

Chapter 5

Interpreting the Data

5.1 Introduction

The questionnaires were the main instrument for data collection. In sum the outcomes of the questionnaires reflect the perceptions of 755 respondents over three interventions. These perceptions are reflected on the bar graphs, tables and graphs presented in this chapter. The first and second interventions (I₁ and I₂) took place in 2006 and data obtained through these two interventions (631 respondents) should be regarded as the core of the survey. The third intervention (I₃) occurred in 2008 and was launched on a much smaller scale. The purpose of a third intervention was to serve as 1) a yardstick for assessing the sustainability of the Absa choir project through comparing the 2006 outcomes to outcomes obtained two years further into the AICF process; 2) a means of triangulation in the research and 3) a way of ensuring that the research study remains actual and current upon completion. The I₃ data is based on the perceptions of 124 respondents.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections, A, B and C. In section A, background information was obtained to establish respondent profiles. Section B tested AICF participants' experiences of the AICF in terms of six factors (objectives of the AICF) identified by Absa. In section C three open-ended questions allowed respondents to express their personal views on what they considered to be obstacles, achievements and benefits to the individual in the AICF.

Due to the large number of graphs utilised to reflect the outcomes of Section A and B of the questionnaire, graphs (and supplementary tables clarifying data in graphs) are numbered as *figure 1-55b*. A sequential index of all graphs and tables found in Chapter 5 is provided at the end of the document (Appendix 2).

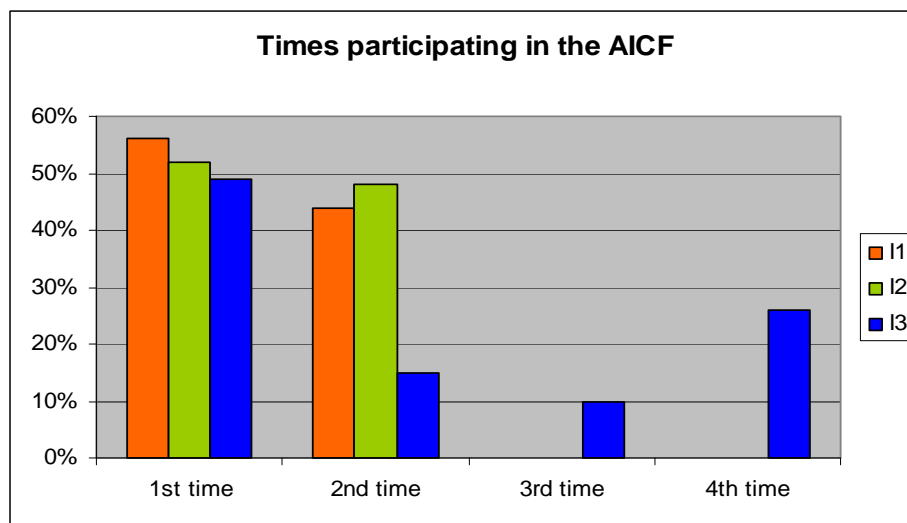
5.2 Section A: Background information on AICF participants

Absa is a major national organisation in South Africa. It is therefore not surprising that their staff consists of people representing a wide range of age, race, language and post-level groups working in almost every conceivable region in the country. In Section A of the questionnaire, questions were aimed at establishing a profile of AICF participants re age, gender, ethnicity, home language, post level and number of times participating in the choir project. In 2008 (I₃) the questionnaire was administered only to a sample per choir, whereas entire choirs were involved in I₁ and I₂¹⁹.

The mean for each group was obtained through the Frequency Procedure. The means of the outcomes to the questions in Section A are reflected in the bar graphs.

