

PERSONAL INTEREST PROJECT

“Reshaping The Poppy”



*An Investigation into the Tall Poppy Syndrome and Its Impact on Creativity, Success,
and Inclusivity in the Australian Music Industry and Broader Society
(A cross-cultural comparison of Australian and U.S.A. music culture)*

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Introduction

Tall Poppy Syndrome is a uniquely puzzling phenomenon prevalent in Australia and New Zealand. It refers to the habit of criticising successes or successful individuals by peers and the public, who believe these individuals have become too successful or are bragging about their achievements. This behaviour contrasts sharply with other cultures like America, where success is often held high and celebrated.

I became interested in TPS due to my experiences in the Australian creative scene. Growing up, I often felt like an outsider because of my interests in fashion and sneakers instead of surfing and sports. Inspired by overseas musicians and designers, I started a YouTube channel in years six and seven, sharing videos on popular culture, fashion, and music. Despite some positive feedback, I faced ridicule and criticism from peers, which I later recognised as TPS. This experience was disheartening and led me to stop my channel, fueling my desire to understand TPS and its broader effects on Australian artists.

Throughout my investigation into Tall Poppy Syndrome in Australia, I've been particularly interested in how it affects the creative arts, with a particular reference to the music industry. This research offers a detailed and varied examination of how societal views on success impact musicians, artists, and their work, and aims to draw logical conclusions and understandings. Through research and discussion, I explored how this cultural habit of cutting down successes has shaped the approaches of artists and the music being produced in Australia. I also looked at why this phenomenon is so prevalent in Australia compared with other cultures, like America, which has had great influences on our own culture. My research included various sources that ultimately supported and reinforced my assumptions. The supportive reading and research led me to understand TPS's origins in greater depth and uncover ways the Australian music scene can move past old attitudes to become more celebratory, welcoming, and varied.

My PIP project has been organised into chapters that address different aspects of TPS. Chapter 1 examines and looks at the impact of TPS on popular culture, particularly the Australian music scene. I conducted an interview with the now international producer Haan to gain perspective on just how his experiences differed from an Australian audience compared with how he is regarded in America where he is now based.

Chapter 2 explores the historical and cultural roots of TPS in Australia. Within this chapter I've spent time further understanding TPS and its definitions, reasoning and its effects on creative work, with deeper understandings as to how our history has helped embed this culture into everyday life and how this has impacted or affected prominent artists

Chapter 3 discusses potential solutions and strategies to overcome TPS, highlighting the importance of education, cultural shifts, supportive communities and policy changes. In each chapter, I've aimed to connect my findings back to my central research question and objectives, providing a critical and evaluative perspective.

Log

Early Stages: Topic Selection and Initial Research

My Personal Interest Project (PIP) journey began from many conversations with my peers and artist friends about how cultural successes are viewed within our society. We tried to rationalise why sport was reinforced so positively, when artistic expression via music and the arts attracted criticism. This made me curious about the Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) in Australia and how it impacts different areas within society, especially in the creative industry. I have also experienced TPS myself which made me want to understand this syndrome more by diving deeper into its impact on creativity and success in the Australian music scene.

Development of Research Focus

I started researching the different levels of TPS. My primary research was conducted by observing, talking with peers in the industry and reading interviews with those in the music industry who have experienced TPS first-hand. I also researched articles and academic papers (secondary research) which gave me insights into the cultural and historical roots of TPS and how it's affected the Australian psyche. This helped me understand the bigger societal context of TPS and how it affects the music industry, impacting creativity and driven successes as well as social diversity within the Australian music scene.

Primary Research and Interviews

To gain a better understanding, I interviewed my friend, Haan, an acclaimed Australian music producer. Haan began working, and gained fame in the Australian music scene, with Kid Laroi as he was starting out and creating a name within the Australian rap scene as well. When The Kid Laroi's success grew and he gained international success, Kid Laroi moved to Los Angeles. Haan also made the move and signed up with prominent record label 'Grade-A'. Witnessing Haan's career progression allowed me to gain insight from someone who has experienced TPS. Haan started from meagre beginnings in Sydney and became a sought after producer in Los Angeles. His comparisons between Sydney and Los Angeles, highlighted how different success is perceived in the differing locations. Sydney is a close-knit scene that has strong underlying tones of TPS interwoven throughout. His invaluable insights showed how TPS can lead to stifling creativity and affecting artists' careers in Australia.

Secondary Research and Comparative Analysis

For my secondary research, I analysed the careers of well-known Australian artists like Kevin Parker (Tame Impala) and Kylie Minogue. Their experiences illustrated the unique challenges posed by TPS, such as cultural resistance to success and the more supportive environments found overseas. I applied theories like Feminism and Conflict Theory to analyse the gendered and socio-economic aspects of TPS. I also looked into examples of Tall Poppy happening right in front of our eyes with how the Australian Media and police have portrayed Sydney rap group 'Onefour'.

Integration of Findings and Critical Evaluation

The more information I found, the more I began to critically evaluate my findings. I compared the information gathered to form a more comprehensive analysis of how TPS shapes the Australian music industry. This involved looking at the broader implications of TPS on artistic expression and innovation and comparing cultural attitudes in Australia and the US.

