SRHE 2018 Conference abstract

**Challenging ‘excellence’ in higher education: racism, inclusion and white privilege**

This presentation will explore how universities work to perpetuate a certain kind of ‘excellence’. It argues that universities are spaces in which whiteness and white identities predominate in which the notion of ‘excellence’ is defined by white, middle class norms and behaviour. This is evidenced not just in representation but in the curriculum and approaches to diversity and inclusion. Processes of racism continue to disadvantage staff and students of colour, consequently universities continue to perpetuate the superiority and dominance of whiteness in which they remain spaces reserved for the privileged few (Bhopal, 2018). They reproduce and reinforce racial inequalities by employing a rhetoric of inclusion and ‘excellence’ but one that is rarely evidenced in practice or outcomes.

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