- **How many times have you participated in the AICF?**

Figure 1: Number of times respondents have participated in the AICF

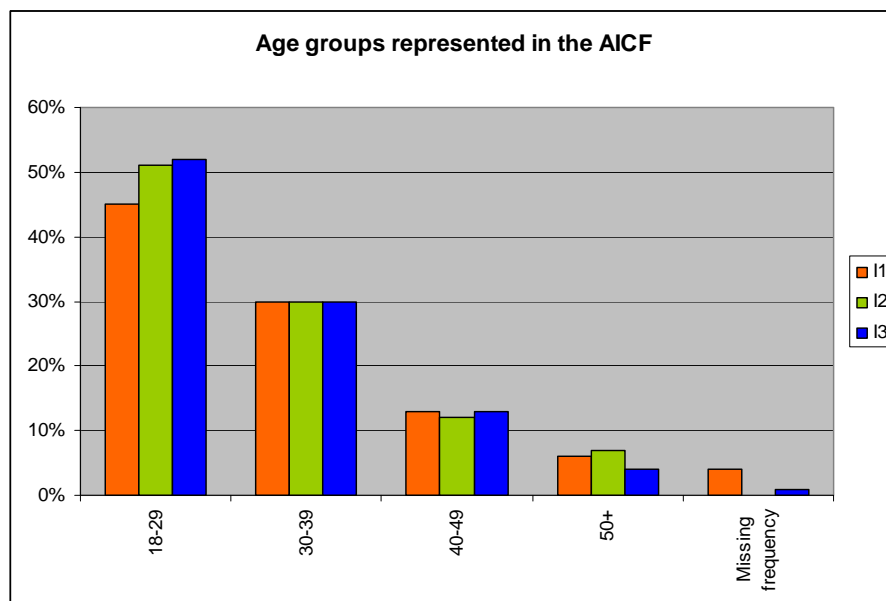


¹⁹ This could affect the profile obtained through the I₃ sample in terms of actual percentages of specific age/race/post level groups in the 2008 Absa choirs.

The indication that no less than half of the AICF participants choose to participate again (with a significant number singing for a third and fourth year) bears evidence to the value of Absa’s choir project to their staff. It also confirms that choir projects, such as the AICF, could be a sustainable enterprise.

What is your age in completed years?

Figure 2: AICF age profile



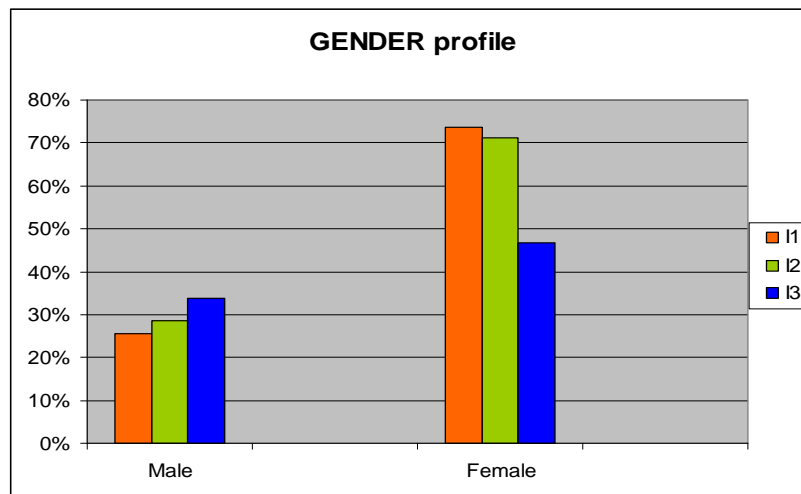
In view of the huge commitment involved in choral singing, the high prevalence of younger people singing in Absa choirs could possibly be understood in terms of a lesser amount of family responsibility – and probably more energy.

- **What is your gender?**

The following graph (*figure 3*) shows that over four years since the inception of the AICF, there has been an increase in the number of men participating in the choir project, resulting in a more balanced gender representation. Choir trainers have, for reasons that

are understandable, welcomed this tendency: more male voices allow for better balanced choirs; greater choice when it comes to selecting own choice works; and better presentations of the prescribed Absa song where, in the absence of adequate bass voices, SATB sometimes has to be sung as SAT. Further, it also addresses superficial perceptions of music as a largely female enterprise.