Chapter 1

What is Tall Poppy Syndrome and how did it start?

The phenomenon known as Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) is both a well-documented and puzzling social affliction to those that have experienced success, fame or notoriety. It is particularly prevalent in Australia and New Zealand whilst being virtually absent in other countries, and there are numerous studies that show how this is a deeply ingrained part of our national psyche.

The term 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' originates from the analogy of tall poppy flowers in a field being cut down to the same height as the other flowers, symbolising a societal desire to maintain equality by reducing or “cutting down” those who excel or ‘break from the pack’. Individuals who achieve notable success or stand out due to their talents, achievements, or qualities are in some ways resented, criticised, or “cut down” by others whether that be individuals, the media or even the government. This phenomenon reflects the complexity of social values, public understanding, psychological factors, and historical influences that shape Australian culture.

To understand why TPS is so ingrained in Australian culture, it is essential to explore its historical roots and how it has become entrenched in our culture. TPS can be traced back to Australia's colonial past, where a strong sense of egalitarianism (all people being equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities) emerged among early settlers. This value of equality was reinforced by the harsh conditions of the Australian frontier, which required cooperation and mutual support among settlers. Over time, these national values evolved into a cultural norm that discouraged overt displays of success or superiority. This is backed up by research from Macquarie University which says, the early Australian society was built on a foundation of equality and mutual support, which has translated into a cultural resistance to individual success¹.

¹B. Peeters, 'Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse: from key word to cultural value.' English World-Wide, 25 (1), (2004) , 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.25.1.02pee>

In my secondary research for this topic, I came across various perspectives on the development of TPS. For example, the "mateship" culture, which emphasises camaraderie and equality, has historically suppressed individual achievements to maintain "group cohesion"². It's such a part of our culture that it can be further illustrated by how former Prime Minister John Howard wanted to include a preamble on 'mateship' in our constitution. This historical context helps further explain why TPS remains prevalent in contemporary Australian society. Interviews and articles, including insights from artists like Tame Impala's Kevin Parker and pop icon Kylie Minogue, have shown how these historical and social origins of TPS influence the behaviour and attitudes within the music industry.

The psychological mechanisms driving TPS are rooted in social comparison theory and envy. Social comparison theory suggests that individuals evaluate their own success and worth by comparing themselves to others. In a culture that values equality, those who excel may evoke envy and resentment among their peers, leading to efforts to "cut them down" to maintain social harmony. This dynamic is evident in many sectors of Australian society, including the music industry, where artists often feel pressure to downplay their success to avoid criticism.

Primary research findings from an interview with Australian producer 'Haan' gives insights that are supported by personal reflections from other artists who have experienced TPS first-hand as well. For instance, Kevin Parker of Tame Impala has discussed the pervasive nature of TPS and its effect on his willingness to openly embrace his success in Australia "There's a big 'tall poppies' thing in Australia... if you start getting success, people will bring you back down to your level". Parker's experiences reveal the internal conflict many artists face when their success is met with societal resistance.³ The fact that so many Australian artists say they have encountered the same experiences with Tall Poppy is a stark understanding that it is a very real problem in Australian culture.

In modern Australia, TPS continues to influence social interactions and cultural attitudes. The media plays a significant role in perpetuating TPS by highlighting and often scrutinising the successes of public figures. A content analysis conducted on Australian media shows a

² J. Chaffey, 'Mateship in Australia', Glasshouse Christian College (n.d.), <https://glasshouse.qld.edu.au/mateship-in-australia/> , accessed 19 July 2024.

³ C. McBride, 'Tame Impala's Kevin Parker Criticises Australia's Tall Poppy Syndrome in New Interview', Cosmic Magazine (28 June 2023), <https://cosmicmagazine.com.au/tame-impalas-kevin-parker-criticises-australias-tall-poppy-syndrome-in-new-interview> , accessed 19 July 2024.

pattern of critical coverage of celebrities and/or high achievers, reinforcing the cultural norm of cutting down tall poppies. This phenomenon is evident in the way media outlets often focus on the personal failings or controversies surrounding successful individuals rather than their achievements.⁴ A perfect example of this is with the Sydney rap group ‘Onefour’ and how the Australian media only reports in a negative way highlighting their bad side and never really celebrates their successes or achievements.⁵

This is especially evident in Australian creatives such as musicians who report feeling pressured to downplay their achievements to avoid criticism. Interviews with Australian music producer Haan reveal how TPS manifests in the music industry, often discouraging artists from taking creative risks. Haan explains, "I feel like artists in Australia often feel that standing out too much can lead to negative attention, which discourages them from pushing creative boundaries".⁶

Understanding the origins and mechanisms of TPS provides a foundation for examining its impact on the Australian music industry. By contextualising TPS within Australia's cultural and historical framework, we can better appreciate the challenges faced by Australian musicians and the need for cultural change to foster a more supportive environment for success.

