

Images of Popularity in Selected High School Movies
Rosamaaria Perttola, Spring 2010
Sample Responses from the Webform Questionnaire

Following are 4 sample responses to the webform questionnaire, to give a sense of the types of answers that were submitted. Two are from California, 1 is from Massachusetts and 1 is from Missouri.

BASIC INFORMATION

Gender: male

High School class: senior

Year of Graduation:

High School Name, City, State: Homestead, Cupertino, CA

QUESTIONS CONCERNING POPULARITY

1. a) 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
- well-known
- fashionable

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

Being active in sports tends to help. Actually any social extracurricular.

2. 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?

Someone with a lot of friends who has excellent charisma. Hangs out in certain spots on campus.

3. 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?

I don't think they're any different, but I think guys go about it in a different way. There's a lot less drama and a lot of it is conserved.

4. Would you consider yourself to be a popular student? yes

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

I'd say so. I have a lot of friends, and I'm pretty outgoing. I wouldn't fall under an exclusive epitome of popularity, but I'm definitely on the popular side of the spectrum. I don't have a hard time making friends.

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

I think it's all the same in an area, but the East coast would be totally different. Clothing styles would clash. I don't see people wearing Hollister brand clothing out of the West coast. Neighborhood to neighborhood would be nearly identical though. Maybe certain sport team members depending on the trend of the school.

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

- Being popular means being the center of public attention: true
- Popular students only associate with other popular students: false
- Associating with an unpopular student may cause a popular student to lose status: false
- Being noticed by a popular student can remarkably raise one's social status: true
- Popular students are the fashion icons of their school. Their style is copied by other students: false
- Popular students usually have a lot of money: false
- Being popular does not necessarily mean being well-liked: true
- A lot of social pressure and expectations are connected to popularity: false

7. 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, how?

No, why?

I'm not too sure, but there definitely isn't a plateau of popularity to reach.

8. 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?

BASIC INFORMATION

Gender: female

High School class: senior

Year of Graduation: 2010

High School Name, City, State: Homestead High School, Cupertino, CA

QUESTIONS CONCERNING POPULARITY

1. a) 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
- socially influential
- well-known
- fashionable
- superficial

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

Outgoing

2. 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?

Popularity was not a big issue at our school. If you were popular, everyone knew you and you were well liked. You always hung out at the "cool spot" (aka Senior Stage for seniors, Junior tables for juniors, Sophomore tree for sophomores and Freshman wall for freshmen). It was looked down upon to go into an area that did not belong to your grade. It was okay if you had siblings or you were dating someone who was of a different grade, then you could hang out with them. Otherwise it was not approved of.

3. 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?

It is more strict for girls: you must be pretty, skinny, fashionable, be in the right crowd etc. For guys, all you have to be is athletic or introduced to the right crowd.

4. Would you consider yourself to be a popular student? yes

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

I had a lot of friends and I knew almost everyone in our grade and I got along with many people from other classes.

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

Our school isn't as into cliques as some of the other schools may be.

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

- Being popular means being the center of public attention: true
- Popular students only associate with other popular students: false
- Associating with an unpopular student may cause a popular student to lose status: false
- Being noticed by a popular student can remarkably raise one's social status: false
- Popular students are the fashion icons of their school. Their style is copied by other students: true
- Popular students usually have a lot of money: true
- Being popular does not necessarily mean being well-liked: true
- A lot of social pressure and expectations are connected to popularity: true

7. 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, how?

No, why?

Those films are exaggerating what happens in real life.

8. 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?

I am not an avid movie watcher but it seems like all movies tend to over-exaggerate high school life.

BASIC INFORMATION

Gender: male

High School class:

Year of Graduation: 2008

High School Name, City, State: Newburyport High, Newburyport, Massachusetts

QUESTIONS CONCERNING POPULARITY

1. a) 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
-well-known
-fashionable

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

In my high school most of the "popular" kids were the nice ones, I had a relatively small school with classes under 200 kids each, we all knew each other and no one that was seen as mean was really popular. The type of kids that could hold a conversation with everyone.

