# Between Words and Action: The Problem with POBF Indictors for Achieving Racial Diversity

**Abstract** This chapter examines the discourse of diversity as it is framed by POBF models. Using critical discourse analysis, we map the prevalence and parameters of the discourse of diversity within POBF models. Our findings will illustrate the limits and potential negative implications of the framing within POBF models for racial diversity and equity. Recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and researchers about how POBF can be more reflective and purposeful towards supporting institutional racial diversity and inclusion goals will be offered.

**Keywords** Diversity indicators · Educational proxies for race · Race and educational policy

## INTRODUCTION

POBF has become a widely used policy tool to improve institutional efficiency and performance in key areas, including retention, degree completion, transfer, and job placement (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). More recently, some POBF models have adopted indicators that target institutional diversity. Diversity indicators seemingly express a state's value of improving institutional outcomes for recruiting and retaining students and faculty of color, and graduating historically underrepresented students,

especially within PWIs. While the use of diversity indicators tied to state funding allocations attempts to incentivize institutional efforts to increase diversity, there has been little examination of the ways in which diversity is framed (or disregarded) by POBF policies and their potential to impact institutional *racial* diversity and equity. This chapter will address this gap in the literature by examining diversity as it is framed by POBF models. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), we map the prevalence and parameters of the discourse on diversity within POBF models. Our findings will illustrate the limits and potentially negative implications of the framing within POBF models for racial diversity and equity. We will also offer recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and researchers about how POBF can be more reflective and purposeful toward supporting institutional racial diversity and inclusion goals

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### POBF, Accountability, and Values

The rise of POBF has been well documented and linked to increased demands for accountability and efficiency in higher education from the public as well as policymakers. The espoused theory of action at work for POBF asserts that linking base-allocated funding to specified indicators will incentivize positive institutional changes that will result in better outcomes in the areas targeted by those indicators (Dougherty & Natow, 2015). Indicators for POBF models are not arbitrarily chosen. In many ways, they are a snapshot in time, reflecting the political climate, ideals, and values of state policymakers and their constituents. The focus on retention, completion, transfer, job placement, and diversity are sign posts, emphasizing state values of production, quality, efficiency, preparation, and the goals of equity and access for all students. Consequently, areas targeted for incentivization vary from state to state and over time, and in the beginning stages of the proliferation of POBF, diversity and equity were not commonly addressed in many models.

In an early analysis of state POBF models, Burke (2002) found that the models stressed diversity and equity much less, and that these areas were emphasized more in performance reporting. However, state values and goals are not necessarily static, but evolving. For example, the college completion agenda and focus on higher education's ability to prepare

and place students in job areas that are in demand are a reflection of the present national agenda overall. Likewise, racial diversity and equity has, over the years, gained more attention and become a priority in the national agenda. Therefore, in the subsequent fifteen years since Burke's 2002 study, more POBF models have adopted indicators that place value on diversity and equity. Still, while the value of diversity is becoming more pronounced in state policy, and particularly in POBF models, there has been little examination of the language used to describe diversity and equity. The literature on race and policymaking (Craig, 2013) strongly suggests that most state policies are intentionally vague and neutral in regards to race in particular, even as they target racial diversity and equity goals.

### State Policymaking and Racial Diversity in Higher Education

Racial equity and diversity has a long and contentious history in state policymaking. Federal law and policy provide some basic mandates and guidance for how racial diversity should be handled in higher education; however, higher education institutions receive substantial operating budgets from the state, which means that state policies can actively drive and shape the way racial diversity and equity are prioritized and approached by institutions. For nearly a century, state policies have been used to enforce de facto and de jure segregation, as well as the marginalization of minority-serving institutions (MSIs). With the advent of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and the Office of Civil Rights oversight, states were forced to prioritize racial diversity more explicitly. But, in the wake of more recent backlash to explicit racial policies and practices such as Affirmative Action, states have begun to show a preference for race-neutral methods of targeting underrepresented students of color, especially within higher education. Both Mendelberg (2001) and Huber and Lapinski (2006) found that political communication and policy are overwhelmingly race neutral. They also found that explicit racial appeals in policy and political campaigns elicit strong and largely negative reactions. Huber and Lapinski describe a "racial penalty" for using language that specifically addresses race, where voters have negative reactions to explicit racial references. While Mendelberg as well as Huber and Lapinski found that most Americans hold egalitarian beliefs, they also found that White Americans especially view references to race in policy and politics as a violation of these egalitarian values.