In conclusion, the Tall Poppy Syndrome in Australia is deeply rooted in historical and cultural values that emphasise equality and modesty. These values, while fostering a sense of community and support, also contribute to a cultural resistance to individual success or TPS as we know now. Understanding these origins helps to contextualise the challenges faced by Australian musicians and highlights the need for cultural change to promote a more inclusive, innovative and welcoming music industry. By addressing the historical and psychological roots of TPS, we can better understand its impact and work towards creating a more supportive environment for success in the Australian music scene.

⁴ Primary research: content analysis

⁵ N. Mason & L. Barratt, ‘Australian Rap Pioneers Onefour v The Police: “They Haven’t Had to Answer for Anything”’, *The Guardian* (30 Oct. 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/oct/30/australian-rap-pioneers-onefour-v-the-police-they-havent-had-to-answer-for-anything> , accessed 19 July 2024.

⁶ Primary research: interview with Australian music producer “Haan”

Chapter 2

Tall Poppies Effects on Pop Culture.

Throughout my investigation into the Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) found within Australia's culture, I have been deeply interested in its impact on the music industry. This chapter will look into how Australian society's views on success influence musicians and their work, especially concerning gender and social inclusion in a diverse and multicultural setting. By comparing TPS with other cultures and examining various other reference sources, this chapter aims to uncover ways the Australian music scene can move past old attitudes and become more welcoming and more diverse.

To understand TPS's impact on the music industry, it is crucial to understand its cultural roots and societal implications. TPS is deeply ingrained in Australian culture, reflecting a tendency to value modesty and humility while discouraging overt displays of success. This cultural trait can lead to a reluctance among artists to stand out or pursue significant new ground due to fear of social backlash. The phenomenon can be linked to historical and psychological factors, including the egalitarian ethos that characterises Australian society. For example, research from Macquarie University highlights how TPS can lead to a collective mindset that suppresses individual achievement due to cultural norms.⁷

The pervasive nature of TPS can significantly impact artists' creativity and willingness to innovate. The interview I conducted with Australian music producer Haan reveals how TPS manifests in the music industry, often discouraging artists from taking creative risks. Haan's experience in Sydney compared to Los Angeles highlights the large contrast in cultural attitudes towards success. In Australia, the fear of being perceived as overly ambitious or self-promotional can stifle artistic expression, leading to a more conservative and less diverse musical landscape. Haan notes, "In LA, people seem to hype you up and celebrate your achievements a lot more, whereas in Sydney, there's always that underlying judgement".⁸

⁷ B. Peeters, 'Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse: from key word to cultural value.' *English World-Wide*, 25 (1), (2004), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.25.1.02pee>

⁸ Primary research: interview with Australian music producer "Haan"

A questionnaire conducted among 20 Australian creatives found that about 70% felt TPS had negatively impacted their creative output, with many citing a fear of criticism as a primary deterrent to innovation and them doing what they really wanted to do.⁹ These findings, supported by Haan's insights, show how the Australian cultural climate can really hinder artistic growth compared to more supportive environments like the US for example. In the US, a supportive environment for success allows artists greater freedom to innovate and pursue ambitious projects without fear of social retribution. For instance, Kevin Parker of Tame Impala talks about the contrast in his experiences in Australia and America, for Australia he says: "In Australia, there's this underlying expectation to stay humble, and it can really make you second-guess your achievements", and for America he says: "America doesn't really have that," he confides, "and it's kind of amazing to see."¹⁰ Parker's journey highlights how different cultural attitudes towards success can influence an artist's career trajectory and creative output.

Case studies of prominent Australian artists such as Kevin Parker and Kylie Minogue further illustrate the effects of TPS. Kevin Parker's journey shows the challenges faced by Australian artists in balancing success with societal expectations. Similarly, Kylie Minogue's global success story highlights the unique obstacles faced by Australian artists on the international stage, where TPS can hinder their acceptance and recognition: "In Australia, success often leads to being attacked, resented, or criticised, which can severely impact one's confidence and career trajectory".¹¹

An example of how TPS impacts artists can be seen in the experience of the Australian rap group OneFour. They have faced significant challenges and scrutiny from the media and law enforcement, often being targeted for their music promoting "gang violence," even though they are simply telling stories from their lives. This scrutiny exemplifies the cultural resistance to success and the tendency to "cut down" those who achieve prominence.¹² Haan

⁹ Primary research: questionnaire

¹⁰ C. McBride, 'Tame Impala's Kevin Parker Criticises Australia's Tall Poppy Syndrome in New Interview', Cosmic Magazine (28 June 2023), <https://cosmicmagazine.com.au/tame-impalas-kevin-parker-criticises-australias-tall-poppy-syndrome-i-n-new-interview>, accessed 19 July 2024.

¹¹ A. Denton, 'Kylie Calls Out Australia's Tall Poppy Syndrome', The Music (8 Nov. 2023), <https://themusic.com.au/news/kylie-calls-out-australia-s-tall-poppy-syndrome/JteUODs6PTw/08-11-23>, accessed 19 July 2024.