Sports also help a lot, if you were on a lot of sports team you would know a lot more people. But that's also not like in the movies, the captain of my football team wasn't popular, and the quarterback was quiet and kept to himself.

2. 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?

There was a rather large group of kids that were "popular." It was the kids that all went to the parties, went to a specific spot on the beach, etc... It wasn't like *Mean Girls* where only a small group of kids were cool and they were mean to everyone else.

3. 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?

Boys were a lot more accepting in my opinion. The girls would be mean to others if they dressed slutty or flirted with the wrong guy, or simply were a slut. But for the most part guys didn't really care what people did as long as they didn't do something out of line or mean. There were groups within groups however, hockey players in my school didn't really like football players as a group, even though a lot of them were friends with one another. Girls are a lot meaner.

4. Would you consider yourself to be a popular student? yes

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

I hung out with kids I liked, with the girls I didn't mind, I was on the sports teams and basically I didn't not get invited to the parties. The only kids that would say no to this from

my high school would be the kids that didn't want to be "popular" and instead saw themselves as rebels of sorts, if you get what I mean.

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

Yes, my town was preppy, kids had boats, new cars, big houses, and we all dressed nicely. The town next to me was not nearly as nice, but it still was by no means ghetto, however the kids would try to say otherwise. Most kids from there would act like they had it rough, like they were from a major city and lived on welfare, they wore their pants around their ankles and tried to rap. They acted like they were big shot drug dealers and knew what happened in real cities and like they were in real gangs...

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

- Being popular means being the center of public attention: false
- Popular students only associate with other popular students: false
- Associating with an unpopular student may cause a popular student to lose status: false
- Being noticed by a popular student can remarkably raise one's social status: false
- Popular students are the fashion icons of their school. Their style is copied by other students: false
- Popular students usually have a lot of money: false
- Being popular does not necessarily mean being well-liked: true
- A lot of social pressure and expectations are connected to popularity: false

7. 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, how?

No, why?

My school was small, everyone talked to everyone for the most part. The prettiest girls would be in lab groups with the quietest guys, and no one really thought they were any better than anyone else, for the most part. Kids that did think they were the best were generally disliked and people let them know it. Kids had parties and no one was ever kicked out or told not to show up. People just kind of went on with their business and didn't pay attention to kids that they didn't like, or didn't like them. My school was unlike other larger schools however.

8. 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?

Not really... The movies always show large schools, bullies, girls that thought they were to hot to talk to most people etc... I didn't really have that.

I think if you asked a girl from my school it may be different though, girls are a lot meaner.

BASIC INFORMATION

Gender: female

High School class: senior

Year of Graduation:

High School Name, City, State: Boonville High School, Boonville, MO

QUESTIONS CONCERNING POPULARITY

1. a) 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
- socially influential
- well-known
- fashionable

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

Athletic

2. 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?

Well-known students in the school are known as popular. People who are involved in a lot of things and are kind to everyone.

3. 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?

I think they are similar. The good-looking, nicely dressed, well-known, athletic boys are the popular ones just like the girls.

4. Would you consider yourself to be a popular student? no

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

There isn't really a "popular" group here. Everyone knows everyone and most people get along so everyone is "popular" in a sense.

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

No.

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

- Being popular means being the center of public attention: false
- Popular students only associate with other popular students: false
- Associating with an unpopular student may cause a popular student to lose status: false
- Being noticed by a popular student can remarkably raise one's social status: false
- Popular students are the fashion icons of their school. Their style is copied by other students: false
- Popular students usually have a lot of money: false
- Being popular does not necessarily mean being well-liked: true
- A lot of social pressure and expectations are connected to popularity: false

7. 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, how?

No, why?

Our school is small so everyone gets along. There are no hugely noticeable cliques like in those movies. The rich kids aren't necessarily popular.

8. 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?

Varsity Blues is more like our school because everyone knows everyone and most people get along. Everyone attends the same social gatherings.