The Representation of Likeability in American Pop Culture: A Case Study of Clueless (1995)

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ABSTRACT

Teenage popularity is often portrayed negatively in American pop culture, frequently associated with bullying, beauty privilege, and social exclusion. This study offers an alternative perspective by applying Mitch Prinstein's theory of likeability, which frames popularity as an indicator of strong interpersonal relationships and high social acceptance. This perspective is captured in Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995), particularly its depiction of the "popular girl" trope as shaped by fashion, social status, and influence among affluent Beverly Hills teens. Focusing on the film's leading character, Cher Horowitz, this study examines how likability is represented as a positive form of popularity. This study employed a descriptive method to analyze how Cher's character embodies likeability as a form of social acceptance. The primary data consisted of the film script, including dialogue, narration, and monologue, while secondary sources included books, journals, and scholarly articles. Data collection involved watching the film, reading the script, and systematically identifying relevant elements. Data were analyzed using an interpretive approach to unpack and discover the underlying themes, patterns, and messages conveyed in the narrative. Findings reveal that Cher's popularity aligns with the likability type, characterized by her ability to make others feel happy, appreciated, and included. The portrayal of such key traits offers a contrast to more negative portrayals of popularity found in other American teen movies, such as *Cruel Intentions* (1999) and *Mean Girls* (2004).

KEYWORDS: *Popularity, Likeability, Representation, American Pop Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Literature encompasses both written and oral works that convey an author's expressions (Netta et al., 2022; Sarair et al., 2023). It is not limited to the written word but also includes spoken, performed, and creatively produced forms (Marcus & Sollors, 2009). Literature can emerge from various artistic expressions, allowing individuals to freely convey their emotions, thoughts, and experiences, resulting in aesthetically rich literary works (Chaira & Yuniarti, 2020; Trisnawati et al., 2016). As a result, people can appreciate and engage with these creations. There are four main types of literature that audiences enjoy: fiction, including novels, novellas, and prose poetry; drama; and film (Klarer, 2004).

Building on the above understanding of literature's diverse forms, literature could also serve as a vital medium for reflecting social realities and human experiences. Among various literary forms, film is particularly powerful in representing cultural and societal issues. It serves as more than just entertainment; it functions as a social reference that shapes audience perceptions and attitudes. Research based on film screening experience by Muna et al. (2023) confirms that building associative mental images linked to an audience's sociohistorical experiences even plays a crucial role in altering the audience's social perceptions towards crucial issues in society, including adolescent struggles such as popularity.

Teen films often reflect societal perceptions of popularity, and *Clueless* (1995), directed by Amy Heckerling, is a prime example of how likeability operates within high school social dynamics (Heckerling, 2019). The film follows Cher Horowitz, a wealthy and socially prominent teenager, who, despite her privileged status, is admired for her genuine warmth, friendliness, and willingness to help others. Unlike many traditional portrayals of popular characters as exclusive or intimidating, Cher exemplifies a likable leader who fosters inclusivity and positive relationships within her peer group.

As a teen film, *Clueless* reflects broader trends in American pop culture, where high school settings often serve as microcosms of social hierarchies and evolving ideals of popularity. According to Driscoll (2002), American teen films play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing societal perceptions of youth culture, particularly in how teenage girls navigate fashion, status, and social relationships. *Clueless* challenges traditional portrayals of popularity by presenting Cher as a likeable and inclusive figure, rather than an exclusive or intimidating leader. Her warmth, generosity, and ability to foster positive relationships align with the evolving representation of teenage girls in American pop culture, where likeability, rather than dominance, becomes a defining trait of social success.

While previous research on *Clueless* has explored themes of consumerism and language class (Press & Rosenman, 2016) or female-focused industry (Hunting, 2014), studies examining the film through the lens of likability-based popularity remain limited. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the character of Cher Horowitz using Mitch Prinstein's popularity theory, with particular emphasis on her social interactions and the behavioral traits that construct her likeable persona. Beyond this specific inquiry, this study pursues a broader objective: to demonstrate how English Literature can critically engage with modern popular media as a means to explore enduring questions of human behavior, social norms, and cultural values in a contemporary society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