¹² N. Mason & L. Barratt, 'Australian Rap Pioneers Onefour v The Police: "They Haven't Had to Answer for Anything"', The Guardian (30 Oct. 2023),

also mentioned this, stating, "The NSW government doesn't understand 'drill music,' and they shut down OneFour for 'promoting gang violence' when it's really just them telling their life stories".¹³

Doing my own personal reflection and a content analysis of interviews with musicians shows a recurring theme of cultural resistance to success in Australia.¹⁴ Kevin Parker notes, "In Australia, there's this underlying expectation to stay humble, and it can really make you second-guess your achievements".¹⁵ These reflections, combined with secondary sources, demonstrate the nuanced ways in which TPS affects individual artists.¹⁶ Australian media in general also shows a pattern of very critical coverage of celebrities and high achievers, reinforcing the cultural norm of "cutting down" tall poppies.

Secondary research I conducted includes analyses of academic sources and cultural studies on TPS, providing a theoretical framework to understand its effects on the music industry. Insights from these articles offer real-world examples of how TPS influences career development and artistic expression. Research from *The Conversation* explores how TPS affects female athletes, highlighting the gendered aspects of the phenomenon.¹⁷ Similarly, the article from *InSight+* delves into the challenges faced by women in medicine due to TPS, providing a broader perspective on the gender bias linked to TPS.¹⁸ These studies illustrate the widespread impact of TPS across different fields, not just the music industry. Cultural theories such as Feminism and Conflict Theory can be applied to analyse the gendered and socio-economic dimensions of TPS. For example, Feminism helps to explain how TPS disproportionately affects women by scrutinising and undermining their achievements more harshly than those of their male counterparts. Conflict Theory offers insights into the power

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/oct/30/australian-rap-pioneers-onefour-v-the-police-they-havent-had-to-answer-for-anything> , accessed 19 July 2024.

¹³ Primary research: interview with Australian music producer "Haan"

¹⁴ Primary research: content analysis

¹⁵ C. McBride, 'Tame Impala's Kevin Parker Criticises Australia's Tall Poppy Syndrome in New Interview', *Cosmic Magazine* (28 June 2023), <https://cosmicmagazine.com.au/tame-impalas-kevin-parker-criticises-australias-tall-poppy-syndrome-in-new-interview> , accessed 19 July 2024.

¹⁶ Primary research: content analysis

¹⁷ H. Lumby & K. Matthews, 'Cutting Down the Tall Poppies: Female Athletes Bullied in Aussie Schools', *The Conversation* (6 Apr. 2015), <https://theconversation.com/cutting-down-the-tall-poppies-female-athletes-bullied-in-aussie-schools-44223> , accessed 19 July 2024.

¹⁸ K. Ta, 'Tall Poppies: Navigating Gender Bias as a Woman in Medicine', *Insight+* (13 Feb. 2023), <https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2023/7/tall-poppies-navigating-gender-bias-as-a-woman-in-medicine/> , accessed 19 July 2024.

dynamics at play, revealing how TPS serves to maintain social hierarchies by discouraging individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds from excelling beyond their peers. This theoretical framework provides a deeper understanding of TPS's broader implications for societal inequality.

In conclusion, TPS can be attributed to emerging problems within the Australian music industry, manifesting in discouraging artistic expression and stifling creativity. By understanding these causes and effects, and comparing them with attitudes in the US, we can identify pathways for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment within Australian culture. It is clear that for Australia to grow artistically, we need to encourage exploration and experimentation and reward it, rather than levelling back. Embracing gender and social inclusivity, along with promoting diversity, is essential for the future of Australian music.

Chapter 3

How We Can Move Past Tall Poppy as a Society?

In this chapter, I explore potential solutions and strategies to overcome the Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) in Australia. By addressing TPS, we can foster a more supportive and inclusive society, particularly in the music industry. This chapter will discuss the importance of acknowledging TPS, cultural shifts and education, the media's role in changing narratives, supportive communities and mentorship, and policy and institutional changes.

Acknowledging TPS as a societal issue is the first step towards change. It is essential to recognise the widespread impact of TPS on individuals and the broader society. My primary research, including quotes from interviews and questionnaire data, shows that many Australians feel the negative effects of TPS. For instance, one respondent noted, "I've always felt that standing out too much can lead to negative attention, which discourages me from pursuing ambitious projects".¹⁹ This sentiment is echoed by Australian music producer Haan, who stated, "I feel like artists in Australia often feel that standing out too much can lead to negative attention, which discourages them from pushing creative boundaries".²⁰

Secondary sources also support the argument that acknowledging TPS is crucial for addressing its impacts. According to Dr. James Larsen, "Recognizing the detrimental effects of TPS is the first step towards fostering a more supportive environment for success".²¹

Cultural shifts and education play a significant role in changing attitudes towards success and individual achievement. It is crucial to promote positive attitudes towards success and reduce envy through education. Educational initiatives and programs that emphasise the value of individual achievements and the importance of supporting others can help shift cultural attitudes. For example, incorporating TPS awareness into school curriculums can teach young people to celebrate success rather than resent it. According to an article in *The Conversation*,

¹⁹ Primary research: questionnaire

²⁰ Primary research: interview with Australian music producer "Haan"

²¹ C. Gibson, 'The Impact of Tall Poppy Syndrome on Business Success', *Business Psych* (n.d.), <https://www.businesspsych.org/articles/244.html> , accessed 19 July 2024.

