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Articles: pages 335-403

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## CULTURAL CONNECTIONS: HOW DANCE FOSTERS INTEGRATION AND UNITY\*

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### Abstract

With increasing migration, integration has become a critical priority for host countries. This article discusses the findings of the research project titled “All the Same with Dance”, which examines the role of cultural activities, specifically dance, in the integration process of migrants. Migration often involves challenges such as xenophobia, which hinder social cohesion. Employing qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, content analysis and focus group discussions, “All the Same with Dance” explored how dance influences perceptions of similarity and reduces prejudices. Findings reveal a shift from nationalistic sentiments before the event to a focus on shared experiences afterward, demonstrating the positive impact of dance. This article contributes to the academic discourse by highlighting the transformative role of cultural exchange in fostering migrant integration.

**Keywords:** dance; integration; xenophobia; cultural biases; migrants.

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### [A] INTRODUCTION

Migration has consistently shaped human history, driven by aspirations for improved opportunities and influenced by multifaceted economic, social and cultural factors. Migrants bring diverse experiences to host societies, yet their integration often faces challenges, including

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socio-cultural differences and deeply ingrained prejudices. Integration, as a process of adaptation and inclusion, has been extensively studied in academic and policy contexts. However, a significant gap remains in understanding the practical role of cultural activities, such as dance, in addressing barriers to integration and fostering social cohesion.

This article stems from “All the Same with Dance”, a project aimed at exploring the transformative potential of culturally interactive dance events in the integration of migrants. By employing qualitative methods—including semi-structured interviews, content analysis and focus group discussions—the project offers empirical evidence on how dance acts as a medium for cultural exchange and social inclusion. Unlike theoretical explorations prevalent in the literature, this research focuses on the practical application of dance as a tool for integration and examines shifts in participants’ discourse and attitudes. The findings reveal that participants transitioned from nationalistic and divisive sentiments to a discourse emphasizing shared experiences and cultural similarities after engaging in the event. This transformation underscores dance’s ability to foster empathy, diminish stereotypes, and create a platform for mutual understanding. By situating dance within the broader discourse on migration and inclusion, this article presents applied insights into the project’s role in reshaping perceptions and promoting integration, particularly in under-represented geographical contexts like Türkiye.

This article contributes to migration and cultural studies by discussing the applied potential of the research project, which highlights dance as a vehicle for promoting social integration. It demonstrates how cultural activities can drive discourse change, reduce prejudices and encourage shared values. By advancing practical and theoretical discussions on using embodied practices like dance to enhance social cohesion, this project offers fresh perspectives on addressing migration challenges in diverse societies.

The structure of the article is as follows: Section B presents the literature review, detailing prior research on migration, cultural activities and integration. Section C outlines the methodological framework of the research project, while Section D discusses the findings in detail.

## [B] LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of cultural and physical activities in fostering integration has been widely acknowledged, yet the specific impact of dance remains under-explored. For instance, Li (2024) and Yang (2024) suggest that innovative and inclusive methods in dance education can promote

cultural exchange and enhance creative expression, while Afolaranmi and Afolaranmi (2024) emphasize the peacebuilding potential of dance. Similarly, Pace (2018) underscores dance's potential to reduce biases and build social bridges, particularly through innovative and interactive approaches. An and colleagues (2024) argue that dance initiatives such as "Dancing with Care" can increase social cohesion and provide avenues for social inclusion among marginalized groups. Furthermore, Makarova and Herzog (2014) highlight the role of sport in strengthening intercultural relations and social ties among migrant youth in Switzerland, while Smith and colleagues (2019) systematically analyse how physical activities, especially sport, contribute to the integration of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The psychological and social benefits of dance further reinforce its relevance. Zafeiroudi (2023) and Tao and colleagues (2022) demonstrate how dance strengthens social connections and enhances resilience. Şenel (2015) illustrates how Turkish diaspora youth in Germany used cultural expressions like hip-hop to foster mutual respect and acceptance. These studies collectively affirm the role of cultural activities in building cohesive societies, providing a foundational context for this article's focus.

However, limited attention has been given to the role of cultural activities in reshaping discourse and reducing xenophobia. In the context of xenophobia, Rivas-Drake and colleagues (2022) emphasize the role of ethnic and racial identity in reducing prejudices and stimulating cooperation. This aligns with the findings of Crush and Ramachandran (2010), who highlight the pressing need for interventions against xenophobia, particularly in regions with heightened humanitarian challenges. Unlike prior studies that focus predominantly on theoretical insights, this article provides applied evidence, demonstrating how participation in dance events can shift participants' perceptions from divisive to inclusive.

This article draws on findings from the "All the Same with Dance" project to highlight how dance can act as a peacebuilding mechanism, facilitating empathy, mutual respect and shared experiences. By situating dance within the discourse of migration and integration, this article provides practical and theoretical contributions, particularly in addressing underexplored contexts such as Türkiye.

## [C] “ALL THE SAME WITH DANCE”

By creating shared spaces for cultural exchange, “All the Same with Dance” demonstrates the transformative potential of dance as a tool for social cohesion and mutual understanding (Smith & Ors 2019). Ethical approval was granted by Eskişehir Osmangazi University’s Social and Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee,<sup>1</sup> and informed consent was obtained from all participants to maintain confidentiality.

The primary research question of the project was: “Is dance an effective tool in the integration of migrants into society, and to what extent does it influence xenophobia?” To address this question, the research has examined two interrelated concepts—integration and xenophobia.

Jiménez defines this phenomenon as follows:

Integration is the process by which newly arrived immigrants and the communities they settle in (both individuals and institutions) mutually adapt to each other. Integration is also the endpoint reached when individuals perceive themselves and others ethnically, racially, and nationally to a minimal extent, and when these characteristics have the least trivial negative impact on opportunities and life chances. (Jiménez 2011).

With the increase in migration movements, the facilitation of transportation and the impact of globalization, integration has become increasingly important. This situation has led many countries to accelerate their efforts to integrate immigrants into society through various political practices. However, while these policies may assist in the integration process, the outcomes can vary significantly from one country to another.

