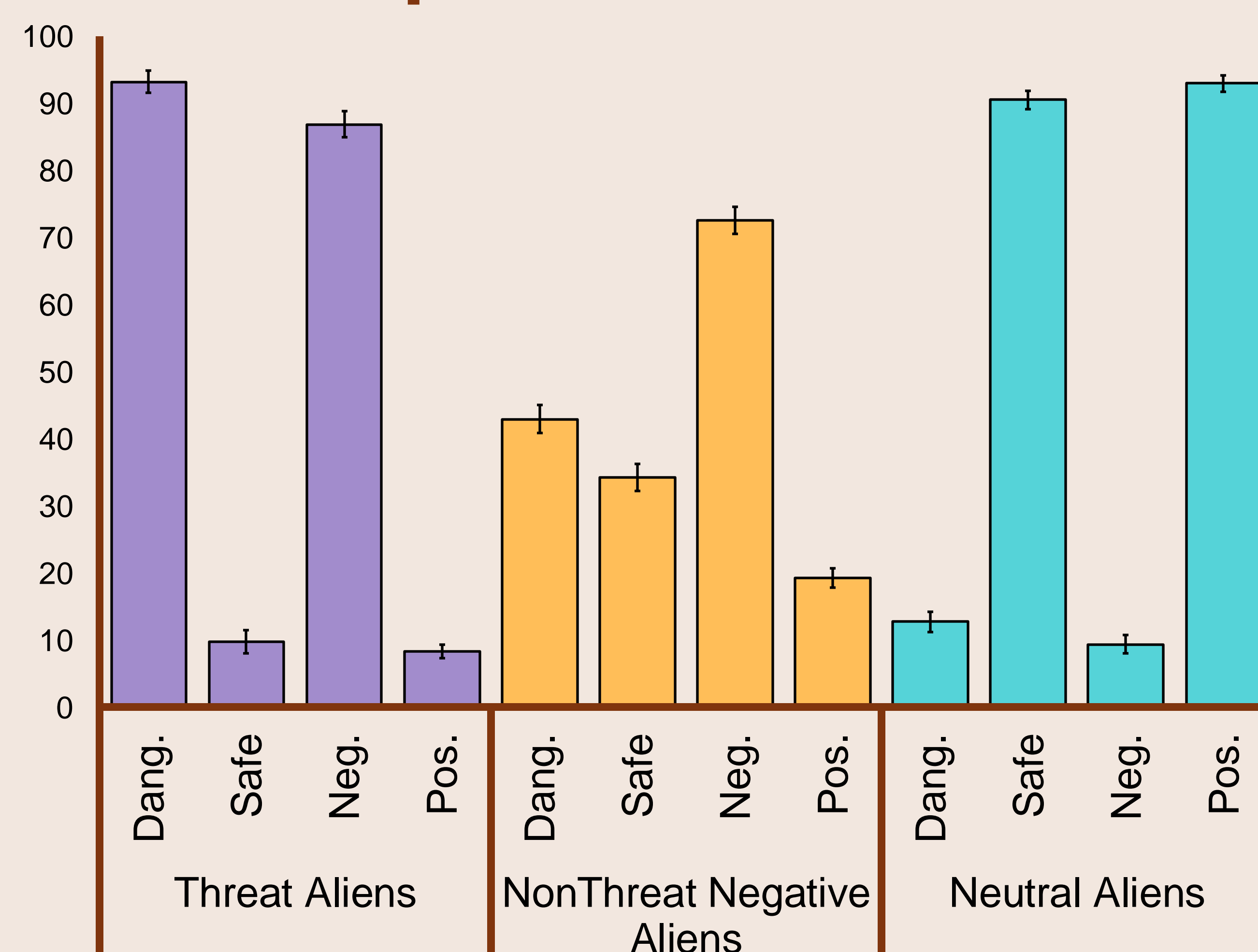
#### Automatic Attitudes

Participants completed indirect measures of threat and valent attitudes using the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP)