Education is a powerful tool for cultural change. By teaching young people to value success and support others, we can help reduce the prevalence of TPS.²²

The media also has a significant influence on societal attitudes and can play a crucial role in perpetuating or challenging TPS. Media coverage can significantly impact public perceptions of success, either positively or negatively. To combat TPS, the media should aim to promote positive stories of success and achievements. For instance, highlighting the accomplishments of successful individuals and celebrating them without focusing on their personal failings can help change societal attitudes. Content analysis of Australian media shows that critical coverage of successful individuals reinforces the cultural norm of cutting down tall poppies.²³ Research from Macquarie University backs this up too saying media coverage that focuses on the positive aspects of success can help change societal attitudes towards individual achievement.²⁴

Creating supportive communities and mentorship programs for artists and individuals is also essential for overcoming TPS. Support networks can provide encouragement and guidance, helping individuals to pursue their ambitions without fear of negative attention. Successful mentorship programs in the music industry and other fields demonstrate the benefits of support networks. For example, the Australian Music Mentorship Program has helped many emerging artists navigate the challenges of the industry. Interviews with artists and industry professionals highlight the importance of mentorship. Haan explained, “Having a mentor can make a huge difference. It gives you something to turn to and helps you navigate the industry which basically everything in it is a challenge”.²⁵ Secondary sources also emphasise the impact of mentorship and community support on individual success. An article from InSight+ echoes this by saying mentorship programs can provide the guidance and support needed to overcome the challenges posed by TPS.²⁶

²² H. Lumby & K. Matthews, ‘Cutting Down the Tall Poppies: Female Athletes Bullied in Aussie Schools’, *The Conversation* (6 Apr. 2015), <https://theconversation.com/cutting-down-the-tall-poppies-female-athletes-bullied-in-aussie-schools-44223>, accessed 19 July 2024.

²³ Primary research: content analysis

²⁴ B. Peeters, ‘Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse: from key word to cultural value.’ *English World-Wide*, 25 (1), (2004), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.25.1.02pee>

²⁵ Primary research: interview with Australian music producer “Haan”

²⁶ K. Ta, ‘Tall Poppies: Navigating Gender Bias as a Woman in Medicine’, *Insight+* (13 Feb. 2023), <https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2023/7/tall-poppies-navigating-gender-bias-as-a-woman-in-medicine/>, accessed 19 July 2024.

Policy and institutional changes are also crucial in addressing TPS. Specific policies and institutional practices can help reduce TPS and promote a supportive environment for success. For example, implementing policies that recognize and reward individual achievements can encourage a culture of celebrating success. Additionally, organisations can create environments that promote collaboration and mutual support rather than competition. Policy changes in other countries have proven effective in reducing similar cultural phenomena. For example, New Zealand's "Tall Poppy Syndrome Awareness Campaign" has raised awareness and promoted positive attitudes towards success. Secondary research on policy impact and recommendations from experts supports these approaches.

In conclusion, overcoming TPS requires a multi-faceted approach, including acknowledging the issue, cultural shifts and education, positive media narratives, supportive communities and mentorship, and policy and institutional changes. By addressing TPS, we can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for success in the Australian music industry and society as a whole. This chapter highlights the importance of each of these elements and provides a roadmap for moving past TPS and creating a more positive cultural landscape.

Conclusion

Throughout my investigation into Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) and its impact on the Australian music industry, it has become clear that TPS can and does play a significant role in discouraging pushing boundaries and displays of success or achievements. Through research and many discussions, it became clear that TPS can stifle creativity by encouraging creatives to produce work from a 'safe zone'; which is one generally free from the effects of TPS. This environment leads to a more conservative and less diverse creative landscape. When we aren't encouraged to pursue true creative endeavours, we tend to revert to our 'pack animal' mentality whereby we stay within the confines of what we know is safe. Not wanting to, or encouraged to, be overtly bold and stand out from the crowd for fear of retribution.

TPS also presents itself when there are significant achievements or goals reached. In simple terms, it can sometimes be pretty hard to let everyone know when you obtain a goal or achievement without sounding like you're bragging. This is an example of how TPS can work within our own minds.

This phenomenon, deeply rooted in Australia's colonial history and egalitarian ethos, affects individual artists and the broader creative industry. Through primary research, including interviews with artists like Haan, and comparative analysis with the United States, the need for a cultural shift in Australia became evident. Proposed solutions include promoting positive attitudes towards success through education, changing media narratives, creating supportive communities and mentorship programs, and implementing policies that reward individual achievements. These steps, combined with the increasing connectivity and awareness brought by social media, offer hope for reducing the impact of TPS. Addressing TPS is crucial for fostering a vibrant and diverse music industry in Australia, where creativity and success are celebrated. This PIP underscores the importance of embracing gender and social inclusivity, promoting diversity, and creating a supportive environment for artists to thrive, ultimately reshaping the cultural landscape to encourage innovation and inclusivity in the Australian creative industry.