Thus, the American public has begun to move away from liberal ideas of equality and the role of government, and now reject the notion that the government can and should play a role in solving major economic and social problems (Chiteji, 2003; Drakulich, 2015). This can be seen in general polls about views on public policies explicitly and implicitly linked to race, such as Affirmative Action, desegregation, and welfare (Drakulich, 2015). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that, in an effort to address the egalitarian but vague values of diversity and equity without specifically targeting race, state policymakers often use proxies that are strongly correlated to race. State policymakers often use racial proxies such as socioeconomic status (as determined by eligibility for Pell Grants) and low test scores, both measures that have been highly correlated to race (Carnevale et al., 2015). The use of proxies, however, is not without problems. First, it assumes that populations affected by systematic and historical racism are monolithic in both socioeconomic class and in their preparation for college. Symbolically, proxies also neglect to acknowledge the need and value of racial diversity.

### Why Racial Diversity Is So Important to Higher Education

There has been increasing focus on racial diversity and equity in higher education. In addition to the high visibility of racial injustices–that is, campus racial incidents–there has been more student and community activism around race in higher education. With rapidly changing demographics, the disparities between people of color and Whites in the United States as it relates to access to higher education and opportunities to compete for higher paying jobs has become a national concern. In amicus briefs for recent Affirmative Action Supreme Court cases, both business and military leaders advocated for more diversity measures in higher education, citing that diversity is essential for both White and nonwhite students because it cultivates important social and team-building skills essential in today's global society. Diversity has been shown to improve students' comfort with and ability to interact with different groups as well their critical thinking skills. One of the driving rationales behind Affirmative Action is that it is a vital mechanism for improving racial climates by increasing the percentage of underrepresented students of color on campus, also described as structural or representational diversity. A wealth of research has accumulated on the importance of achieving a critical mass of students of color (Gurin, 2004). Critical mass refers to a nonspecific number of students of color that reaches beyond token representation. Low critical

mass can negatively impact an institution's racial climate, creating a particularly toxic campus environment that features heightened experiences with stereotyping, microaggressions, and overt racism (Solorzano et al., 2000), all of which lead to greater attrition (Chang, 2002; Gurin, 2004). But, while increasing structural or representational diversity is an important part of achieving this goal, it is only one part of the solution. For instance, a student's interpersonal environment has a significant impact on their perception of campus climate, relationships, and their willingness to participate in social and academic functions, all of which affect their overall experience (Pascarella et al.,1996; Pewewardy & Frey, 2002).

Attention to racial diversity and racial climate does not only benefit students of color. There is clear evidence that diversity benefits all students by exposing them to a wide array of people, experiences, and perspectives. In her study of Michigan students, Gurin (2004) showed that the educational benefits of increased students of color on campus included civic engagement, critical thinking, greater comfort with conflict and increased awareness about both racial and world views and issues. However, diversity researchers also point out the need for more university administrative attention to diversity beyond representation so that interaction occurs more frequently and real diversity can be realized (Gurin, 2004; Chang, 2002; Smith, 2015).

## Conceptual Framework

In previous scholarship, it has been noted that state policymakers often use vague language that fails to adequately and directly address racial equity (Witham et al., 2015). Furthermore, policy often neglects to provide guidance on how to appropriately address equity. To address this problem, Bensimon, Dowd, and Witham (2016) propose five guiding principles for addressing equity in policy and practice. These principles are: 1) clarity in language, goals, and measures; 2) "equity-mindedness" as a guiding paradigm for language and action, particularly when addressing race; 3) equity in practice and policies designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of students' learning, particularly in regards to race; 4) a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about whether goals are relevant and effective; and 5) equity enacted as a system-wide principle.