POPULARITY IN AMERICAN POP CULTURE

Clueless is a film that represents popular teenage life in America during the 1990s. This era of American teenage life was marked by distinctive features that reflected the cultural, social, and technological trends of the time. According to Furstenberg (2000), teen self-confidence reached a low point in 1980, with 82 percent of teens reporting satisfaction with their personal lives; by 1992, this satisfaction rate had increased to 86 percent. Teens identified friends, home, and school as the biggest influences on their generation. Their main concerns included school grades, career uncertainty, growing pains, fears, and getting along with parents. The social lives of popular teenagers in the 1990s were very active, often involving time spent in shopping malls, attending parties, and hosting exclusive social events. Shopping malls served as social hubs where teens gathered to shop, socialize, and display their style. Parties and social events were integral to their lives, often involving school friends and the broader community (Furstenberg, 2000, pp. 896–902).

Culturally, the 1990s were marked by the influence of the "MTV Generation," a term used to describe adolescents and young adults who were significantly impacted by the television channel MTV. This era was characterized by a strong connection to music, fashion, and visual media, shaping the identities and social behaviors of teens. The MTV Generation was known for its cynicism, quick information processing, and a penchant for irony in humor and entertainment (Greenberg, 2009, p. 159).

Appearance also played an important role in the 1990s, with popular teenagers following the latest fashion trends and wearing clothes from famous brands. The Fashion History Timeline by the Fashion Institute of Technology notes that in the 1990s, "trends in music like grunge, hip-hop and Britpop influenced styles throughout the decade." Specifically, grunge fashion included "oversized flannel shirts, sometimes worn over a t-shirt, and jeans," while hip-hop fashion featured "sportswear, including baseball caps and jackets, basketball shorts, tracksuits, and hoodies." By the mid-nineties, styles became more feminine again. Slip dresses epitomized the minimalist look during this period. Silk versions were worn as formal wear, while a popular daytime look was the slip dress over a white T-shirt. The "sexy school girl" look as seen in films like *Clueless* (Reddy, 2020).

This cultural context of 1990s fashion, shaped heavily by youth identity and media, provides an important backdrop to films like *Clueless*, which not only reflected these trends but helped define them. This study utilizes the film *Clueless* (1995) as the object of the study. Released in July 1995, *Clueless* earned over $10 million in its first week, a

surefire success, especially for its genre. Heckerling's high school rom-com, starring a young Alicia Silverstone as Cher Horowitz, grossed more than $56 million worldwide. The film was so popular that it even sparked a TV spin-off that ran for three seasons, spanning 62 episodes and two different television networks. Therefore, this film is worth reviewing because the themes raised in this film are quite interesting.

In contemporary America, social media plays a central role in shaping teens' construction of popularity. A 2023 Pew Research Center report reveals that social media platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram are widely used by American teens, with 63% using TikTok and over half using Instagram and Snapchat regularly. These platforms promote status-based popularity by quantifying attention through likes, followers, and viral content, often reinforcing the association between popularity, visibility, and appearance (Pew Research Center, 2023). This phenomenon underscores the ongoing relevance of studying alternative representations of popularity in teen media, such as the likability-centered model seen in Clueless.

CATEGORIZATION OF POPULARITY ACCORDING TO MITCH PRINSTEIN

Prinstein distinguishes between two types of popularity: likability-based popularity and status-based popularity. While the former refers to being well-liked by many and disliked by few, the latter is about being widely recognized, influential, and powerful, which does not necessarily correlate with being well-liked (Prinstein, 2017, p. 45).

Status-Based Popularity

Unlike likability, which fosters trust and closeness, status-based popularity revolves around visibility, dominance, and power. This form of popularity emerges in adolescence when social hierarchies become more defined (Prinstein & Getz, 2022, p. 36). High-status individuals are widely recognized, set social trends, and influence peer behavior, yet they are often among the least liked in their group.

Status is not about kindness or connection but about establishing a social hierarchy. Those with high status dictate what is considered "cool," and their influence encourages others to follow their lead. This status often stems from physical attractiveness, dominance, and, unfortunately, exclusionary or aggressive behavior. Studies show that high-status adolescents frequently engage in behaviors such as belittling others to maintain their position, a pattern reflected in portrayals of social cliques in films like *Mean Girls* (Prinstein & Getz, 2022, p. 40).