Creativity and creative industries rely heavily on true balanced feedback. Positive reinforcement is defined by rewarding or giving praise after a behaviour to increase the

chances of that behaviour happening again. Without saying that all work should be positively received, TPS tends to shift this understanding to one of more negative reinforcement, which has great concerns for the creative evolution of our industry.

Annotated Reference List

Primary Research

Content Analysis

Content analysis was a very useful methodology for me to employ given the nature of my project and its foundations being media and the music industry. Through studying the careers and media portrayal of artists like Kevin Parker, Kylie Minogue, and the rap group OneFour, I was provided with lots of insight into the evolution of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) and the issues within Australian society over time. Content analysis can, however, be very time-consuming due to rewatching, quote-taking, and analysis. For myself, it was the most valuable form of analysis, and I referred back to it the most. Content analysis allowed me to quantify and further analyse how TPS impacts artists in the media. To create an effective comparison between different artists and media portrayals, there must be systematic examination and categorising in order to be effective. Through creating an assorted table with headings such as year, artist, media outlet, and type of coverage (positive or negative), I was able to divide data and organise data into quantitative content analysis with tallies and analyse important quotes. The common theme of my data was that successful Australian artists are often met with critical coverage rather than celebratory, reflecting the cultural norm of TPS. This method allowed me to highlight the impact of media portrayal on artists' willingness to embrace their success openly and the broader implications of TPS on the Australian music industry.

Interview

Conducting an interview with Haan, an acclaimed Australian music producer, was super helpful for my project and further understanding, due to his firsthand experiences with Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) in both the Australian and international music industries. This interview provided deep insight into the real-world implications of TPS on creatives of all levels. Haan's perspective was particularly beneficial as he has experienced the Australian music scene and its cultural attitudes towards success first-hand. The interview allowed me to gather ideas that are not typically captured through quantitative research. Haan talked about his journey from Sydney to Los Angeles, highlighting the difference in culture between the

two environments. He mentioned, "In LA, people seem to hype you up and celebrate your achievements a lot more, whereas in Sydney, there's always that underlying judgement" This quote is a prime example of the cultural resistance to success prevalent in Australia and supports the broader themes explored in my PIP. Haan's insights into the challenges faced by artists in Australia, including the fear of negative attention and therefore the reluctance to stand out, were very beneficial in understanding the broader impact of TPS. Haan's comparison between the supportive and still competitive environment in Los Angeles and the somewhat more critical and harsh atmosphere in Sydney provided a valuable cross-cultural analysis. This qualitative data enriched my PIP by providing a personal dimension to the secondary research I conducted and contrasted but confirmed the more theoretical research. Overall, the interview with Haan was very beneficial in highlighting the real-life implications of TPS on Australian musicians. It provided a nuanced understanding of how cultural attitudes towards success can stifle creativity and innovation. This primary research method not only validated my secondary research findings but also offered unique insights that enhanced the depth and authenticity of my PIP.

Personal Reflection

Doing my own personal reflection has been crucial in my project, allowing me to connect my personal experiences with the broader phenomenon of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) in Australia. This approach provided a unique and authentic perspective, enriching the overall project with first-hand insights into the cultural and personal impacts of TPS. Reflecting on my own journey as a creative in the Australian industry, I have encountered numerous instances where TPS has influenced my decisions and feelings towards success. Growing up, I feel I have experienced TPS a lot and have been discouraged from pursuing ambitious projects or showcasing my achievements due to not wanting to have the negative attention and criticism that comes with it. This mirrored the experiences shared by many respondents in my questionnaire and interviewees, validating the prevalence of TPS in our Australian culture. My personal reflections involved revisiting past experiences where I felt the impact of TPS. One significant incident in my life when I became fully aware of TPS was when I started a YouTube channel at a young age, making videos and sharing my passion for fashion and specifically sneakers. Despite my passion, I faced ridicule and criticism from peers, which ultimately caused me to stop creating content but left me wondering why the people who I looked up to in America could do the same thing and get support from everyone, but if I tried the same thing in Australia I was "cut down". This experience really highlighted the

effects of TPS on young creatives and underscored the need for cultural change to foster a more supportive environment. I find the topic of TPS particularly interesting because of my immersion in the creative scene in Australia and experiencing it firsthand. The creative scene in Australia is a very small world where the majority of people are acquainted with one another through mutual friends and connections. Because of this, I have seen many of my peers affected by TPS and have been affected by it myself, especially since I have always done things differently from my peers since a very young age. This introspective approach not only enriched my project but also highlighted the importance of addressing TPS to create a more supportive and inclusive cultural landscape.