Figure 3: AICF gender profile

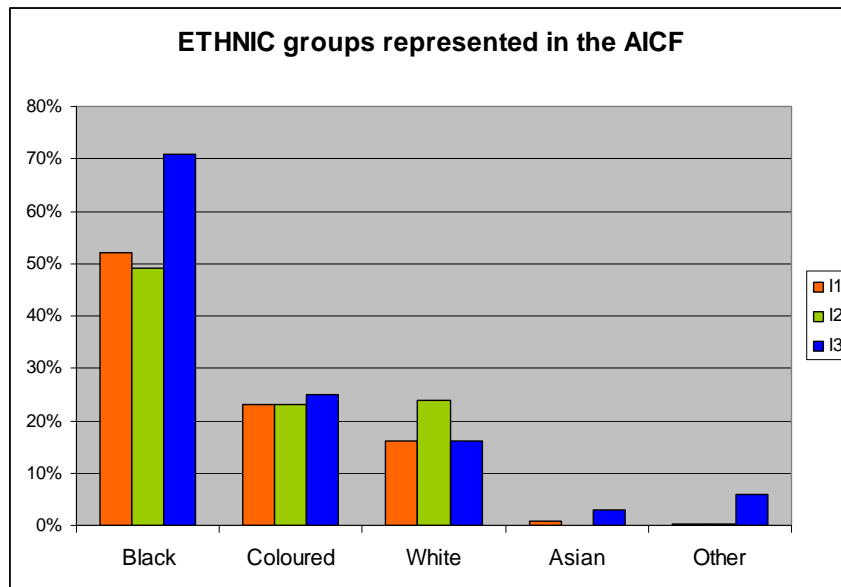


- **To which ethnic group do you belong?**

The graph below (*figure 4*) shows that Absa employees from all ethnic groups are participating in the AICF. This offers each choir member the opportunity of getting to know people of all other ethnic groups in South Africa. The limited Asian employee participation could be related to the status of choral singing in that culture.

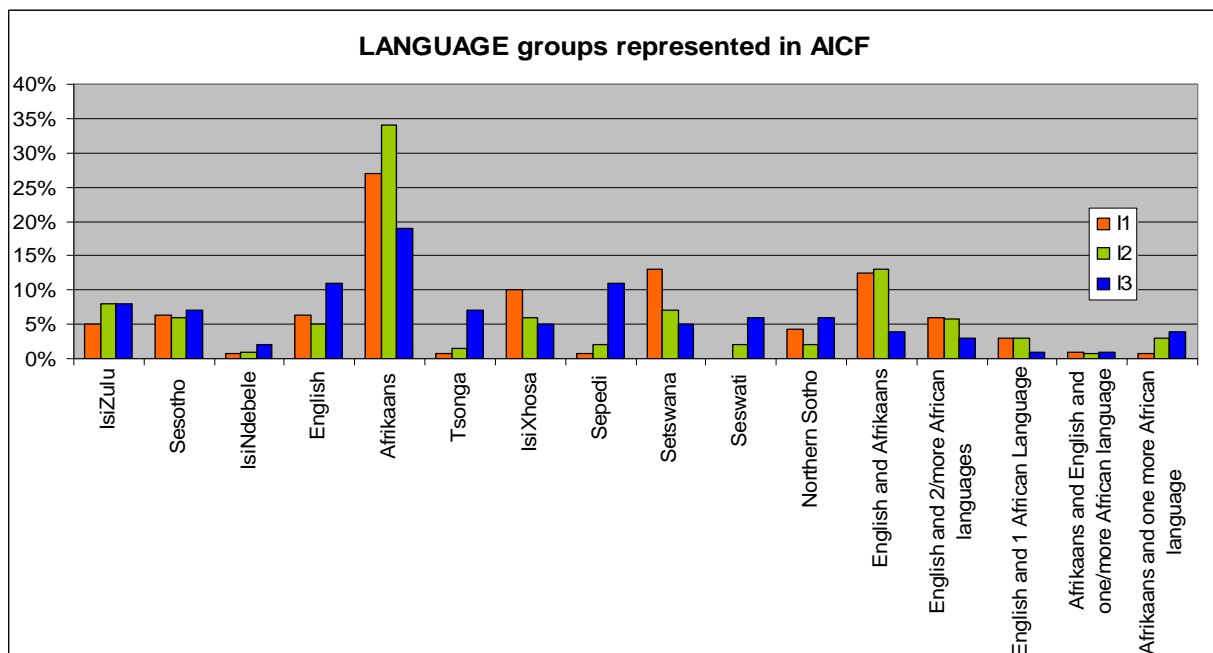
Between I2 and I3 the ethnic profile of the AICF reflects a markable increase in Black participants (49%-71%). Ideally, more White employees should be encouraged to join in future and so allow themselves the opportunity for sharing alternative communicative practices with employees of other cultures.

