Greetings,

In the first semester, you participated in a study about "Personality and Social Relations Scales," and said that you would be interested in hearing about the results. We appreciate your help with our research, and we are happy to tell you about the findings. Sorry about the long delay in sending out this summary! Normally we try to write up within weeks of the data collection, but a combination of illness, overseas trips, and other work resulted in a few months’ delay.

The study was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Winnifred Louis. If you would like to ask questions, to comment on what you read, or to find out more, you can contact project staff by phoning (07) 3346 9515, by e-mailing w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au, or by writing to Dr. Winnifred Louis, School of Psychology, McElwain Building / University of Queensland / St. Lucia, QLD 4072. You can also read about other studies that we've done on political decision-making at http://www.psy.uq.edu.au/~wlouis/.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: “Tall Poppy” Attitudes in relation to Anti-Americanism
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WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR
In this study, we were following up on a study we did a couple of years ago looking at the relationship between Tall Poppy attitudes and anti-Americanism. “Tall Poppies” are people who are conspicuously successful, and “Tall Poppy” attitudes concern views that these folks are usually admirable and should be rewarded, compared to views that these folks’ positions are unfair and more equal relations are desirable. In the earlier study, we found that people who have favourable views of Tall Poppies also often had favourable views of the US, and perceived the US’s higher status relative to Australia as more legitimate and less threatening. We interpreted these findings as showing that respect for success can promote favourable attitudes not only to high status individuals (e.g., “Tall Poppies”) but also to high status groups (e.g., “the US”).

We wrote that study up for publication and reviewers expressed scepticism about the finding. They thought the reason that there was a link between Tall Poppy attitudes and anti-Americanism in the old data could be because people knew it was a study about relations between Australia and the US when they started the questionnaire. As a result, when they filled in the scale about Tall Poppy attitudes participants could have been thinking about successful Americans, not successful people in general.

To answer this point, in the study that you participated in people filled in a scale measuring attitudes to successful individuals before being asked any questions about Americans, or being given a hint the study was looking at views re the US. In addition, people were randomly assigned to fill in a Tall Poppy scale with no special instructions, or with instructions to think about successful individual Australians, or with instructions to think about successful Americans. If the reviewers’ point is valid, the link between hostility to individual “Tall Poppies” and anti-Americanism should only appear in the third condition.

SOME DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS
During the first semester 2005, 357 people completed the study. All participants were students from UQ, who completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis during a short break in classes. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 65 (but 74% were 20 or younger), and were predominantly female (57%). There were a high proportion of non-Australians (33%), and we consider them separately in the analyses below.

WHAT WE FOUND
1. TALL POPPY ATTITUDES. Most people surveyed (73%) had positive attitudes to Tall Poppies, and were more likely to believe that successful people were deserving and should be
rewarded than that they should be brought down. This didn’t change as a function of condition, though there were weak trends that Australians respected success more than foreigners, and that more respect for success was observed when people were thinking in the no-instruction condition or the “think of successful Australians” condition compared to the American condition.

2. ANTI-AMERICANISM AND VIEWS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT FOR THE US IN IRAQ. We then looked at anti-Americanism, measured in terms of feeling higher negative emotions and lower positive emotions about Americans as a group. We also looked at political opposition to the US, measured in terms of (low) endorsement of Australia’s support for the US in Iraq. Most of the sample (53%) expressed more negative than positive emotions regarding Americans, despite the fact that political views were relatively evenly distributed (42% politically opposed to US in Iraq, 30% supportive of US in Iraq, 28% neutral or ambivalent on this point). Instruction condition made no difference to views re Americans in general or the US in Iraq. However, Australians were both more likely to endorse Australian support for the US Iraq (47%, compared to foreigners’ 23%) and also more likely to be anti-American (59% compared to 42%).

3. RELATING TALL POPPY ATTITUDES TO ANTI-AMERICANISM. Across the three conditions, there was a positive relationship between hostility to “Tall Poppies” and hostility to Americans. The relationship was about equally strong for Australians and foreigners. But looking within conditions, differences emerged. For foreigners, hostility to successful individuals was only linked to anti-Americanism in the condition where people filled in the Tall Poppy scale while thinking about successful Americans. For Australians, the link was strongest in the ‘successful Americans’ condition, but it was still present and significant in the ‘no instructions’ control condition, and only disappeared in the condition when people filled in the Tall Poppy scale while thinking about successful Australians.

SUMMARY. One basic point of the study is that political opposition to the US is not at all the same as anti-Americanism, because most Australians endorse anti-American sentiments while political opposition is more rare. This is a point we have made in other studies as well. On a theoretical level, however, the results provide support for the reviewers’ argument that one reason that Tall Poppy attitudes and anti-Americanism may be linked is because people are thinking about successful Americans that they admire or resent. Even though the overall level of anti-Americanism wasn’t higher in that condition, the link between hostility to successful individuals and anti-Americanism was strongest then. However, we found in the ‘no instructions’ control condition that there was a relationship between Australians’ respect for success and positive emotions towards Americans, which is what we found in the original data. We think that means that our original point is valid. One factor which feeds into views about the US is the extent to which people respect success; this can be linked to more positive views of successful groups (such as Americans) as well as individual Tall Poppies. We’ll see what the reviewers say this time!

THANKS AGAIN....
So that’s a description of what we found in this study. If you have any questions, or would like a copy of the longer write-up when we get that done (in several months) please get in touch. And thank you again for your participation and interest!