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Diversity and Inclusion in Events: A US Perspective on Strides and Stagnation

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Title: Diversity and Inclusion in Events: A US Perspective on Strides and Stagnation

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Abstract:

This presentation will review the findings of a study I conducted for Meeting Professionals International, focusing on the D&I attitudes and practices of US meeting and event professionals. The study comprised of a membership survey (1087 respondents) and a series of interviews with 20 D&I specialists in and outside of the event sector.

The survey shows that respondents feel diversity and inclusion are a stronger focus for the industry now compared to 10 years ago, and that diversity and inclusion are focus areas for their organization. In some areas, D&I practices are widely included in the event planning and delivery process: food restrictions and dietary requirements for example were shown to be carefully considered, whereas other demographic such as race and gender identity were less often seen as important factors. The interview data showed that while great strides are made in some areas, in other areas complacency or lack of awareness have led to a stagnation in D&I initiatives and efforts.

A finding that generated much discussion, was that white, heterosexual men are often less likely to participate in D&I discussions and are sometimes perceived as hindering the efforts to make events more inclusive. This begs the question whether they should become the focus of greater efforts, or whether this would strengthen their position as a privileged group in society. Warikoo (2016) argues that the US's changing demographic diversity can lead White Americans to endorse more conservative policies, lean more Republican, shift their evaluation of merit, and believe that they are now the victims of racial discrimination. She adds that white Americans need not hate or be consciously biased against African Americans, Latinos, Asians, immigrants, or Muslims to feel threatened by their growing presence.

Warikoo, N. K. (2016). *The diversity bargain: and other dilemmas of race, admissions, and meritocracy at elite universities* . Chicago: IL, University of Chicago.