Figure 4: AICF ethnic profile



- What language or languages do you speak at home?

Figure 5: AICF language profile



The above graph (*figure 5*) clearly reflects the dilemma of especially Afrikaans and English speakers to access the lifeworlds of others of differing language groups due to an inability to speak their languages²⁰. Booysen (2007) notes: “Us Whites know too little about Black culture. Black people know much more about us and our culture than what we know, therefore it is our responsibility to learn”.

The wealth of cultural diversity presented in the Absa choirs is evident. This opens abundant possibilities for learning music of other cultures and sharing intercultural choral experiences. It further offers opportunities of singing songs in other South African languages, with mother tongue speakers - fellow choir members - who are available to explain the meaning of the words, give guidance on authentic pronunciation and elucidate the cultural significance and use of the song in its culture. Singing songs in an unknown language is also a good way to overcome one’s fear of the unknown and embark on a journey of learning that language. In the four years of involvement in the AICF, several white Afrikaans speakers have mentioned to the writer that, after experiencing the songs of black South African cultures, they “now want to learn to speak” that language.

Of late in South Africa, a significant number of Black parents choose to send their children to English medium public or, if they can afford to do so, private schools. This could account for the notable percentage of respondents indicating that they speak English and one or more African languages at home.

- **What post level in Absa are you employed at?**

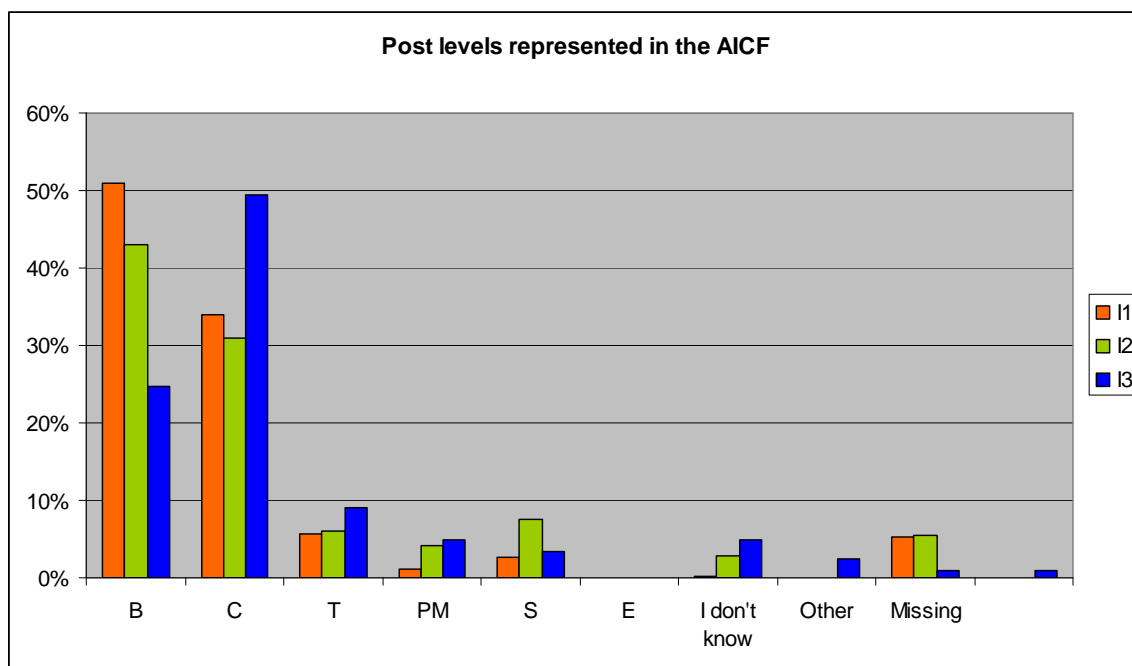
The Absa choirs allow employees over all levels of employment to associate together in a choir with a common goal. There is no differentiation based on status in a choir. In the AICF the conductor is often a choir member who is employed at level B, leading the choir which includes Junior and Middle Management staff.

