Discursive constructions of second generation immigrant identity and belonging amongst young people of New Zealand descent in Australia

Australia and New Zealand have historically enjoyed a close bilateral relationship, which has in part been shaped by the ‘open’ Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement between the two nations. Drawing on Discourse Analysis approach I examined the lived experiences of young adults born in Australia of New Zealand descent (second generation) as they negotiated their identities and sense of belonging in this context. I conducted a discourse analysis of historical and media texts and in-depth interviews with second generation young adults of New Zealand descent. Findings indicate that the subject position of the ‘New Zealand second generation’ is consistently figured as the ‘almost similar other’ to the ‘host’ Australia. The operation of logics of equivalence and difference between Australia and New Zealand, articulated through myths related to historical and cultural similarities and racial and class-based differences, serve to structure their subject position. Participants’ experiences of belonging and identity point to the shifting role of ‘national’ identifications through their participation in transnational social fields. In turn, these findings provide an alternative approach to second generation immigrant research, a field which to date has tended to privilege an immigrant-centred lens to explain the acculturation of second generation immigrants.

About Dr Ranmalie Jayasinha

Dr Ranmalie Jayasinha is the Research Associate for the ARC Linkage Project titled: Positive life pathways for vulnerable adolescents: The role of a life management program approach (LP140100429). Ranmalie completed her doctoral research at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, UNSW in 2015 on the identity and wellbeing experiences of second generation New Zealand young people of Māori and Pakeha descent in Australia. Ranmalie’s previous and on-going research has focused on the health and rights of young people from Indigenous and migrant communities, diversity and cultural competence in health care settings, capacity building of minority groups and community-based advocacy, and peer-led approaches to health promotion and education.