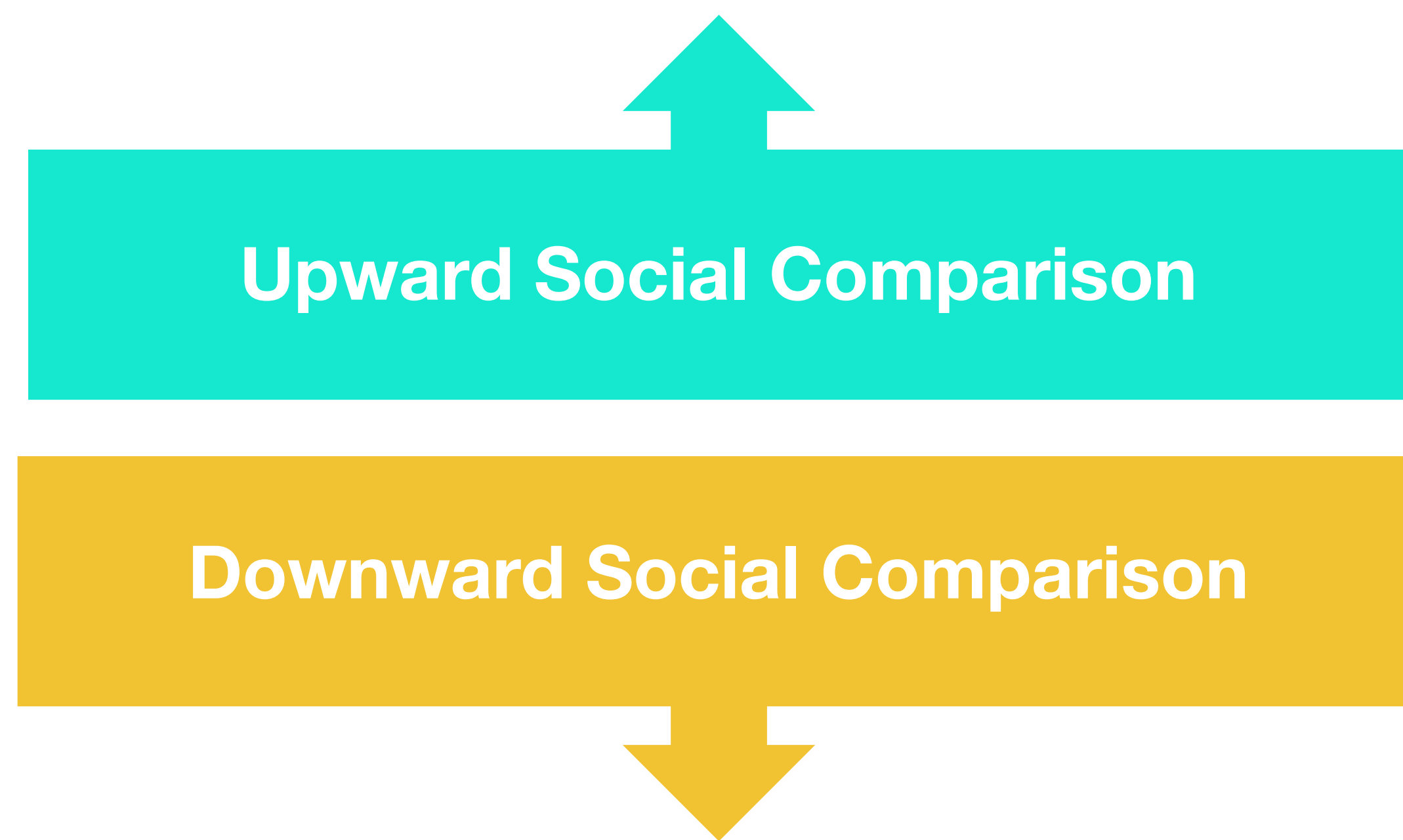




Mengdi Huang, Desiree Aleibar, & Lesley A. Guareña

University of California, San Diego

## Background



Past research on social comparison theory focuses on what individuals compare (e.g. academics, physical characteristics)<sup>1,2</sup>. Few studies address *how* individuals compare; that is, whether individuals are looking for similarities or differences between themselves and a social comparison target<sup>3</sup>.

The present study examined whether comparing similarities or differences by way of upward or downward social comparison impacts one's Academic Self Concept.