While these principles may be helpful for understanding how diversity and equity are addressed within policy, to date, they have yet to be

used as a framework for applying CDA to examine state POBF policies related to diversity and equity.

## METHODS

To address the gap in scholarship on the ways in which POBF address diversity and equity, we will use the five principles outlined in the conceptual framework to examine current policy models. Overwhelmingly, POBF models are presented as race-neutral, and are usually framed without any critical "agenda" or goals. In order to examine and discuss these policies in ways that expose how they may be ineffective or counterproductive toward racial diversity and equity goals, it is necessary to use a critical policy lens. CPA is an approach that seeks to uncover processes, mechanisms, and discourses that may be hidden or unexamined within traditional policy and policy frameworks (Taylor, 1997). There are a number of ways CPA can be undertaken, including the use of counter-storytelling to dominant narratives, CDA, and the application of postmodern, constructionist, and critical theories. We will use a CDA approach to examine the language used to frame diversity goals within POBF models.

CDA is a method of qualitative inquiry that seeks to uncover dominant narratives communicated within text, images, and speech (Aleman, 2015). CDA scholars assert that texts can convey particular ideologies, beliefs, and messages that speak to a wider hegemonic structure in society, which dictate practices and relationships between different groups of people, particularly those in power and those without. Our goals for using CDA to examine POBF policies is threefold: (1) to illuminate how racial diversity and equity are framed (or excluded) within POBF policies; (2) to understand how this framing conveys how the state understands and expects racial diversity and equity to be enacted by institutions of higher education; and (3) to uncover how the current framing of racial diversity and equity may restrict or inhibit transformative efforts to fully realize racial diversity and equity in higher education.

It has been noted that, while CPA is increasingly being used to examine educational policies, there is a dearth of detail about the actual methods and processes researchers use for applying CPA (Aleman, 2015). Therefore, in order to be transparent and to improve trustworthiness, we will briefly review the approach prior to our review of the literature and discussion.

## Methodological Approach

There were two phases of this CDA review of POBF policy models. The first phase involved a national scan of all proposed, transitioning, and operating POBF models. In our scan, we examined the language used to describe racial diversity and equity goals. Since discourse analysis revolves around language, it is important first to define and identify what we were looking for within this analysis. Based on the previous literature review, we believed that racial diversity would typically not be explicitly outlined within most POBF models. Therefore, we conducted a search of language which was inclusive of and proxy to racial diversity. As of July 2015, the National Conference of State Legislatures listed 32 active POBF models across 32 states. We examined each of these models for both indicators and areas awarded weighted points for language that referred to specific racial and ethnic groups such as "African-American/Black," "Hispanic/Latino/a," "Asian," or "Native American/American Indian" or the words "minority" and "underrepresented." When race or ethnicity is not mentioned, we also looked for proxies commonly used for race and ethnicity, such as socioeconomic class or "low-income/Pell-grant eligible," students who are described as "at-risk" and/or use the terms "diversity," and "equity." This also means that POBF models that explicitly reference race/ethnicity or minority were automatically excluded from inclusion in the count for POBF models that utilize proxies for race/ethnicity. We debated whether "underrepresented populations" should be used as an explicit or implicit category because it does not refer specifically to race, but may be inclusive of racial diversity as "underrepresented populations"; however, this could also include a number of other categories such as geography, ethnicity (exclusive of race), gender, ability, and perhaps even sexual identity. Ultimately, we included this term in the count of explicit racial diversity and equity metrics and weights because most groups of students of color are always underrepresented, whereas not all groups or members of underrepresented students of color necessarily fit the criteria for other categories utilized for proxies.

For the second phase of the scan, there was much more probing into the actual rationale and framing of the POBF policies, taking note of any additional proposals, conceptual frameworks, and explanations provided to explain the language and/or rationale behind the use of metrics or weights that either explicitly or implicitly referred to racial diversity and equity.

