



Social Inclusion, National Identity and the Moral Imagination

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ABSTRACT

How does the influential policy metaphor ‘social inclusion’ achieve its effects? To answer this question well, we argue that policy analysts need to attend to the intuitive-emotional, rather than the rational-calculative, domain of policy knowledge. Within this intuitive-emotional domain, we emphasise the moral imagination, which works through representation, connecting people with certain values or desires, and the influence of the passions. Evolving ideas about national identity have strongly influenced official accounts of social inclusion, because these ideas set out the attributes a person must have in order to be considered a ‘true’ citizen. We describe the evolution of official representations of national identity during the 20th century — from the ‘character’ or ‘self’ attributed to whiteness, to an account of the ‘Australian way of life’, and finally to certain social and moral values said to signify ‘the Australian way’. We conclude that present renderings of national identity are open-ended, provisional, and watchful. Accordingly, official renderings of social inclusion emphasise moral and behavioural issues at the expense of human and citizenship rights as the basis of belonging.

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