While status can grant short-term social power, research indicates it carries significant long-term risks. High-status individuals face increased chances of depression, anxiety, and loneliness in adulthood. Compared to their peers, they are more likely to struggle with job instability, substance abuse, and unhealthy relationships (Prinstein, 2017, p. 43). Ultimately, while status may seem desirable, true social success and well-being are more strongly linked to likability.

Likability-Based Popularity

Likability and popularity are closely intertwined. Individuals with high likability are more readily accepted in social settings, form healthier relationships, and receive greater social support. Research suggests that likability is a more stable and enduring form of social success compared to status-based popularity, which is volatile and dependent on external social factors. Likability fosters strong interpersonal relationships and social acceptance, making it more sustainable than status-based popularity, which is often subject to fluctuating social trends and group hierarchies (Prinstein, 2017, p. 17).

According to Prinstein, likability, which is particularly significant in childhood, reflects how much others genuinely appreciate and enjoy an individual's presence. In grade school, the most popular children tend to lead quietly, help others, and cooperate (Prinstein, 2017). Likability is associated with behaviors that make others feel happy, accepted, and valued. However, it is distinct from status, which is often linked to power, influence, prestige, and dominance. While some individuals may possess both high status and likability, this is relatively uncommon. Research indicates that only about 35% of those with high status are also highly likable, while many others fall into the "controversial" category (Prinstein, 2017, pp. 50-51).

Likability is characterized by prosocial behavior, emotional well-being, and high-quality friendships (Cillessen & Rose, 2005, p. 27). Unlike status, which many teenagers aspire to due to its association with power and recognition, likability fosters long-term social and emotional benefits. Status, on the other hand, has been linked to adverse outcomes such as depression, anxiety, substance use, and difficulties in personal relationships. Mervielde & De Fruyt (2000) found that peer-likeability ratings are primarily associated with Agreeableness, whereas popularity (e.g., being outgoing, bossy, or noisy) correlates with high levels of Extraversion and Emotional Stability (Mervielde & De Fruyt, 2000, p. 300).

General Characteristics of Likeability

Prinstein, in *Popular: The Power of Likability in a Status-Obsessed World*, argues that likeability extends beyond mere social preference; it plays a crucial role in group acceptance. Social experiences during adolescence significantly shape an individual's future interactions. Those who have faced rejection may carry subconscious biases that affect their social behavior in adulthood, potentially reinforcing patterns of social avoidance or misinterpretation of others' reactions. Recognizing and challenging these ingrained patterns can help individuals develop healthier social interactions.

Peer relationship dynamics remain remarkably stable across various life stages, from early childhood to senior communities. Accepted individuals are present in diverse settings such as classrooms, workplaces, social groups, and organizations, demonstrating the enduring influence of likeability in shaping social experiences (Prinstein, 2017, p. 115). Prinstein asserts that highly likable individuals are naturally categorized as accepted. These individuals often excel in social environments, frequently being chosen by peers as the most liked and rarely as the least liked. Likable individuals tend to be effective leaders and benefit from numerous social and personal advantages.

Research indicates that those categorized as accepted in childhood tend to experience higher self-esteem, greater career success, and stronger personal relationships in adulthood. Furthermore, they exhibit better physical health than their less accepted peers, suggesting that the power of likeability extends beyond traditional determinants such as intelligence, socioeconomic status, and health behaviors (Prinstein, 2017, p. 45).

Specific Characteristics of Likability

1) *The Ability to Make Others Happy*

Prinstein identifies a second type of popularity centered on likability, which social science research suggests is the most meaningful form of popularity. Even at an early age, children recognize and reliably identify their most likable peers, not necessarily those who are powerful or dominant, but those who are genuinely well-liked.

Likability remains relevant throughout life and is considered the most influential form of popularity. It fosters closeness, trust, and happiness in social interactions (Prinstein, p. 24). Likable children bring joy in various ways, depending on their age and interests. In elementary school, they are often those who make others laugh, create engaging activities, or introduce exciting new games. As they mature, likable individuals continue to provide humor and enjoyable experiences while also offering meaningful

compliments and positive reinforcement, which enhance others' self-esteem and strengthen social bonds (Prinstein, p. 25). Being kind and inclusive contributes significantly to popularity. At any age, from childhood to adulthood, likability strongly predicts positive life outcomes, including successful relationships, well-adjusted children, and career achievements (Prinstein, p. 43).