Questionnaire

Conducting a questionnaire was a highly effective methodology for my project, allowing me to collect diverse and quantifiable data on the impact of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) within the Australian music/creative industry. The questionnaire was designed to gather information from a wide range of participants, including musicians, producers, and other creatives within the industry. By using both closed and open-ended questions, I was able to capture quantitative and qualitative data, offering a broad view of the issue. One of the key questions asked about the extent respondents felt they had been affected by TPS over their careers. Around 70% of respondents showed that TPS had a significant impact, showing the real prominent nature of this phenomenon. I distributed this questionnaire to around 20 of my peers in the Australian creative scene and made sure to do so to a broad range of individuals, for example; male & female, different races and ages too. The data collected from this method provided valuable insights into common themes and experiences, such as the fear of criticism and reluctance to stand out. For example, one respondent noted, “I’ve always felt that standing out too much can lead to negative attention, which I guess in a way makes me tone down my ‘creativity’.” This response lined up perfectly with the findings from my interview with Haan and reinforced the broader trends that I had identified in my secondary research. The structured format of the questionnaire also allowed for easy analysis and comparison of responses. In addition to providing statistical support for my arguments, the questionnaire also offered qualitative insights through open-ended questions. These responses enriched the data by providing context and personal experiences, adding depth to the numerical findings as well as giving it a more personal aspect as it was from people I know directly rather than reading an article for example. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaire allowed for a more holistic understanding of TPS and

its impact on the Australian music industry. Overall, the questionnaire was a crucial component of my research methodology, offering a broad and reliable dataset that supported my primary and secondary research findings. It helped to quantify the prevalence of TPS and provided valuable insights into how this cultural phenomenon affects creativity and success within the music industry.

Secondary Research

**Chaffey, J., ‘Mateship in Australia’, Glasshouse Christian College (n.d.),
<https://glasshouse.qld.edu.au/mateship-in-australia/>, accessed 19 July 2024.**

This article discusses the concept of “mateship” in Australia, emphasising its cultural significance and historical roots. Mateship is portrayed as a cornerstone of Australian identity, characterised by values of loyalty, equality, and mutual support. It was even suggested by former Prime Minister John Howard as an inclusion in our constitution. The article explains how this cultural norm has been ingrained in the Australian psyche since colonial times, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie. However, it also highlights how the emphasis on equality and humility associated with mateship can contribute to the prevalence of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS). By discouraging overt displays of success and individual achievement, mateship can at times inadvertently promote social envy and the tendency to “cut down” those who stand out. This concept is valuable for understanding the cultural underpinnings of TPS and provides a perspective on how deeply rooted cultural values can shape societal attitudes towards success.

**Denton, A., ‘Kylie Calls Out Australia’s Tall Poppy Syndrome’, The Music (8 Nov. 2023),
<https://themusic.com.au/news/kylie-calls-out-australia-s-tall-poppy-syndrome/JteUODs6PTw/08-11-23>, accessed 19 July 2024.**

Tall Poppy Syndrome occurs when success leads to being attacked, resented, or criticised, often suggesting the person didn’t deserve their achievement. Young adults, particularly in competitive environments like college or early career stages, are vulnerable due to developing confidence and coping with insecurity or envy. The syndrome can have various

effects on individuals, including loss of confidence, insomnia, depression, and relationship problems. It has ancient origins, related to a story about King Tarquin in Rome, and appears globally in different forms, like the Japanese saying, “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” It’s prevalent in Australia, where success is scrutinised under the guise of egalitarianism. In contrast, it’s less prominent in America, which values individualism, though it still exists in competitive work cultures and among disadvantaged groups. Tall Poppy Syndrome can arise in zero-sum environments, driven by envy, low self-esteem, resentment, and fear. Victims are advised to focus on internal validation, establish boundaries, seek supportive environments, and consider professional help.

Gibson, C., ‘The Impact of Tall Poppy Syndrome on Business Success’, *Business Psych* (n.d.), <https://www.businesspsych.org/articles/244.html>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This article by Dr. James Larsen delves into the destructive impact of envy in the workplace due to Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS). It examines the cultural roots of TPS in Australia and its detrimental effects on the economy and individual careers. The article provides examples of how TPS is enacted in organisational settings and offers strategies for managers to mitigate its effects. This source is valuable for understanding how TPS affects professional environments and the measures that can be taken to address it. Potential biases include the focus on workplace settings, which may not fully capture the societal and psychological dimensions of TPS. Additionally, the emphasis on managerial strategies might overlook the broader cultural changes needed to combat TPS.

Lexim, P., Dum, D., & Orosz, A., ‘Tall Poppies: Bullying Behaviours Faced by Australian High Performance School-Age Athletes’, *ACU Research Bank* (2018), <https://acuresearchbank.acu.edu.au/item/8q260/tall-poppies-bullying-behaviours-faced-by-australian-high-performance-school-age-athlete>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This article explores the concept of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) as it manifests in the context of school-age athletes in Australia. The authors discuss how bullying behaviours specifically target high achievers, resulting in significant psychological impacts on young athletes. The study provides detailed examples of how TPS leads to stress, anxiety, and reduced motivation among high-performing students. This source is crucial for understanding the negative consequences of TPS on youth in competitive environments and highlights the broader

implications of TPS in educational and athletic settings. However, potential biases include the focus on a specific demographic (school-age athletes), which might limit the applicability of the findings to other groups. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data could introduce subjective biases, affecting the generalizability of the results.