Integration is defined differently according to context. When approached from a socio-cultural perspective, the integration process begins from the moment an individual joins a different society. This phenomenon is understood as individuals seeing themselves as part of the society they belong to, leading their lives in harmony and, ultimately, as an ongoing process (Aykaç & Karakaş 2022).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Integration is:

The term “integration,” which is used and understood differently in various countries and contexts, can be defined as the process in which migrants are recognized as both individuals and groups

<sup>1</sup> The research was conducted following the ethical guidelines and approval of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Eskişehir Osmangazi University (Approval Number: 2022-19).

being part of the society. It often refers to a two-way process between migrants and host communities. The concrete conditions required for host communities to accept migrants vary from country to country. Integration does not necessarily imply permanent settlement. However, it points to issues related to the rights and obligations of migrants and host communities, access to various types of services and labour markets, identification of core values that bring migrants and host communities together for a common purpose and ensuring their observance (IOM 2014).

The concept of “xenophobia” implies an extreme fear of something. This typically refers to attitudes towards groups or minorities that differ from the majority society in terms of national origin, religion and racial characteristics (Kaya 2021). In this article, and previously in the research project, the definition of the term “xenophobia” is the one developed by the European Migration Network:

Attitudes, prejudices, and behaviour that reject, exclude, and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society, or national identity (European Migration Network nd).

## Data collection

The research design incorporated a Control Group of 10 participants and a central “dance event” held online on 17 February 2024 with 21 participants from 20 countries. For the dance event, participants contributed videos of traditional dances representing their cultures. These videos were collectively viewed, followed by interactive discussions examining cultural similarities and differences. The event fostered meaningful exchanges, lasting approximately three-and-a-half hours. During the event, observational notes were also recorded. In total, 162 statements from the Control Group and 878 statements from the Event Group (including 576 before the event, 36 during the event, and 266 after the event) were analysed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both groups to explore participants’ perspectives on concepts like nationalism, cultural identity and stereotypes. These interviews provided insights into how participants’ understanding of these concepts evolved, particularly as they interacted during the event.

All data were organized in Excel and subjected to an inductive thematic analysis. Following this, the data were further processed using SPSS software to identify patterns and correlations, providing a comprehensive framework for interpreting shifts in participants’ attitudes and perceptions.

The *Control Group* comprised 10 participants from various nationalities, including Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Poland and Indonesia. This group consisted of six self-identified men and four self-identified women, aged between 21 and 30, from 10 different countries. They were interviewed exclusively prior to the culturally interactive dance event, part of the “All the Same with Dance” project, to establish baseline data on attitudes toward integration, cultural identity and xenophobia. These interviews<sup>2</sup> provided a critical reference point for comparing the results from the Event Group.

The *Event Group* consisted of 21 participants representing 20 different nationalities, including countries such as Tajikistan, Georgia, Italy and Indonesia. Participants ranged in age from 17 to over 30, with diverse educational backgrounds (16 holding bachelor’s degrees and 5 holding master’s degrees). This group participated in a series of *three structured interview phases*:

- 1 *Before the event*, participants shared their initial perspectives on integration, cultural identity and xenophobia, providing a baseline understanding of their attitudes.
2. *During the event*, participants engaged in the central activity and were interviewed in real time to capture immediate reactions and insights into how shared cultural practices influenced their experiences. The *central activity*, referred to as the “dance event”, was conducted online on 17 February 2024, addressing logistical challenges while ensuring inclusivity. Participants contributed videos of traditional dances representing their respective cultures. These videos were

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<sup>2</sup> The interview questions included:

1. What do you think is the definition of nationalism and racism?
2. What comes to your mind when you think of national identity?
3. Is national identity in need of protection, why?
4. What do you think are the elements that create or threaten a national identity?
5. Is your identity and culture similar to others, and why?
6. What are the elements that you associate as common values?
  - Are common values an advantage or disadvantage for you, why?
  - How do common values affect your life?
7. Do you have a stereotype in your mind against any identity or culture, why?
  - If no, do you think all humanity shares the same values, why?
  - If yes, to what extent does it affect your daily life?
  - Is there a stereotype you have been exposed to before, and if so, what is it?
8. Do you feel yourself as belonging to a country or as a citizen of the world, why?
  - Do you feel better in the country you are in now or in the country you are a citizen of, why?



collectively viewed, fostering discussions about their cultural significance and similarities with other practices. This interactive format aligns with existing research highlighting the potential of cultural activities, including dance, to foster co-existence, dismantle prejudices and create spaces for mutual respect (Afolaranmi & Afolaranmi 2024; Li 2024). This three-and-a-half-hour event served as a platform for participants to express their cultural identities while appreciating others' values, thus reducing stereotypes and promoting social cohesion (Şenel 2015). The emphasis on rhythmic and cultural exchange during the event allowed participants to establish deeper connections, thereby addressing xenophobia and promoting social inclusion. By creating shared experiences, the dance event operationally demonstrated the transformative role of dance in bridging cultural divides, enhancing mutual understanding and fostering co-existence.

3. *After the event*, follow-up interviews<sup>3</sup> were conducted to explore how participants' perceptions and attitudes evolved following the activity.

This *multi-phase interview design* provided a longitudinal lens through which the transformative effects of the dance event could be assessed. The three distinct stages of data collection allowed researchers to track shifts in discourse, moving from a focus on nationalistic identity and stereotypes to shared experiences, cultural similarities and mutual respect.

To analyse the collected data, a *thematic analysis* approach was employed. Responses were categorized into major themes or categories—such as Culture, Nation, Politics and Society—and minor themes, including tradition, identity, emotions and belonging.

Before the event, participants predominantly expressed sentiments related to nationalistic identity, cultural differences and stereotypes. During the event, discussions shifted to focus on collaborative engagement and shared cultural practices. After the event, participants

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<sup>3</sup> The post-event interview questions included:

1. Did your definition of nationalism and racism change after the event, and why?
2. What changes occurred in your thoughts about national identity after the event?
3. To what extent did the event confirm your ideas about common values?
4. Do you still think the same about identity and culture, and why?
5. What are the changes in your thoughts about stereotypes?
6. How do you plan to deal with stereotypes in the future?
7. How did the behaviour of the people at the event change your thoughts?

emphasized mutual respect and cultural similarities, reflecting a significant transformation in discourse. The analysis revealed five main categories after the event: Culture, Nation, Common Values, Emotions and Behaviour. Subcategories, such as tradition under Culture and dance under Common Values, further illustrated the nuanced shifts in participants' attitudes.