2) The Ability to Make Others Feel Appreciated

Likable individuals make others feel valued, a quality that extends beyond mere entertainment. While humor and amusement attract attention, lasting social bonds are formed through genuine care and meaningful interactions. People gravitate toward those who acknowledge their presence, offer support, and build deeper emotional connections (Prinstein, p. 25).

3) The Ability to Make Others Feel Heard and Valued

Likable children excel at fostering meaningful connections by demonstrating attentiveness and responsiveness. Small yet impactful gestures—such as maintaining eye contact, nodding in agreement, and building on others' ideas—contribute to a sense of being heard and valued (Prinstein, p. 25).

4) The Ability to Foster Inclusion

A key trait of likability is making others feel included. People naturally seek out those who express interest in them and exhibit welcoming behaviors. Acts of inclusion—such as inviting someone to join a group, defending an isolated peer, making space at a table, or tagging a friend in a humorous post—enhance likability by signaling warmth and acceptance. Conversely, aggressive behaviors, including name-calling, rumor-spreading, exclusion, and teasing, are strong predictors of social rejection (Prinstein, pp. 25-26).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to analyze Cher Horowitz's portrayal of popularity in *Clueless* (1995) using Mitch Prinstein's popularity theory. The study categorized popularity into likeability-based popularity (fostering positive interactions and peer acceptance) and status-based popularity (gaining social recognition through influence and visibility). Primary data consisted of film dialogues, narration, and monologues. Secondary data were gathered from scholarly sources, including books, journals, and articles on popularity theory and teen film studies. The data collection process involved watching the film, reading the script, identifying relevant scenes, and categorizing findings based on Cher's social interactions and her

ability to generate positive responses from her peers. In this study, data were analyzed using an interpretative approach to unpack and discover the underlying themes, patterns, and messages that were told in the narrative as suggested by Wesner (2024, p. 97). One key limitation of this study lies in the limited applicability of the concept of representation within the broader discourse of American popular culture. While representation theory offers valuable insights into how meanings are generally constructed and communicated, it may not fully capture the diverse, fluid, and subjective ways in which pop culture artifacts are interpreted by different audiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the type of popularity embodied by the main character, Cher Horowitz, in *Clueless* (1995). By analyzing her interactions, behaviors, and social influence, this study determined whether her popularity aligned more with Mitch Prinstein's concept of likeability-based popularity or status-based popularity. The findings here are presented through an analysis of key dialogues, monologues, and narrative moments from the film, demonstrating how Cher navigated social relationships, fostered inclusion, and influenced those around her. By examining these textual elements, this study provides insight into how Cher's character challenges traditional notions of high school hierarchy and presents a more enduring, prosocial form of popularity.

CHER'S ABILITY TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE HAPPY

According to Prinstein (2017), likability remains relevant throughout life and is recognized as the most meaningful form of popularity. Unlike status-based popularity, which relies on dominance and recognition, likability-based popularity fosters closeness, trust, and genuine happiness in social interactions. Individuals who fall into this category bring joy to others through their presence and actions (Prinstein, 2017, p. 24). Cher's ability to bring happiness is exemplified in the scene where she orchestrates a romantic connection between her teachers, Mr. Hall and Miss Geist:

> EXT. TEACHER'S PARKING LOT - DAY CUT TO:
> Mr. Hall walks Miss Geist to her car, Dionne and Cher sneakily following. The teachers get in the car and chat. The girls silently urge Mr. Hall to make a move. As Geist opens her car door, Hall awkwardly gives her a peck on "goodbye". The girls high-five.
> CUT TO: INT. GEIST'S CLASS DAY

One side of the blackboard, Miss Geist has reserved for "Homework". She erases a lengthy assignment and writes "Have a great weekend". The kids look at each other with astonishment.

TO: EXT. LUNCH COURT DAY

Cher enters the area and is met with a round of APPLAUSE from appreciative.

(Heckerling, 1995)

This scene highlights Cher's ability to foster happiness within her social environment. By matchmaking Mr. Hall and Miss Geist, she not only improves their personal lives but also creates a ripple effect that benefits the entire student body. Miss Geist, who was previously known for assigning excessive amounts of homework, becomes more lenient and even cancels an assignment—something that surprises and delights her students. The applause Cher receives from her peers further underscores her role in spreading joy and improving the mood of those around her.

