

Eating Your Way to Integration: the making of a diverse community at LSE

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This research paper examines the significance of food on intercultural relationships. We analyse the extent to which consuming different cultural foods impacts the integration of students at LSE, a culturally diverse community. Although the existing literature explains how food is a symbol of cultural identity and helps integration in culturally diverse communities, there is none that focuses on the integration of students at university and in particular, universities located in cosmopolitan cities. Hence we hope to illustrate this through the microcosm of LSE. Our research investigates student's consumption of different cultural cuisines and we examine how important they deemed it to be in their social interactions. Based on our online survey of 103 LSE students, we found that there is a positive

correlation, significant at the 5% significance level, between the diversity of students' choice of food and their degree of integration into the diverse student community, confirming our hypothesis. Through our qualitative survey responses, we found that there do exist causal channels confirming the significance of food on intercultural relationships. Overall, through this research, we emphasise the limitations of students' cultural experience through the microcosm of LSE. Thus, a further discussion can inspire new ways to improve integration at LSE and in other universities located in cosmopolitan cities, and ultimately help students find a sense of belonging beyond the boundary of their national backgrounds.