The *content analysis* revealed additional insights through categorization. For instance, in the Culture category, subthemes such as tradition, religion and food were highlighted, while the Nation category included subthemes like language, history, identity, nationalism and belonging. Similarly, the Politics category focused on concepts such as democracy, freedom and citizenship, while the Society category emphasized family and humanity. During the event, the emergence of minor themes, such as dance and culture, indicated a shift toward exploring cultural similarities and fostering connections. Post-event interviews revealed further evolution, with participants highlighting themes of Common Values, Emotions, and Behaviour, reflecting a deeper appreciation for shared experiences.

The research faced several challenges, including logistical barriers, participant hesitations linked to socio-political conflicts and the absence of incentives, which affected recruitment. Conducting the event online addressed some obstacles but limited the depth of engagement compared to in-person interactions. These limitations underline the complexities of organizing such studies and suggest areas for refinement. Future studies should prioritize in-person activities to enhance the depth and quality of interactions. Expanding the participant pool and extending the research timeline will enable a richer understanding of how cultural practices influence attitudes across diverse contexts. Additionally, employing innovative strategies to encourage active participation will improve the overall reliability and impact of future research.

## [D] RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of the article, the focus will first be on how the findings differ between self-identified men and women participants. Following this, the differentiation of major themes between the Control Group, who did not participate in the dance workshop, and the Event Group, who actively participated in the same event, will be explored in detail. Subsequently, the analysis will extend to the minor themes to explore any distinctions between the groups and whether more pronounced differences exist. After analysing the distinctions between the Control



and Event Groups, the discussion will move to how national differences influence the major themes. To evaluate the impact of the event, graphs illustrating the changes in both major and minor themes before, during and after the event will be presented.

The bar chart in Figure 1 highlights the distribution of major themes among self-identified men and women participants before and after the event. For self-identified men, themes such as Nation and Politics were the most dominant before the event, with a noticeable decline in Politics after the event. On the other hand, self-identified women demonstrated a strong focus on Nation and Discrimination themes before the event, with Nation remaining prominent, but a shift away from Discrimination after the event. Both groups exhibited a decrease in thematic diversity following the event, indicating that discussions became more concentrated around specific themes, particularly Nation and Religion.

Data suggests that the dance event facilitated a shift from divisive themes, such as Politics and Discrimination, to unifying ones like Nation and Religion, highlighting the association between dance and social cohesion. This points out the significance of dance in enhancing social interaction. Furthermore, the divergence of self-identified men from the Politics theme and self-identified women from the Discrimination theme underscores the role of interaction in addressing gender-related issues and reducing social disparities.

The analysis of the data revealed significant differences in the representation of major themes between the Control and Event Groups. As shown in the bar chart in Figure 2, the Nation theme was the most frequently mentioned across both groups, with 97 instances in the Event Group compared to 61 in the Control Group. This suggests that participation in the event heightened discussions around national identity and related concepts. The Culture theme also appeared prominently, with a slightly higher representation in the Event Group (44) compared to the Control Group (40). Interestingly, themes like Politics and Society were only present in the Control Group, with 47 and 13 mentions, respectively, while they were entirely absent in the Event Group. This shift could indicate that event participation shifted the focus away from political and societal issues to more experiential or emotional themes. For instance, the Common Values theme emerged with 61 mentions exclusively in the Event Group, highlighting a stronger emphasis on shared values during the event. Similarly, themes related to Discrimination and Emotions saw increased attention in the Event Group, with 13 mentions of Discrimination and 11 mentions of Emotions,