As individuals grow older, likable people continue to make others laugh and think of enjoyable activities, but they also provide compliments and positive feedback that enhance others' self-esteem. This ability to make others feel good fosters a desire to spend more time with them, which is a crucial aspect of likability (Prinstein, 2017, p. 25).

INT. BOY OH BOY IT'S THE GIRL'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY
Girls are changing out of their gym clothes. De and Cher are with Tai.
Cher: "So I had time to psych myself up for the unpleasant task." Tai bursts into tears.
Tai: "It's my hips, isn't it?"
De and Cher protest loudly.
Dionne and Cher: "No, of course not, don't be stupid."
Cher: "You could do so much better."
Dionne: "He's an asshole"
Cher: "He thinks he's God's gift."
Dionne: "You're too good for him."
Tai: "If I'm too good for him, how come I'm not with him? "
She starts a new round of sobs.
Cher: "I got an idea. Let's blow off seventh and eighth and go to the Mall. We can walk around, see the new Christian Slater, and have a calorie fest at C.P.K."
Tai gets even more emotional.
TAI: "You guys…"
(Heckerling, 1995)

This scene illustrates Cher's ability to make others feel appreciated and valued, a defining trait of likability-based popularity. Rather than allowing Tai to dwell on self-doubt, Cher and Dionne immediately counter her insecurities with encouragement, reinforcing her worth and reassuring her that she deserves better. By offering emotional support and actively working to lift Tai's spirits, they create a true sense of belonging and care.

Additionally, Cher strengthens their bond by suggesting an enjoyable activity—skipping class to visit the mall, watch a film, and indulge in comfort food. This aligns with Prinstein's assertion that likable individuals foster positive social experiences, making others feel good and strengthening their social connections (Prinstein, 2017, p. 25). Cher's approach not only alleviates Tai's distress but also reinforces her place within their friendship circle, demonstrating that Cher's popularity is rooted in kindness, emotional support, and a genuine desire to uplift those around her.

CHER'S ABILITY TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE HAPPY

Likable people uplift those around them, not only by creating enjoyable experiences but also by offering genuine compliments and positive reinforcement. These acts enhance others' self-esteem and strengthen social bonds, making likability a powerful form of social influence (Prinstein, 2017, p. 25). Cher exemplifies this ability in a scene where she and Dionne offer Tai both emotional and social support:

> **Cher:** "Hey, I got a great idea! Let's do a makeover."
> **Tai:** "What dya mean?"
> **Cher:** "Do your make-up, figure your colors, re-plan your wardrobe..."
> **Dionne:** "Ah, let her. Cher's main thrill in life is makeover's. It gives her a sense of control in a world of chaos."
> **Cher:** "Please"
> **Tai:** "Well, yeah...sure. (emotionally) **Shit, you guys! I've never had straight friends before.**"
> (Heckerling, 1995)

This dialogue illustrates how Cher exemplifies likability-based popularity, as described by Prinstein, through her ability to make others feel valued and included. By suggesting a makeover for Tai, Cher offers personal attention and extends a gesture of acceptance, helping Tai feel like part of their social circle. Tai's emotional reaction, *"I've never had straight friends before,"* highlights how Cher's actions foster a sense of belonging and support. This aligns with Prinstein's argument that likable individuals form meaningful connections by making others feel important and respected.

Likable individuals also go beyond surface-level interactions; they ensure that others feel genuinely appreciated, which plays a crucial role in building lasting relationships. While entertaining and amusing people may attract attention, it is those who provide emotional support and genuine care that others seek out for deeper connections (Prinstein, 2017, p. 25). Cher demonstrates this ability again in a moment of self-reflection when she begins to recognize and appreciate the goodness in those around her:

> **Cher: "**Later, while we were learning about the Pismo Beach disaster, I decided I needed a complete makeover, except this time I'd make-over my soul. But what makes someone a better person? And then I realized, all my friends were good in different ways. Like Christian, he always wants things to be beautiful and interesting. Or Dionne and Murray, when they think no one is watching, are so considerate of each other. And poor Miss Giest, always trying to get us involved, no matter how much we resist?"
>
> **Miss Geist: "**Oh, it's just that doesn't even show… You know, every single possession, every memory, everything you had your whole life… gone in a second. Can you imagine what that must feel like?"
>
> (Cher raises her hand)
>
> **Cher:"** Miss Giest?"
>
> **Miss Geist:** "Cher?"
>
> **Cher: "**I wanna help"
>
> **Miss Geist:** "**That would be wonderful.**"
>
> Cher: "**I felt better already."**
>
> (Heckerling, 1995)

This scene further reinforces Cher's likability-based popularity by demonstrating her ability to make others feel valued. Here, Cher recognizes Miss Geist's efforts, acknowledging her dedication to the students. When she offers to help, Miss Geist's reaction suggests that she rarely receives such support, making Cher's kindness especially meaningful. By choosing to contribute, Cher makes Miss Geist feel appreciated and seen, underscoring the idea that true likability is rooted in acts of care and recognition.

Through these moments, Cher's popularity is not based on status or dominance but on her ability to uplift and include others. Whether by helping Tai feel beautiful and accepted or by acknowledging Miss Geist's hard work, Cher embodies the principles of likability as described.

An essential characteristic of likability is the ability to make others feel included. People naturally gravitate toward those who express interest in them, often seeking subtle cues that indicate whether someone is welcoming or distant (Prinstein, 2017, p. 25). Cher demonstrates this ability when she meets Tai, a new student at their school:

> The principal enters with Tai, a sixteen-year-old schlub.
> **Principle: "**Ladies, we have a new student with us. This is Tai Frazer."
> Tai is dressed in long, baggy jeans and a shapeless flannel shirt. She responds shyly in an unintelligible, thick New York accent.
> **Dionne:** "She could work on an oil rig in those clothes."
> **Cher:** "De, my mission is clear. Look at that girl. **She's so adorably clueless…"**
> **(She waves Tai over.)**
> **Cher: "We've got to adopt her."**
> Dionne gives in. Tai comes over.
> **Tai:** "Ay!"
> Cher: **"Hang with us."**
> **Tai: "**Thanks."
> **Cher: "**You're from New York?"
> **Tai: "**(amazed) How'd ya know?"

This scene illustrates that Cher exemplifies likability-based popularity by making others feel included. She immediately notices Tai's discomfort and proactively invites her into their social circle, saying, *"Hang with us."* This small but significant gesture reassures Tai, providing her with a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment. Cher's actions align with Prinstein's view that likable individuals create welcoming social spaces, ensuring that others feel valued and accepted. By embracing Tai without hesitation, Cher reinforces her ability to foster positive connections and make others feel at ease.

All in all, this study finds that Cher's popularity aligns with the likability type, offering a contrast to the more negative portrayals of popularity found in typical popular characters such as Regina George in *Mean Girls,* whose social power is rooted in dominance, exclusion, and beauty privilege. In contrast, Cher's behavioral traits represent a more inclusive model of likeability-based popularity, grounded in her ability to make others happy, foster inclusion, ensure others around her feel heard, valued, and appreciated. Through these qualities, Cher builds meaningful relationships and positively influences those around her. Whether by creating joyful moments, providing emotional support, or making newcomers feel welcome, her social success is rooted in

the ability to uplift others. Finally, Cher's character in *Clueless* (1995) ultimately demonstrates that genuine popularity extends beyond status; it is about forming genuine connections and making people feel important.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that Cher's Characteristic popularity is characterized by both general and specific traits associated with likeability. Her general characteristics align with what Preinstein describes as the accepted category, as seen when Cher is welcomed by her social environment, such as the scene where she helps Tai gain confidence and finds a partner for her teacher, which makes her liked by many people. These actions reflect her social acceptance and peer approval. In terms of specific characteristics, Cher constantly exhibits key aspects of likeability, such as the ability to make people happy, feel appreciated, and included. Overall, Cher exemplifies the likability-based popularity category by uplifting those around her and forming meaningful and inclusive relationships.

Further research might benefit from the ideas from Urie Bronfenbrenner's concept of bioecological system, particularly focusing on a popular individual's microsystem, to explore how the immediate environment, such as family, peers, and school settings, shapes the development of likeability-based popularity. This approach could offer more contextual factors that influence adolescent social behavior as represented in teen films.

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