²⁰ The question inquired about languages spoken at home – locally it is to be expected that participants can speak other languages. However, in South Africa only a very small percentage of White people can speak Black African languages.

Figure 6a: Post levels in Absa Bank

Description of Absa Post-levels	
B	Entry-level
C	Next level
T	Junior Management
PM	Middle Management
E	General Manager
F	Managing Executive
G	Director

Figure 6b: Post level profile of AICF participants



The above indicates that between 2006 and 2008 there has been an increase in representatives of the higher post levels C, T and PM participating in the AICF.

5.3 Section B: Factors

This section of the questionnaire examined the value of the AICF for facilitating human development re the following six factors identified in collaboration with AICF management and Human Resources department:

- **Fun (FUN)** - Did employees perceive participating in this initiative as an enjoyable experience?
- **Proudly Absa (PABSA)** - Has this project instilled an increased sense of corporate pride?
- **Cultural Diversity (CDIV)** - Through participating in this project, did participants perceive they had benefited from this teambuilding and transformation initiative?
- **Teambuilding (TBUILD)** - Through participating in this project, did participants perceive they had benefited from this teambuilding and transformation initiative?
- **Improved Cross-departmental collaboration (CDEPT)** - This factor relates to the sub-question on teambuilding and transformation.
- **Absa does indeed view its staff as “its most important asset” (MIMPAS)** - Does this project instil in employees a sense of being valued as important individuals?

Respondents indicated their views on forty-five “questions” - posed as statements - relating to the six factors. These Likert scale options were provided in order to simplify the process:

- 1 = *I most strongly disagree*
- 2 = *I strongly disagree*
- 3 = *I slightly disagree*
- 4 = *I slightly agree*
- 5 = *I strongly agree*
- 6 = *I most strongly agree.*

Arranged per the groups identified in Section A, the graphs below reflect the means obtained through the T Test for Section B. The Standard Error²¹ (estimated deviation or error in the method) is indicated in the table on the right. The T Test results for Section B of the questionnaire are presented on the graphs below. For each factor, seven graphs illustrate the mean for the factor, as allocated per the seven groups in Section A.

Please note:

1. Concluding each section/factor, a graph illustrating the mean (*m*) of the summative ratings for that factor is presented. Additionally, the actual mean and the Standard Error of the mean (SEM) - estimated deviation or error in the method - is indicated in a supplementary table with each ‘summative graph’; and
2. Due to the large number of languages and combinations of languages presented in the AICF, these languages are indicated as numbers in the graphs illustrating each of the six factors as per *Language*. The following tables indicate the languages represented by these numbers:

1. IsiZulu	2. Sesotho	3. IsiNdebele	4. English	5. Afrikaans	6. Tsonga	7. IsiXhosa
---------------	---------------	------------------	---------------	-----------------	--------------	----------------

8. Sepedi	9. Setswana	10. Seswati	11. Northern Sotho	12. English and Afrikaans
--------------	----------------	----------------	-----------------------	------------------------------

13. English and two or more African languages	14. English and One African Language	15. Afrikaans, English and one or more African language	16. Afrikaans and one or more African languages
--	---	--	--

²¹ The Standard Error of a statistic is the standard deviation of the sample distribution of that statistic. Standard errors are important because they reflect how much sampling fluctuation a statistic will show (Hyperstat Contents 2008).