Of the 32 states with active POBF programs, over half ($n$ = 20) included either proposals or plans that have indicators and weights explicitly targeting racial diversity and equity. Additionally, 14 states utilize proxies that may be used to address racial diversity and equity. It should be noted that there was significant overlap between the count of explicit and implicit metrics employed by the states.[1] While these numbers may seem promising, there are some caveats and challenges with the framing of racial diversity and equity within these models that we will review below.

### Explicit Indicators and Weights for Racial Diversity

The 20 states that utilize outcome metrics or weights that explicitly refer to race, ethnicity, or minority populations are Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota. Of greater interest is whether racial diversity and equity are optional or required metrics or weights, whether they are included in the state's broad model or in tailored institutional agreements, and how they are framed (see Table 7.1). We found that not all of these racial diversity and equity metrics and weights are mandatory or system-wide. Seven states allow only optional use of explicit racial diversity and equity metrics or weights. For example, Florida has a racial diversity metric, and only two schools (Florida Gulf Coast University and Florida Atlantic University) have formal agreements that incorporate these metrics. Also, only four of these states—Hawaii, Kansas, Montana, and South Dakota—target one particular group of students of color. It should also be noted that two of these states (Connecticut and Oregon) are in transition, and one state (Maryland) only has a serious proposal, but has not formerly adopted or moved toward transitioning its POBF proposal into operation. Finally, in New York, the POBF policy only applies to two-year institutions. Keeping these caveats in mind, of the 32 states seriously considering or using POBF, there are actually only 8 POBF models that have made inclusive racial diversity and equity a core requirement, and only six of these eight models are *actively* operating at the moment.

**Table 7.1** Explicit State POBF Indicators and Weights Addressing Racial Diversity and Equity

| State | Language used | Metric or weight | Core, compulsory, or optional | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | Minority graduates Minority credentials | Metric | Optional | Arkansas Department of Higher Education (2015) |
| Connecticut (transitioning) | Underrepresented populations | Metric | Core | Connecticut General Assembly (2015) |
| Colorado | Minorities | Metric and Weights | Core | Colorado General Assembly (2014) |
| Florida[a] | B.S./B.A. awarded to minorities | Metrics | Optional | The Florida Senate (2013) |
| Hawaii[b] | Native-Hawaiian students only | Metric | Core | Hawaii State Legislature (2008) |
| Illinois | Hispanic and African-American | Weights | Optional | Illinois Board of Higher Education, Higher Education Performance Funding Steering Committee (2014) |
| Iowa | Minorities | Metric | Core | Board of Regents, State of Iowa (2014) |
| Kansas[a] | Minority Hispanic/Latino | Metric | Optional | Kansas Legislature (2014) |
| Maryland (proposed) | Diverse populations | Metric | Core | Department of Legislative Services Office of Policy Analysis Annapolis, Maryland (2013) |
| Massachusetts | African-American and Latino | Weights | Optional | The 189th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (2016) |

(*continued*)

**Table 7.1**  (continued)

| State | Language used | Metric or weight | Core, compulsory, or optional | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minnesota | Racial diversity Underrepresented students of color | Metric | Core | Minnesota Chapter 5-H.F.No. 4 Article 1: Higher Education Appropriations (2011); Minnesota Office of Higher Education (2007). |
| Montana[b] | American Indian only | Weights | Core | Montana University System (2015) |
| New York[a] | Underrepresented within a particular field of study | Metric | unclear | New York State General Assembly (2015) |
| Ohio | Native American, African-American, or Hispanic | Weights | Core | Ohio Board of Regents (2013); Ohio Higher Education Funding Commission (2012) |
| Oregon (transitioning) | Underrepresented Minority | Unclear | Core | Oregon Higher Education Commission (2014) |
| Pennsylvania | Faculty diversity | Metric | Core and optional | Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (2012) |
| South Dakota[b] | American Indian only | Metric | Core | South Dakota Legislature Legislative Research Council (2015) |
| Utah | Persistence and graduation rates by ethnicity, availability of financial aid, faculty diversity, college participation rates, progress in affirmative action, and student demographics | Metric | Core | Utah System of Higher Education (2015) |
| Virginia[a] | Underrepresentation of minority students | Metric | Optional | The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (2015) |

[a]Optional and only included in a select few institutional agreements
[b]State was also included in the racial proxy count because there was only reference to one particular race/ethnicity for the explicit metric or weight.