## Hypotheses

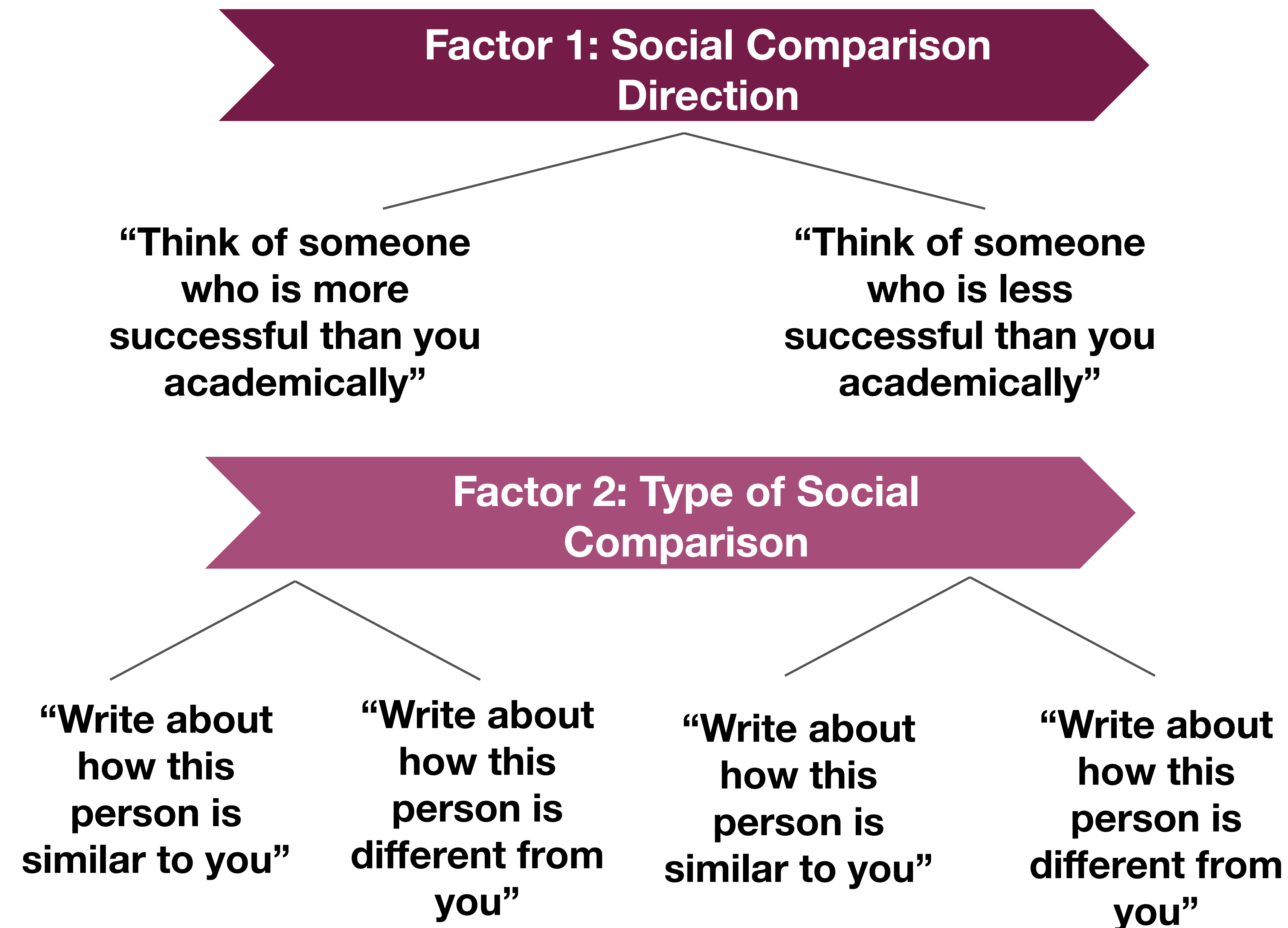
- (1) Individuals who upwardly socially compare will demonstrate higher academic self-concept than individuals who downwardly compared.
- (2) Individuals who found similarities will demonstrate higher academic self-concept than individuals who found differences.
- (3) When individuals socially compare similarities to upward social targets, they will demonstrate higher academic self-concept than when comparing differences.

## Methods

### Participants

52 undergraduate students (6 males, 45 females, 1 non-binary), age range from 18 to 24 (M=20.43, SD=1.32). All participants were recruited via social media. Data was collected via Qualtrics (online self-paced survey). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions.

### Procedure



Dependent Variable: Academic Self-Concept Scale<sup>4</sup>

## References

1. Aspinwall, L. G., & Taylor, S. E. (1993). Effects of social comparison direction, threat, and self-esteem on affect, self-evaluation, and expected success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64(5), 708-722. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.64.5.708
2. Cattarin, J. A., Thompson, J. K., Thomas, C., & Williams, R. (2000). Body Image, Mood, and Televised Images of Attractiveness: The Role of Social Comparison. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19(2), 220-239. doi:10.1521/jscp.2000.19.2.220
3. Collins, R. L. (1996). For better or worse: The impact of upward social comparison on self-evaluations. *Psychological bulletin*, 119(1), 51. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.119.1.51>
4. Flowers, L. O., Raynor, J. E., & White, E. N. (2013). Investigation of Academic Self-Concept of Undergraduates in STEM Courses. Retrieved from <http://infinitypress.info/index.php/jsss/article/view/292/174>