Abbreviations used in this section:

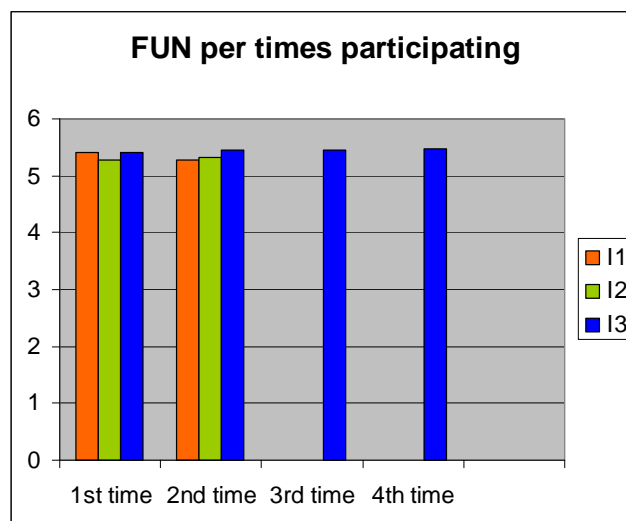
- **EC:** Eastern Cape
- **FS:** Free State
- **GP:** Gauteng
- **GPN:** Gauteng North:
- **KZN:** KwaZulu-Natal
- **LP:** Limpopo
- ***m*:** Mean
- **Mpu:** Mpumalanga
- **NC:** Northern Cape
- **N.p.i:** Did not participate in this intervention
- **NW:** North West
- **P:** Province
- **SEM:** Standard Error of the Mean
- **WC:** Western Cape.

The following pages review the outcomes of the investigation of the AICF pertaining to the six factors examined - 1. *fun* (FUN); 2. *proudly Absa* (PABSA); 3. *cultural diversity* (CDIV); 4. *teambuilding* (TBUILD); 5. *cross-departmental collaboration* (CDEPT); and 6. *Absa does indeed view its staff as its “most valuable asset”* (MIMPAS).

5.3.1 Factor 1 – Fun (FUN)

Questions related to *Fun* explored whether singing in an Absa choir had a positive influence on participants' mood, and if they felt happier and less stressed after choir practices. The following graphs (*figure 7-14b*) reflect the respondents' evaluation of choral singing in regards to FUN by group (Section A).

Figure 7: FUN per number of times participating in the AICF



Respondents who participate year after year without fail in the AICF appear to have experienced a consistent increased sense of fun in choral singing.

As seen in *figure 8* below, Absa employees from all regions enjoyed singing in Absa choirs.