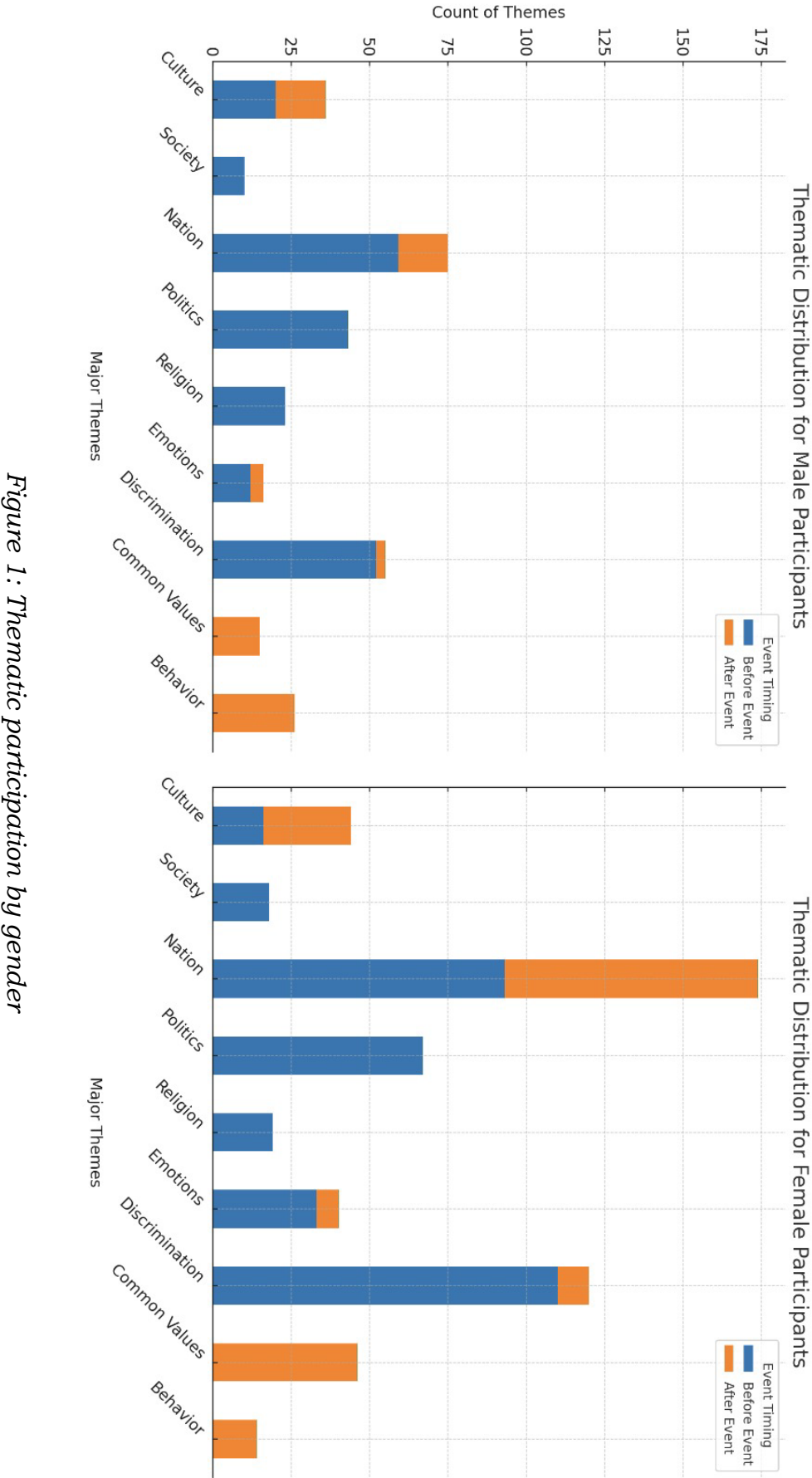


Figure 1: Thematic participation by gender

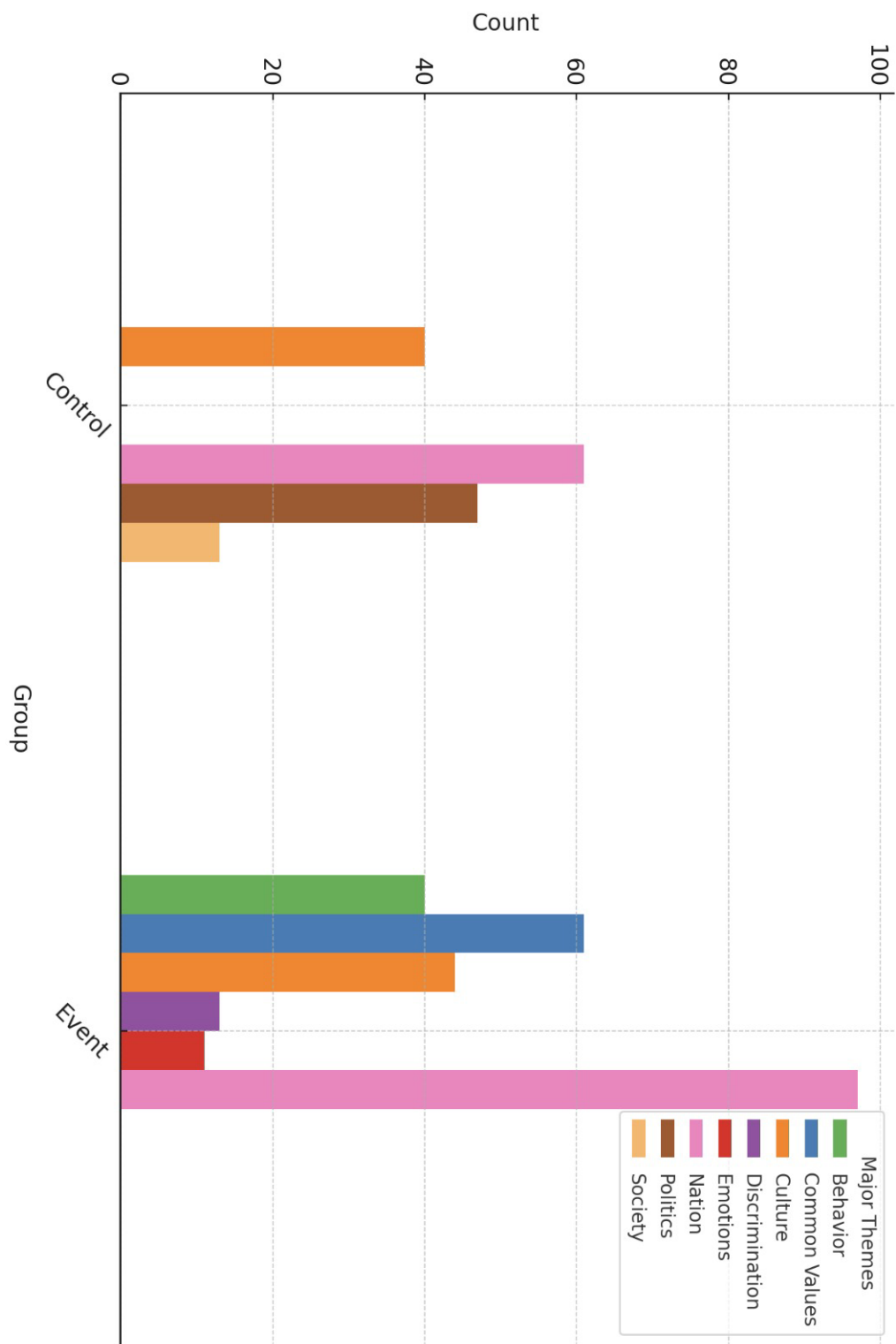


Figure 2: Impact of event participation on major themes

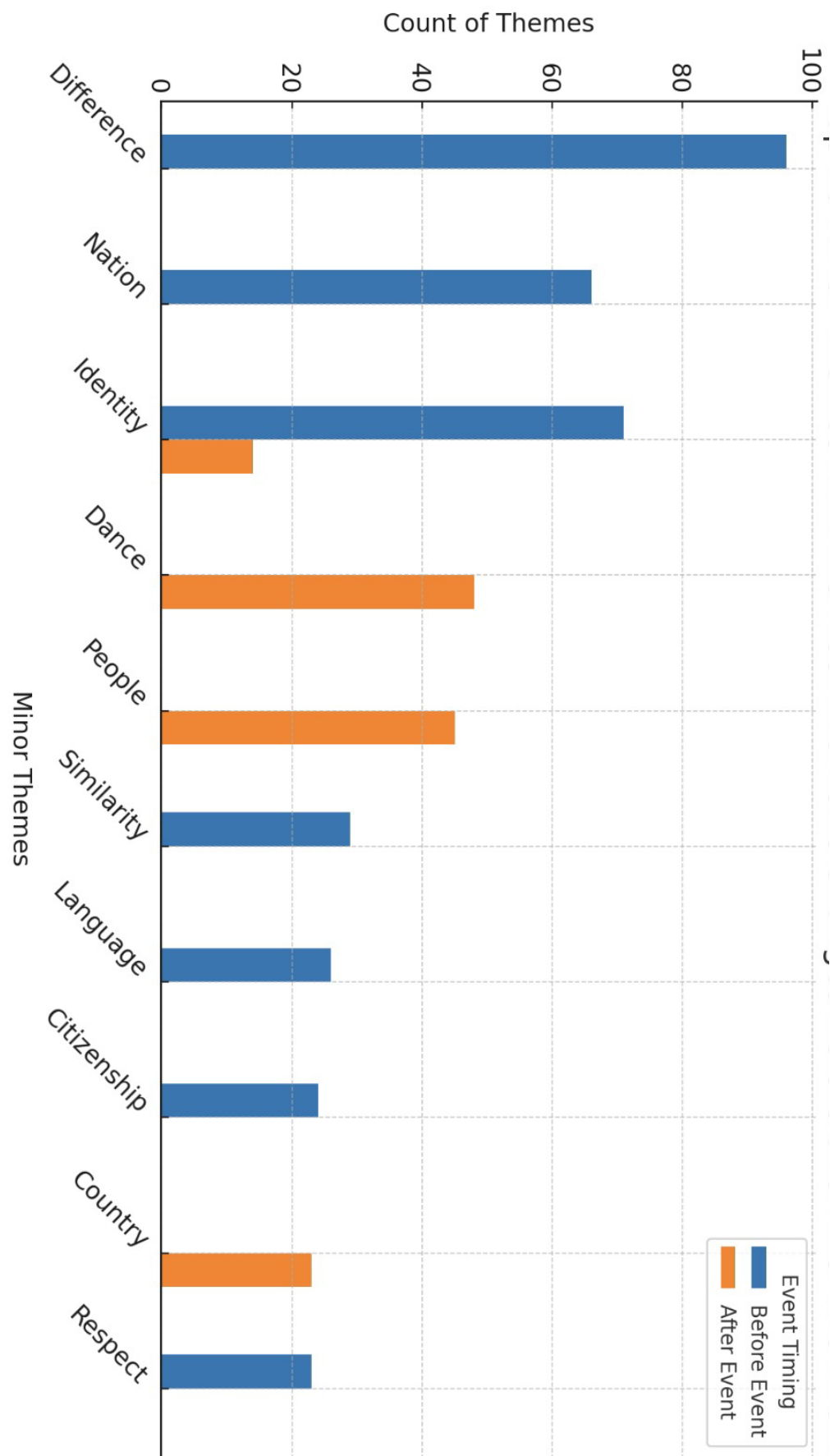


Figure 3: Top 10 most dramatic changes in minor themes in both Control and Event Groups

whereas they were not discussed in the Control Group. Participation in the event significantly shifted discussions toward cultural and nationalistic themes, emphasizing shared values and emotions.

The comparison between the Control and Event Groups in Figure 3 reveals significant differences in the distribution of minor themes, as illustrated in the bar chart. The analysis highlights the top 10 minor themes with the most dramatic changes between the two groups. Notably, the minor theme dance shows the largest increase in the Event Group, with 48 occurrences, while it was absent in the Control Group. Similarly, country and tradition also saw notable increases in the Event Group, suggesting that participation in the event heightened discussions around cultural expression and national identity. Conversely, minor themes like minority and family were more prevalent in the Control Group, with 34 and 9 mentions, respectively, and no representation in the Event Group. In this context, the participants shared the following statements:

What we call a common value is of course the family, as in most Turkic countries. Family should be protected. Family is important. The other is commitment to relatives, like brothers and sisters ... (Azerbaijan, Self-identified man from the Control Group)