### Proxies and Implicit Language

Without actually interviewing those responsible for constructing the POBF models we examined, it is impossible to discern whether racial diversity and equity were even considered a priority. However, based on the literature, we know that there is a clear history of policymakers using language that implicitly targets race by identifying proxies that would capture racially underrepresented groups. Of the 14 states that currently employ or are considering the use of proxies typically inclusive of racial diversity and equity, five include states that were already counted in the explicit tally (Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Montana, and South Dakota). This means that there are only five states that have no explicit or implicit metric that addresses racial diversity and equity.

As Table 7.2 demonstrates, the most universal proxy used is socio-economic status ($n= 13$), and it is usually measured by a student's ability to qualify for a Pell grant. Socioeconomic status is often recommended as a proxy for racially underrepresented populations because it is politically more appealing, addressing both marginalized racial groups as well as poor Whites. Another common proxy that often addresses racial diversity is the word "at-risk," which is used as an indicator in six POBF models. These six models make clear delineations for what "at-risk" means, and "socioeconomic" is used as one of the primary criterion for the "at-risk" category in all six of these models.

### A Closer Look

In our examination of the legislation of each of the states' proposed and active POBF models, we found two interesting trends. First, for some states, there are more explicit references to racial diversity and equity in the framing of the state's goals for POBF; however, in the actual model, they may only use proxies. For example, in the narrative of New Mexico's POBF plan, the aim of the "at-risk" metric is specifically described as targeting the Hispanic population. The second goal is listed as:

> [To] reduce the gap in achievement between Whites and Hispanics, and between rich and poor in the state, so that all New Mexicans have a decent shot at the good life, if they are willing to prepare well and study hard. (New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2011)

**Table 7.2**   State POBF Proxies for Racial Diversity

| State | Proxies | Metric or Weight | Core, Compulsory, or Optional | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | At risk students | Metric | Compulsory | Arkansas Department of Higher Education (2015) |
| Florida | Undergraduates with a Pell Grant | Metric | Core | The Florida Senate (2013) |
| Hawaii | Low-income students | Metric | Core | Hawaii State Legislature (2008) |
| Indiana | At-risk (Pell-eligible) degree completion | Metric | Core | Indiana Commission for Higher Education (2013) |
| Maine | Pell Grant recipients | Weights | Core | University of Maine System (2013) |
| Michigan | Pell Grant recipients | Metric | Core | House Fiscal Activity (2014) |
| Montana | Economically disadvantaged | Weights | Core | Montana University System (2015) |
| Mississippi | At-risk students (Pell recipient, ACT score of less than 19, 25 years and older | Metric | Core | Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning (2013) |
| New Mexico | At-risk | Metric | Core | New Mexico Legislature (2015); New Mexico Higher Education Department (2013) |
| New York | Academically at-risk due to economic disadvantage | Unclear | Unclear | New York State General Assembly (2015) |
| Oklahoma | Pell Grant retention rate | Metric | Core | Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (2015) |
| Rhode Island | Socioeconomic status | Weights | Core | State of Rhode Island General Assembly (2016) |
| South Dakota | At-risk Low-income | Metric | Core | South Dakota Legislature Legislative Research Council (2015) |
| Vermont | First-generation Low-income | Metric | Unclear | Legislature of Vermont (2015) |

Increasing Hispanic participation and closing the achievement gap between Hispanics and Whites is also listed as a priority for the state. Yet, for the actual POBF model, there is no mention of Hispanics or racial diversity. Similarly, in Massachusetts, the narrative for the General Appropriations Act for the state's POBF model explicitly discusses closing the achievement gap between minority and White students; however, there is no explicit mention of race or racial diversity and equity goals in the actual POBF model. In contrast, the narratives for both Vermont and Utah identify the "traditionally underserved" as pertaining to socioeconomic and first generation status.