Figure 8: FUN per Absa region in South Africa

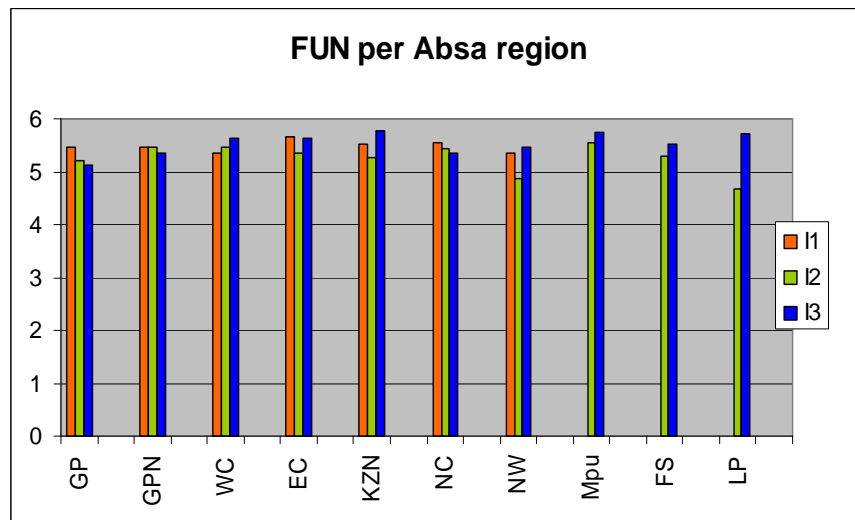
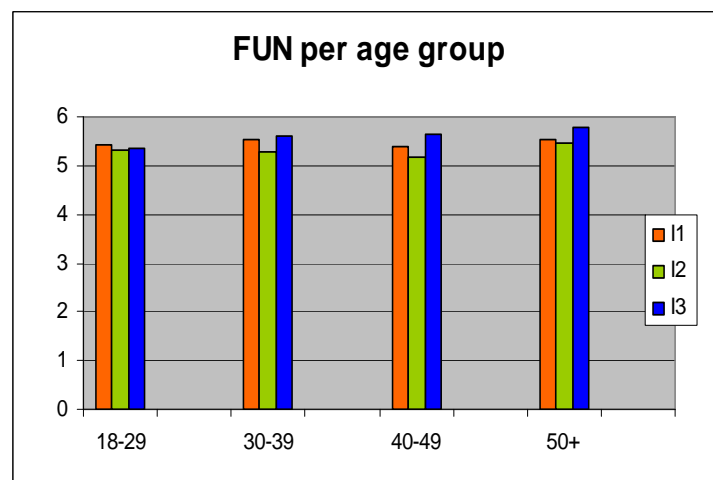
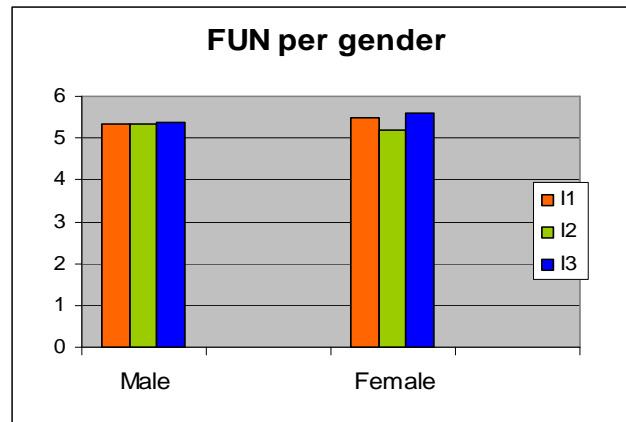


Figure 9: FUN per AICF age profile



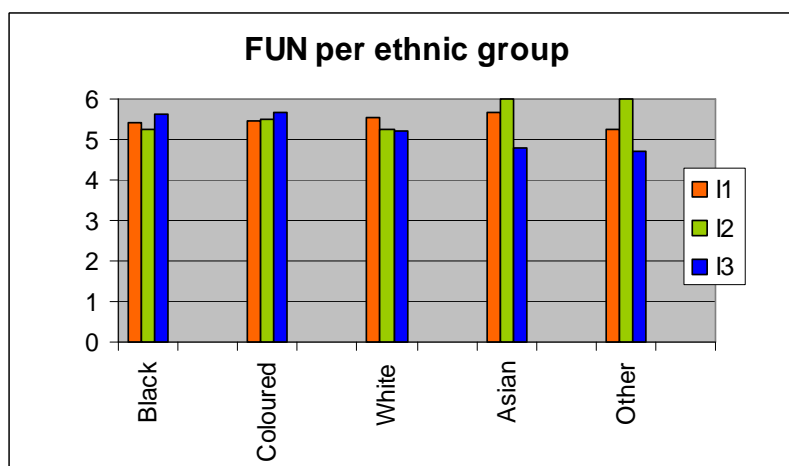
Although employees across all ages indicated that they have enjoyed their choir experience, respondents in the 50+ age category seem to have the most fun singing in choirs. Male choristers seem to have a more consistent emotional response to their choral experience.

