

Questionnaire On Popularity In American High Schools

My name is Rosamaaria Perttola. I am a third year student at the University of Tampere, Finland. This questionnaire is part of the research for a paper I am writing on the concept of popularity in American high schools, e.g. how realistic is the portrayal of 'popularity' in many Hollywood films?

Outside the U.S., the images people have of American life is often based on how it has been presented cinematically. In hit films such as *Mean Girls*, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Clueless*, for example, 'popular' U.S. high school students are presented as being socially influential, relatively wealthy, fashion-oriented, superficial, conceited, and mean-spirited, often forming cliques who act to 'make or break' newcomers to the school or students with lower social status. Such films are of course fictional entertainment rather than documentary reality. Yet the consistency in the way 'popularity' is characterized in mass-audience Hollywood films suggests a basis in reality. My paper questions the extent to which the 'real' definition of 'popularity' in American high schools is either similar to or different from the images portrayed by selected Hollywood film hits of the past two decades.

I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions presented below. All responses will be anonymous (the webform will not reveal your name or e-mail address). The URL for the final web version of this paper, scheduled to appear by mid-May, is given in the thank-you note which will appear after your responses have been submitted. The questionnaire will be online from April 8th to April 18th. Thank you for your interest!

Basic information

Your gender

- Male
 Female

Which class in high school are you in?

- Freshman
 Sophomore
 Junior
 Senior

If you have already graduated from high school, what was your graduation year?

What is the name and location of your high school (HS name, city, state)?

Questions Concerning Popularity In High School

According to many films which depict recent American high school life, the following characteristics are typical of 'popular' students. On the basis of your high school experience, which would you associate with students *you* felt were 'popular'?

- Attractive
 Affluent

- Socially influential
- Well-known
- Fashionable
- Superficial
- Conceited
- Unkind

What other characteristics would you suggest instead of, or in addition to, those listed above?

How do you think 'popularity' is (or was, if you are a graduate) defined in your high school? How would you describe a 'popular' student?

Most film portrayals of high school popularity have focused on girls. In your opinion, are the popularity criteria for boys similar to or different from those for girls? Briefly, how and why?

Would you consider yourself to be a popular student?

- Yes
- No

If 'yes,' why or in what sense? If 'no,' why not?

Do you feel popularity might be defined differently among the students in your school than in some neighboring schools? If so, how?

Do you consider the following statements to be true or false?

True	False	Statement
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Being popular means being the center of public attention.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Popular students only associate with other popular students.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Associating with an unpopular student may cause a popular student to lose status.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Being "noticed" by a popular student can remarkably raise one's social status.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Popular students are the fashion icons of their school. Their style is copied by other students.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Popular students usually have a lot of money.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Being popular does not necessarily mean being well-liked.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A lot of social pressure and expectations are connected to popularity: popular students may be expected to act and behave a certain way in order to maintain their high social status.

Is the way high school life was presented in films such as *Mean Girls*, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *Clueless* similar to how it is (or was) in your high school?

- Yes
 No

If 'yes,' in what ways?

If 'no,' how does (or did) your school differ?

Are there other films you feel would describe your high school experience more realistically than the ones cited in this questionnaire? If so, could you please list their titles and briefly describe how you feel they are more realistic?

Submit answers