Among those models that explicitly address race, there is a wide disparity in the range of detail describing racial diversity indicators and weights. The most in-depth and critical framing of racial diversity and equity goals can be found in the Pennsylvania POBF plan. It is the only model of the six that provides a conceptual framework for "transforming students and the learning environment" (PASSHE, 2011). Pennsylvania also has the most extensive number of explicit racial diversity and equity goals in its POBF.

In one of its core areas of target, "access," the conceptual framework specifically states:

> [The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education] **PASSHE must ensure that the students who learn in its universities reflect the diversity of the communities from which they come**, that the faculty and staff who teach and support them do as well, and that students are well prepared to enter a global workforce. (PASSHE, 2011)

In this model, it is unclear how equity goals and diversity would be measured in MSIs, as the language appears to be aimed at institutions that have traditionally excluded–or at least not widely included–nonwhite students and faculty.

The Maryland POBF proposal also explicitly addresses racial diversity as a goal; however, this policy has not yet been adopted. The Virginia POBF plan, on the other hand, addresses racial diversity and equity in several ways. First, it addresses four goals, which include affordable access, student success, change and improvement, and economic and cultural prosperity. Second, it is highly differentiated according to institutional goals and missions. For example, George

Mason University's proposed initiative to provide access to nontraditional populations, including underrepresented populations, is addressed in the POBF plan. Institutions are also given three options for addressing student success. Option #2 explicitly states "funds will be distributed based on an allocation strategy tied to performance, **such as the percent of under-represented student enrollment and graduates**" (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 2015, pg. 17).

Other POBF plans that address racial diversity and equity explicitly, such as Illinois, Arkansas, and Ohio, only offer clarification. For example, the Arkansas POBF plan provides the following detailed description regarding its optional indicators for minority graduates for both two- and four-year institutions:

> This is an overall headcount of any credential (Technical Certificates and above) awarded to persons **identified as Asian only, Black only, Hispanic any, American Indian/Alaska Native only, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander only or Two or More Races**. Unknowns, Non-Resident Aliens, White and Other graduates are not included. (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2015)

## DISCUSSION

Huber and Lapinski (2006) describe an electoral and political penalty being attached to the use of overt racial language in policy and rhetoric, where explicit references to race can have a negative affect and provoke backlash among Whites. As a result, policymakers often use vague language with broader appeal. At first glance, however, the threat of the racial penalty Huber and Lapinski (2006) described does not seem to have deterred state policymakers from including racial diversity and equity as a goal within POBF models. In fact, over half of the models we examined explicitly target racial diversity and equity. Even for those models that address racial diversity and equity implicitly with proxies, there are frequent references to racial diversity and equity as a goal in the narrative attached to the policy. However, there are many caveats and problems with the way racial diversity and equity are currently framed within most POBF models.

### The Problem with Both Explicit and Implicit Racial Diversity Indicators

*Limited Diversity*
Some of the models which employ explicit references to racial diversity and equity only target one or two racial/ethnic groups. While efforts to attend to the gaps between groups that have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised within particular states is admirable, limiting racial diversity and equity goals to only a few groups can limit efforts to recruit and retain other historically underrepresented racial populations. It also reifies White supremacist models of limiting the types and number of students of color within historically White institutions.

*Addressing the Symptom Instead of the Sickness*
While POBF models that attempt to implicitly incentivize racial diversity and equity are certainly a step in the right direction, by avoiding race, they fail to address the root of the problem. Not only do proxies fail to address the issue of racial disparities, but they negate the impact of racism and racial marginalization, which can affect student access, attrition, and graduation, independent of proxies. In fact, proxies such as socioeconomic status and preparation are often systematic symptoms of the larger problem of racism. In states such as Michigan, where there have been referendums to ban race-conscious policies like Affirmative Action, it may be politically riskier to target race explicitly; however, since the advent of the ban, it may be more necessary than ever to stabilize the loss of enrollment of students of color.