I think in Türkiye, um, I have and I will for a very long time be a minority. When I go out in public. I always have these eyes on me. This idea that I'm being, uh, that I'm under surveillance by the public. Uh, the public vigilante concept. Um, and since I'm a minority, since I'm not a national, I think, uh, at points at certain times, it can raise discomfort (Pakistan, Self-identified man from the Event Group).

These shifts show that participating in the dance event redirected focus toward more dynamic and experiential themes, such as dance and tradition, while reducing emphasis on social and familial themes. The data indicate that participation in the event significantly influenced the types of discussions participants engaged in, particularly encouraging more cultural and nationalistic discourse.

The analysis in Figure 4 identified three common minor themes between the Control and Event Groups: identity, tradition and value. These themes, sorted alphabetically, are presented in the bar chart comparing the two groups. The tradition subtheme had the highest overall mentions, with more emphasis in the Event Group (30 occurrences) compared to the Control Group (18 occurrences). The identity subtheme was discussed more in the Event Group as well, while value was mentioned more frequently by the Control Group. This suggests a shift in focus towards tradition and identity during the event, while values were more prominent in discussions within the Control Group. Furthermore, the

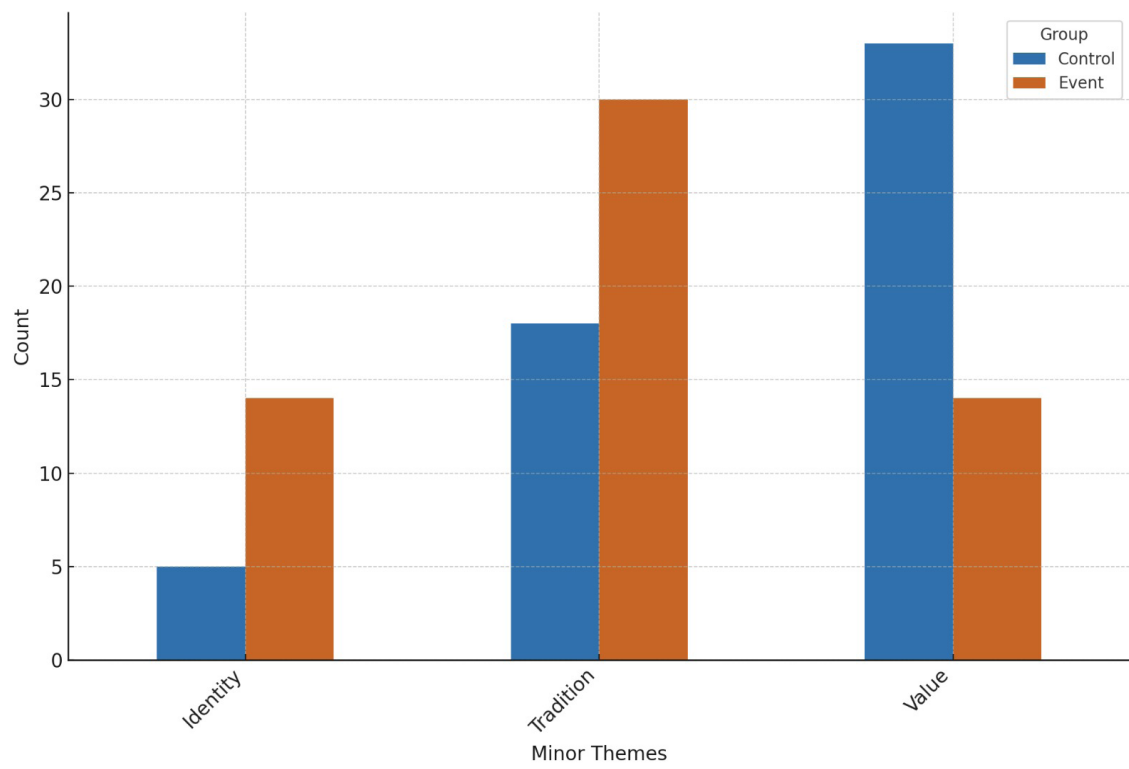


Figure 4: Common minor themes in both control and Event Groups

frequent discussion of the value subtheme in the Control Group and the increased focus on the subthemes of tradition and identity in the Event Group highlight dance’s impact on bringing these themes to the forefront and its importance in facilitating intercultural interactions.