Lumby, H., & Matthews, K., 'Cutting Down the Tall Poppies: Female Athletes Bullied in Aussie Schools', *The Conversation* (6 Apr. 2015), <https://theconversation.com/cutting-down-the-tall-poppies-female-athletes-bullied-in-aussie-schools-44223>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This article explores the actions of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS) and in particular, it focuses more on the context of female athletes in Australian schools. It discusses the historical origins of the label or term and its contemporary relevance. It also focuses on how high-achieving female athletes are targeted and bullied. This source is essential for understanding the gendered aspects of TPS and its impact on young women in competitive environments.

Mason, N., & Barratt, L., 'Australian Rap Pioneers Onefour v The Police: "They Haven't Had to Answer for Anything"', *The Guardian* (30 Oct. 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/oct/30/australian-rap-pioneers-onefour-v-the-police-they-havent-had-to-answer-for-anything>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This article talks about the Sydney rap group "OneFour" and how they have been targeted and silenced by the police/government over the years, highlighting contemporary relevance to current societal issues. The documentary that this article is discussing paints a fairytale picture turned nightmarish: a group that rose to fame from the streets of Mount Druitt, historically one of Sydney's poorest postcodes, before becoming the targets of Strike Force Raptor – a New South Wales gang-related police squad. This portrayal provides a unique cultural perspective of Sydney's music scene and the societal responses it elicits. However, the focus is somewhat narrow, centring specifically on OneFour, which might limit the broader applicability of the findings. Additionally, biases could be present due to my connection to the group, influencing how the information is presented and interpreted. This article/documentary will be particularly strong for my PIP as I know some of these people personally, enabling me to delve deeper into the Tall Poppy Syndrome's impact on their

journeys and how people from this scene feel about it, thereby offering a more personalised media portrayal.

McBride, C., ‘Tame Impala’s Kevin Parker Criticises Australia’s Tall Poppy Syndrome in New Interview’, Cosmic Magazine (28 June 2023),
<https://cosmicmagazine.com.au/tame-impalas-kevin-parker-criticises-australias-tall-poppy-syndrome-in-new-interview>, accessed 19 July 2024.

Kevin Parker of Tame Impala discussed the cultural phenomenon of Tall Poppy Syndrome in Australia. He described it as a tendency to criticise those who achieve success, linking it to Australia’s English heritage which lacks communal positivity. Parker, who purchased a home in LA, finds the US more accepting of success. He interprets Tall Poppy Syndrome as a sign of success, though it had affected his feelings in his hometown, Perth. He mentioned a specific incident in a pub where his work was unfavourably compared to another artist, impacting his perception of his city and partly influencing his move to LA.

Smith, S. A., ‘Tall Poppy Syndrome: Summary’, Medical News Today (11 Feb. 2020),
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/tall-poppy-syndrome#summary>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This resource provides an overview of Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS), discussing its origins, effects, and coping strategies. It explains how TPS is prevalent in Australia and New Zealand and compares it to similar phenomena in other cultures, such as the Japanese saying, “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” The article highlights the psychological and social impacts of TPS and offers practical advice for individuals dealing with its effects. This source is beneficial for understanding the broader cultural and psychological implications of TPS and providing actionable strategies to mitigate its impact. Potential biases include the general nature of the overview, which may lack in-depth analysis of specific cases or sectors. Additionally, the focus on coping strategies might overlook systemic changes needed to address TPS.

Ta, K., ‘Tall Poppies: Navigating Gender Bias as a Woman in Medicine’, Insight+ (13 Feb. 2023),

<https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2023/7/tall-poppies-navigating-gender-bias-as-a-woman-in-medicine/>, accessed 19 July 2024.

This article discusses the challenges faced by women in medicine due to Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS). It highlights findings from a Canadian study on professional women being undermined because of their achievements and relates these findings to the Australian context. The article also discusses strategies for addressing TPS in healthcare organisations. This source is crucial for understanding the intersection of gender bias and TPS, providing insights into the professional hurdles faced by women. Potential biases include the specific focus on the medical field, which may not fully represent the experiences of women in other professions. Additionally, the emphasis on gender bias might overshadow other contributing factors to TPS.

**Turner, L., ‘Understanding Tall Poppy Syndrome: Effects on Mental Health’, Newport Institute (n.d.),
<https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/tall-poppy-syndrome/>,
accessed 19 July 2024.**

This resource explains Tall Poppy Syndrome (TPS), its psychological underpinnings, and the cultural context in which it arises. The article provides a broad overview of the syndrome, discussing how TPS manifests in various forms of social envy and cultural resistance to individual success. It highlights the mental health implications of TPS, including stress, anxiety, and depression, and emphasises the negative impact on individuals’ well-being and societal progress. This source is useful for understanding the broader societal impacts of TPS and provides a theoretical framework for analysing its effects on different demographic groups. Potential biases include the focus on psychological impacts without considering broader societal or systemic factors that might also contribute to TPS, as well as the emphasis on mental health which may overlook other areas where TPS has significant effects.