## Results

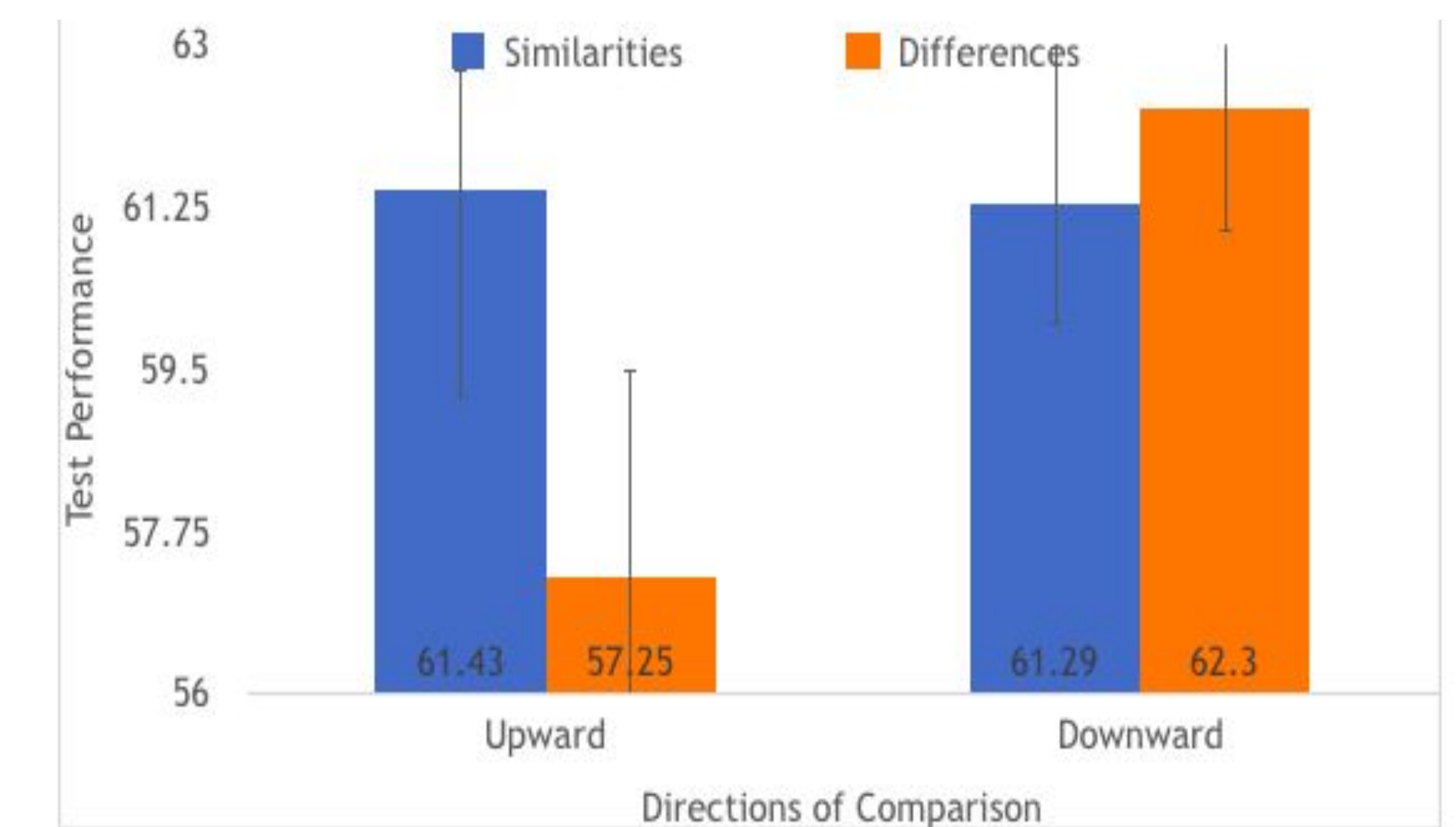


Figure 1. The Effects of Direction of Comparison and Type of Comparison on Academic Self-Concept

- 2x2 factorial ANOVA
- No significant main effect of Direction ( $F(1,48)=1.41, p=0.24$ ) in neither upward ( $M=60.76, SD=1.61$ ) or downward comparison ( $M=62.04, SD=1.30$ ).
- No significant main effect in type of comparison ( $F(1,48)=0.59, p=0.45$ ) in neither different ( $M=61.46, SD=1.62$ ) or similar ( $M=61.39, p=1.29$ ).
- No significant interaction between direction and means of comparison ( $F(1,48)=1.58, p=0.22$ ).

## Discussion

Comparing similarities or differences while upward or downward comparing has no significant effect on one's Academic Self-Concept. It is possible that no significant results were observed due to small sample size. Future research should explore if participants choosing their own direction (upward or downward) and type of social comparison (similar or different) produces a stronger effect on academic self-concept. This may give insight into preferences surrounding social comparison, specifically whether individuals prefer to compare similarities or differences.