These findings indicate that the importance of the subthemes of tradition, value and identity serves as a significant indicator for understanding the role of dance in strengthening cultural ties and promoting social integration. This suggests that individuals can unite society around shared values, thereby reinforcing social cohesion. Dance fosters social cohesion by encouraging mutual understanding and strengthening social identities.

In Figure 5, the combined heatmap visual illustrates the distribution of major themes across countries both before and after the event. The “Before Event” heatmap shows that themes such as Politics, Society and Religion were moderately represented across countries like Hong Kong, India and Indonesia. After the event, we observed notable shifts, particularly in countries like India, Tajikistan and Russia, where themes like Politics lost their importance. The visual comparison highlights the evolving thematic focus, suggesting that the event influenced participants’ perspectives, with increased emphasis on certain themes post-event. For example, the



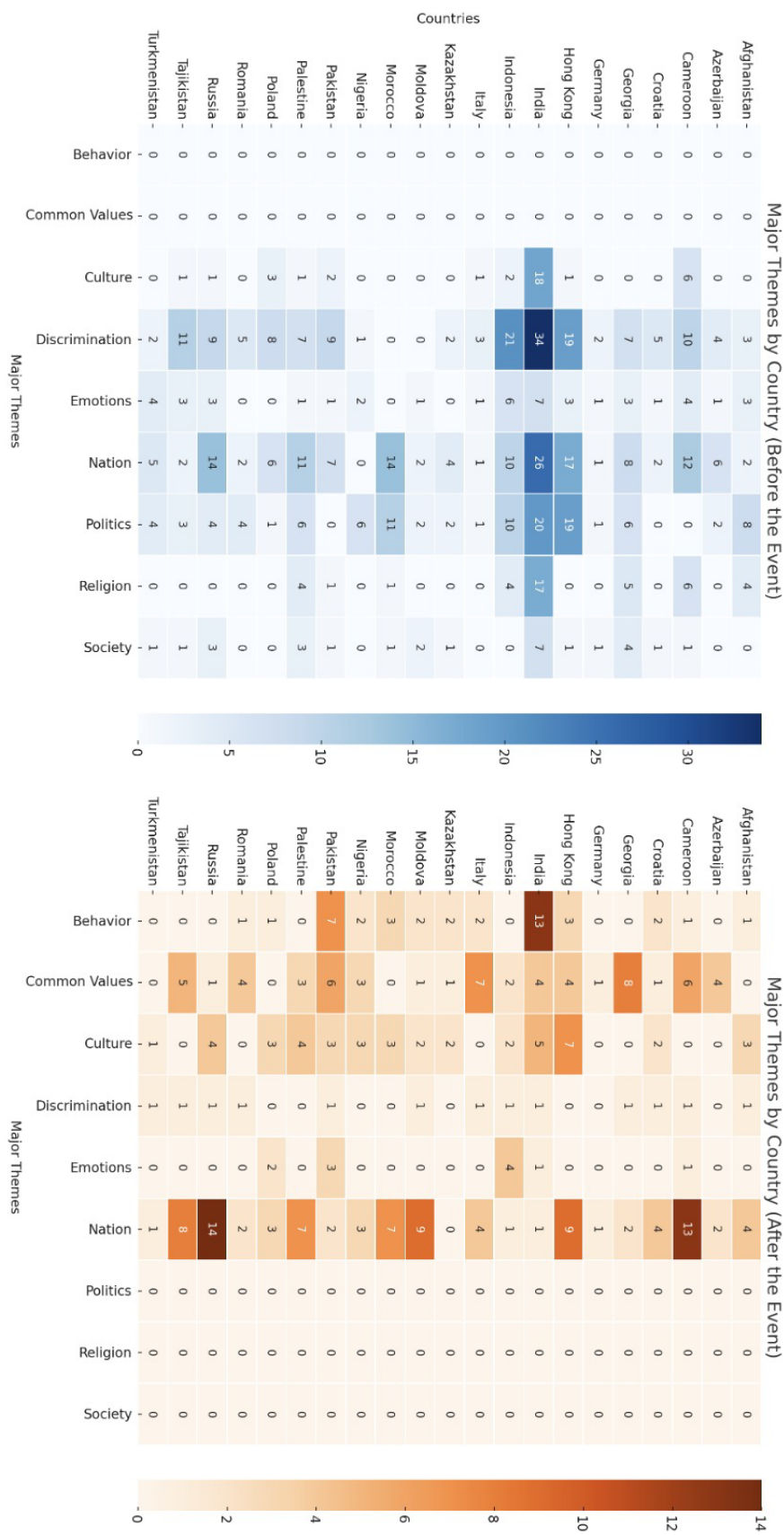


Figure 5: Major themes by country before and after the event

theme Discrimination has had an obvious shift by the event. Likewise, in the interviews with the Event Group after the event, it was found that they hardly mentioned the feelings of discrimination and politics. On the contrary, they emphasized minor themes such as positivity, holism and respect.

I think that I don't feel any barriers with those people and I think I even can be friend or et cetera and their nations wouldn't be a Problem for me or something different. (Poland, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

It was a positive vibe, Uh. When we were in the event, there were like a lot of nationalities and everyone was trying their best to come with the best of their culture, I think. I think, uh, this is the way it was and. I think uh. I don't know. Like, yeah, it was it was good. I like Ohh like if you get it in general I think about the. Was that good mode It was a good mood, uplifter even, and I think it should occur more to know each other. Maybe the next time I will be interested if there is a physical event where everyone can cook their meal or something and. Have an interaction between them so maybe they can know more about their cultures (India, Self-identified man from the Event Group).