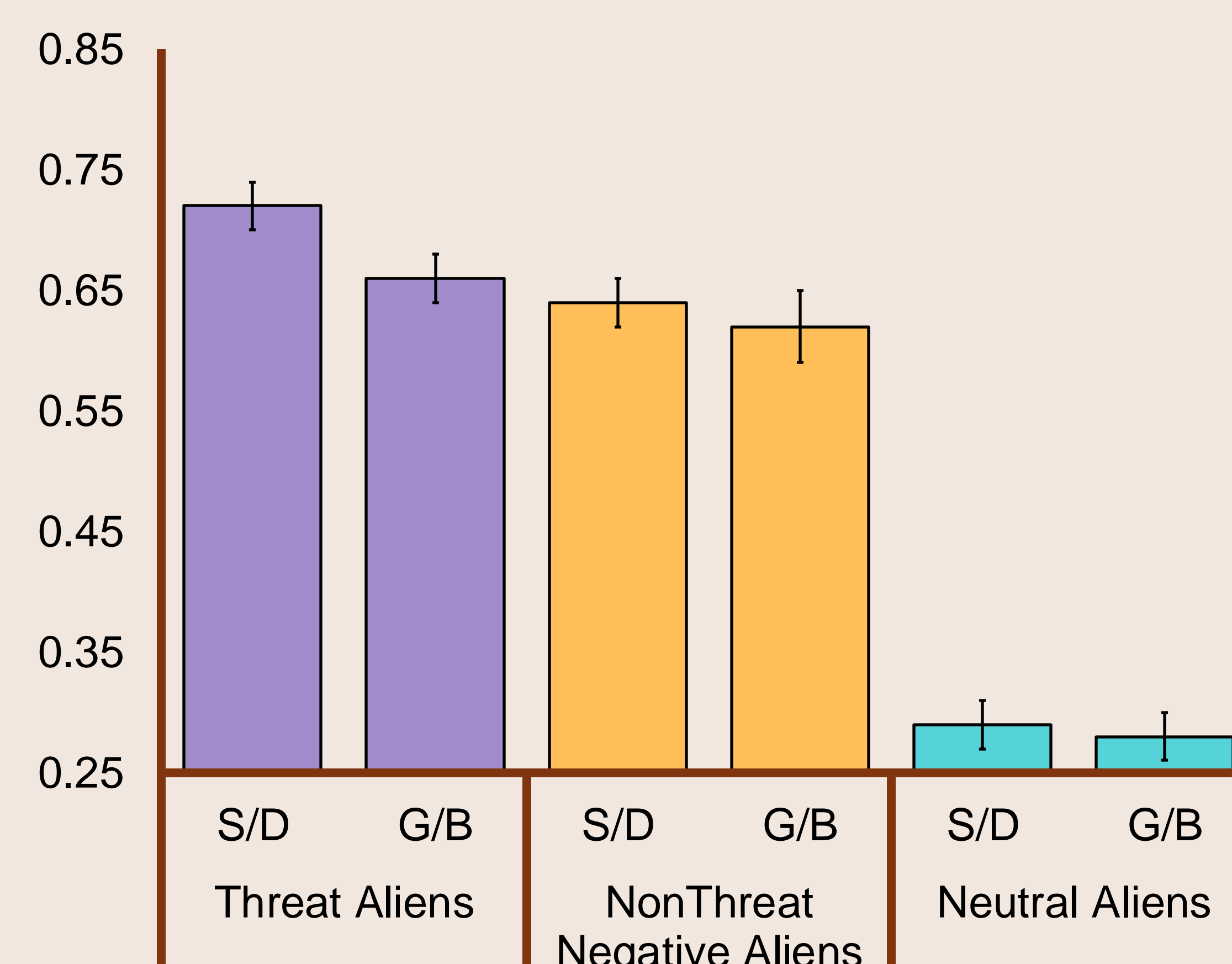


## Results

### Explicit Attitudes



### Automatic Attitudes



N = 110

## Discussion

People learn to associate aliens differently along dimension of *threat* and *valence*:

- People explicitly and automatically evaluated Threat Aliens as more dangerous than Nonthreat Negative aliens
- People explicitly and automatically evaluated Threat Aliens (but not Nonthreat Negative Aliens) as more dangerous than negative

#### Next Steps:

Examine whether (a) learned threat and valence attitudes uniquely influence behavior and (b) threat and valence attitudes update or change at different rates.

## References