*Diversity Without Inclusion*
Structural racial diversity has been shown to lead to more informal interactions and dialogue between White and non-White students (Park, 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2006); however, diversity researchers caution that there needs to be more attention paid to diversity beyond representation for achieving inclusion, a critical goal for institutions that wish to sustain and expand racial diversity. Discrimination and marginalization can negatively impact non-White student grades and test performance (Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012), as well as attitudes and development while in college (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terezeni, 1996). In fact, Pascarella et al. (1996) demonstrated that White students' openness to diversity and students' of color student

development are both significantly linked to purposeful policies and programs that sensitize faculty, administrators, and students to issues related to diversity and equity. State policies can play a vital role in addressing inclusion to better support both state and institutional diversity and equity goals.

### Low Priority

As previously noted, many of the explicit racial diversity and equity metrics and weights were optional, and were only negotiated with specific institutions. Letizia (2015) asserts that POBF models are neoliberal mechanisms designed to maximize capital and increase training to improve competitiveness in the global market of higher education. This has also been largely confirmed by policymakers who design POBF models, who often cite efficiency, quality, and improving student performance in college and on the job market as rationales for the model.

One of the challenges to the neoliberal philosophy undergirding POBF models is that the chosen indicators are meant to target values that have explicit market value. Values that are not seen as market centered, also known as externalities, are largely ignored or not prioritized. Additionally, while diversity is currently regarded as a marketable commodity, and an essential element towards creating global and multiculturally competent leaders, this view of diversity is very shallow and vague. It does not specifically identify racialized (or any other) aspects of diversity.

As previously noted, many of the explicit racial diversity and equity metrics and weights in the POBF we examined were optional, and were only negotiated with specific institutions. The devaluing of racial diversity and equity by state POBF policy is confirmed by McGowan's (2016) analysis of the reporting of performance outcomes. Her study revealed that most colleges and universities place value on reporting their performance in enrollment trends, graduate student participation, and, to a lesser extent, retention and graduation rates and institutional rankings. Diversity and improvements thereon are low or non-existent when discussing "performance outcomes." In fact, racial diversity is almost exclusively located within the "Student Profiles" section of most "Fast Facts/ Institutional Information" webpages.

### Lack of Capacity Building

Many POBF researchers have noted that POBF lacks guidance and support for the kind of institutional capacity building and organizational learning

necessary to improve institutional outcomes (Jones et al., 2015). This is certainly the case in racial equity and diversity goals. Rutherford and Rabovsky (2014) assert that the espoused theory of action behind POBF, the belief that incentivizing performance goals will aspire institutions to act, is presumptuous. They suggest that, without clear goals and knowledge about how to fix what is not working, POBF will fail to make an impact on outcomes. This chapter demonstrates that most POBF models fail to clearly articulate racial diversity and equity goals and how they should be achieved. More important, current POBF models fail to address the essential goal of inclusion necessary to achieve the type of institutional transformation needed for sustained and expanded racial diversity and equity.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This critical discourse analysis examined the language used to frame diversity goals within POBF models to show how POBF models often use neoliberal presuppositions that commodify diversity in a way that does not support transformative diversity within higher education. Of the 32 states currently using POBF models, there are only 6 active examples of POBF models that explicitly address racial equity and diversity, and only two of those models provide a more detailed descriptive explanation and vision for their racial diversity and equity goals. None of the models we examined address one of the most essential components of sustaining diversity: inclusion. Racial diversity indicators and proxies designed to address racial diversity also fail to address or provide institutions support for the type of capacity building needed for sustaining long-term racial diversity and equity goals. In its current form, the neoliberal approach to framing diversity as structural and representative instead of an essential component of learning and development limits its ability to be realized. In order for state policymakers to truly address racial diversity and equity, they must make politically courageous decisions to conscientiously address these goals explicitly, in policy as well as in measures and language that provide a vision and pathways toward cultivating inclusion.

## Note

1. States in which only one racial or ethnic group was explicitly specific, or where the explicit racial diversity metric option was also counted in the proxy scan.

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