However, at this point, it is seen that the concept of nation is emphasized again. Compared to data collected before the event, the concept of nation was mentioned in this context by emphasizing more integrative and similar characteristics after the event, while before the event, it was mostly evaluated on discrimination, identity and negative concepts. One participant offered the following response in relation to the topic:

I live inside Israel. I have an Israeli passport. And trust me, as much as I have faced discrimination, I have faced racism, sexism, everything you can think of ... Anyone who is displaced from their own country will say that about other countries that they have immigrated to or run away to because they lost the sense of warmth that they had back home like its chaos back home (Palestine, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

In light of these findings, it has been observed that participants from various countries shifted their focus towards shared emotional and cultural themes after the event, setting aside their diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Furthermore, the decline in divisive themes such as Politics highlights how dance creates a broader and more inclusive environment for interaction, transcending social differences. This underscores the significance of understanding how individuals with diverse perspectives contribute to social integration. Conversely, the concept of Nation, initially discussed in the context of differences and distinct identities, transitioned into a unifying theme that highlighted

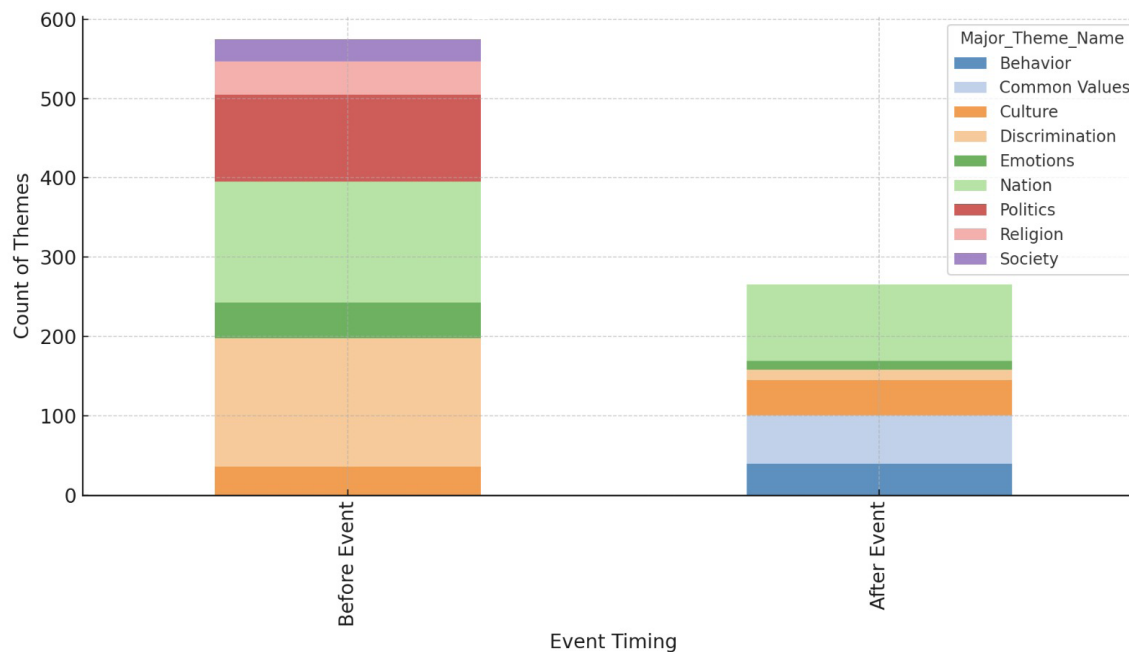


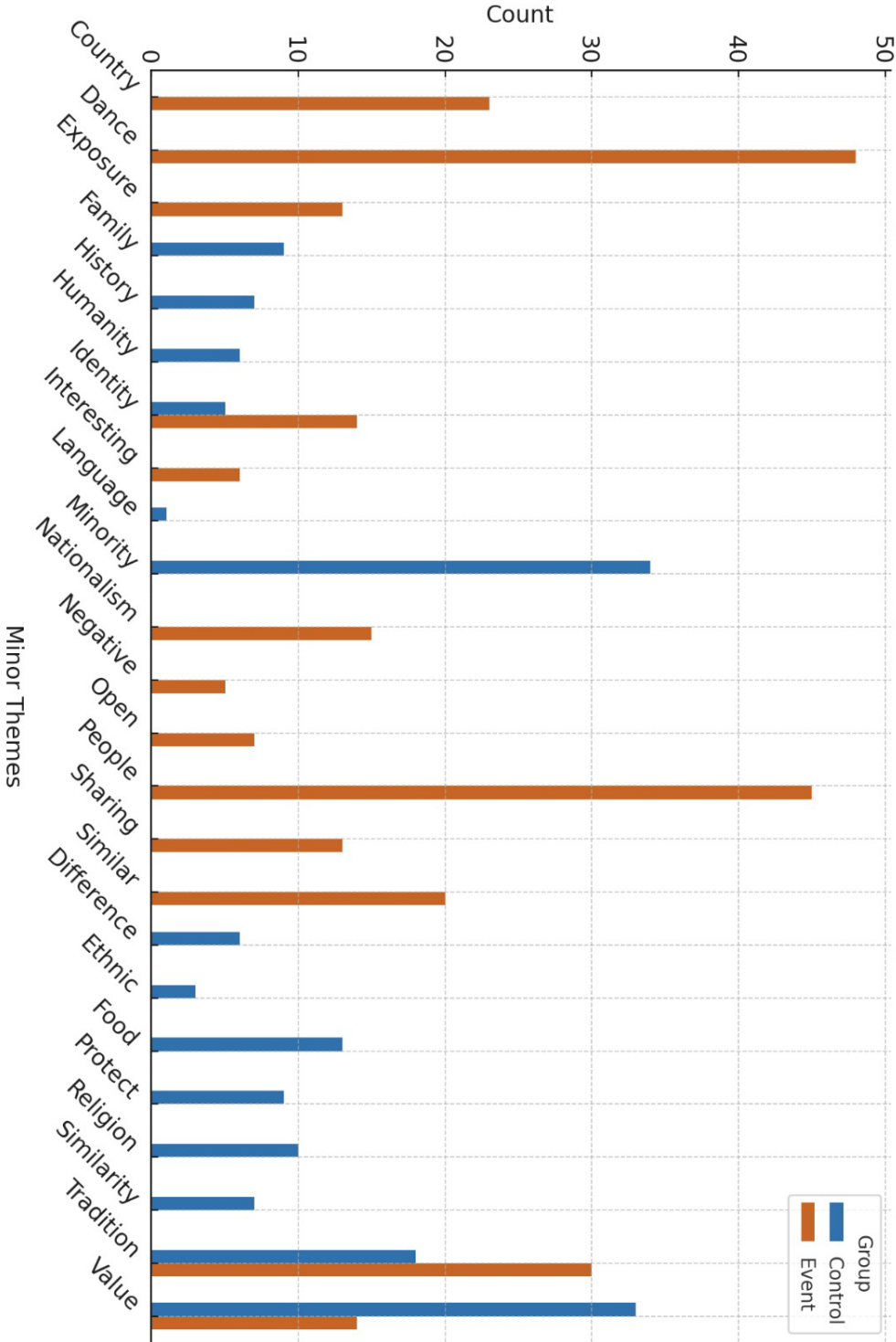
Figure 6: Distribution of major themes before and after the event

commonalities among participants. This evolution underscores how the event facilitated a reinterpretation of national identity as a shared value rather than a divisive boundary.

The analysis in Figure 6 shows a decline in divisive themes, such as Politics and Discrimination, and an increase in unifying ones like Nation and Religion post-event. Notably, themes related to Culture, Society and Nation dominate both time periods, though the prominence of certain themes, such as Politics and Religion, appears to shift slightly after the event. The most significant changes are observed in the Emotions and Discrimination categories, which show an increased presence following the event. These variations suggest that the event may have heightened awareness or influenced discussions around emotional responses and experiences of discrimination. To sum up, the chart highlights how different thematic focuses evolve across event timings, reflecting potential shifts in participant perspectives.

The bar chart in Figure 7 illustrates the top 10 minor themes with the most significant changes before and after the event. Subthemes such as difference, identity and dance showed notable shifts, with dance and people emerging predominantly after the event, while subthemes like difference and nation saw a substantial decrease. This indicates that the event had a marked impact on discussions surrounding cultural identity and social expressions, particularly with a rise in interest in activities

Figure 7: Top 10 minor themes with the most dramatic changes before and after the event (Control v Event)



such as dance. The shift in minor themes suggests a transformation in participant focus, moving from more abstract concepts like Identity to more tangible expressions of culture and values.

The findings are crucial for understanding the impact of the event on participants' social expressions. Specifically, the reduction in the prominence of divisive minor themes such as difference and the emergence of shared values and traditions further emphasize the role of dance in promoting social integration. Furthermore, participants reported that comparing their own cultures with those of others during the event allowed them to recognize shared values and traditions. This process fostered cultural awareness and led them to confront and overcome their own prejudices. As part of the discussion, participants articulated these reflections, emphasizing the transformative role of dance in promoting understanding and reducing biases. For example, they noted:

Intend to not see them as like a first impression. I tend to give people more than one chance or second chances to think who they are without the stereotype (Palestine, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

In order to deal with stereotypes, I think to interact more with races that have stereotypes, I think interaction is more successful in the elimination of these stereotypes (Romania, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

The participants' understanding and conceptualization of notions such as "nationality" and "identity" showed significant positive development and transformation. The second finding of the research posits that: "Xenophobia will decrease in cases where rhythmic and choreographic similarities are observed." To evaluate this finding, the research project examined the change processes within both the Control and Event Groups. The findings revealed that the Control Group exhibited stronger prejudices and sharper distinctions between themselves and others. In contrast, the Event Group, while initially emphasizing differences, culture and identity in the context of xenophobia, transitioned toward a more moderate and inclusive perspective, highlighting similarities and shared values during and after the event.

Thus, the research findings provided robust confirmation of the positive effect of dance on decreasing xenophobia. Notably, the interview data aligned with this conclusion, illustrating consistent patterns of reduced prejudices and increased emphasis on commonalities among participants. Participants articulated their reflections, further supporting the transformative effect of dance on breaking down xenophobic attitudes and fostering intercultural understanding. For example, they noted:

It's actually surprising that ... Yeah, it does surprising because surprisingly, Indonesia have the most random common dance with South Africa, with Nigeria. So it's very interesting and I really love it, actually (Indonesia, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

For example, everything felt different. I liked it, actually. Afghan dances, Afghan identity. It was like Asia, the culture of Asia, and what else was there? Central Asia, the Middle East, the Middle East. It was like a mixture of the West of the East, Asia, the West and the Middle East. It reflected the culture of Pakistan, India, which wasn't really there a bit, and the clothes and stuff. I'd never seen it before. I loved the Afghan dancing and stuff like that. I was like, 'Wow.' How many cultures does it have in itself like that? Iranian culture. India, Pakistan, etc. For example, I never imagined that an Afghan and an Indian would be so close. For example, I liked this. (Georgia, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

I didn't know Georgian dances. How was it? That has changed my mind completely. And after the event I watched a few videos from Georgia, so I liked them because of their songs and how they dance and so on, and from my point of view I didn't know them. Yes, we are neighbours with Russia, but Georgia and Azerbaijan already have a lot of similarities, for example Azerbaijan. But for example, Azerbaijani dances are very popular, but in Georgia we usually know men's dances. But both men and women danced in the event and it was completely different, so it attracted my attention and after the meeting I started to research (Tajikistan, Self-identified Woman from the Event Group).

Overall, a comparative analysis between the Control and Event Groups revealed distinct differences in attitudes. While the Control Group maintained more rigid views, the Event Group demonstrated a notable shift in its discussions, emphasizing shared experiences and collective values. These results underscore the role of interactive cultural activities in encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding.

## [E] CONCLUSION

This article has presented the findings of "All the Same with Dance", a research project that investigated the potential of dance to influence attitudes and perceptions, particularly in contexts involving cultural exchange and integration. The findings show that participants moved away from divisive themes, such as Nationality and Discrimination, toward more inclusive and positive concepts, reflecting a transformation in how they approached shared values and cultural similarities. This evolution highlights how shared experiences can create spaces for dialogue and understanding, bridging differences and contributing to social cohesion. Further, the findings show that dance can function not only as a tool for



integration but also as a potential antidote to cultural prejudice, making both theoretical and practical contributions to a broader discourse on migration and inclusion.

Thus, dance represents as a powerful tool for bringing individuals together in both cultural and emotional contexts.

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