Figure 10: FUN per AICF gender profile



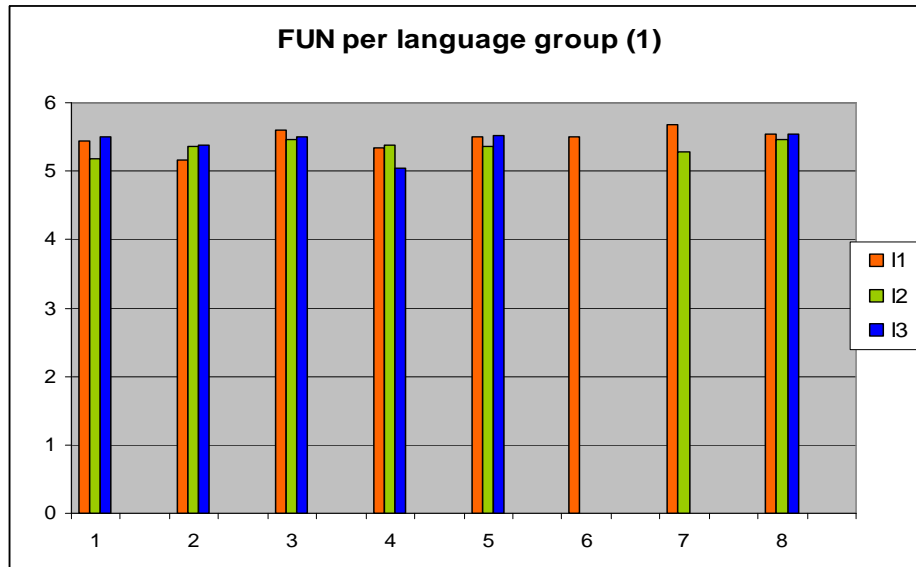
Intervention 2 occurred the day before the final Absa choir competition in 2006. It could be that the stress of the forthcoming competition was more profoundly felt by the female respondents. As suggested by one of the respondents, “us ladies are always more stressed than the men”.

Figure 11: FUN per AICF ethnic profile



It is interesting to note that, while the Asian group had the most fun in I2, they had the least fun in I3. All language groups have, however, indicated that choral singing was fun.

Figure 12a: FUN per language groups 1-8



As seen in *figure 12b* below, those who speak English and one African language -*group 14* - allocated the maximum (six out of six) for FUN in I3.

Figure 12b: FUN per language groups 9-16

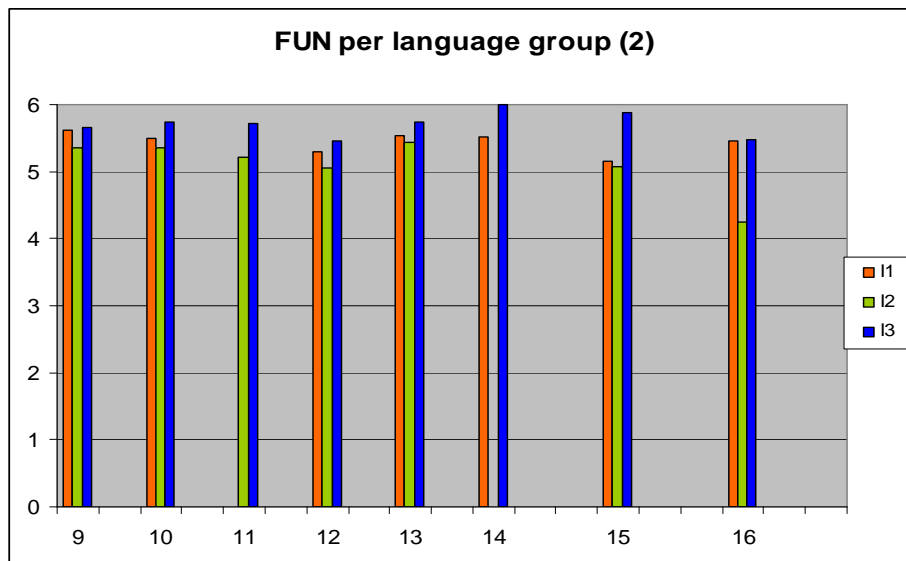
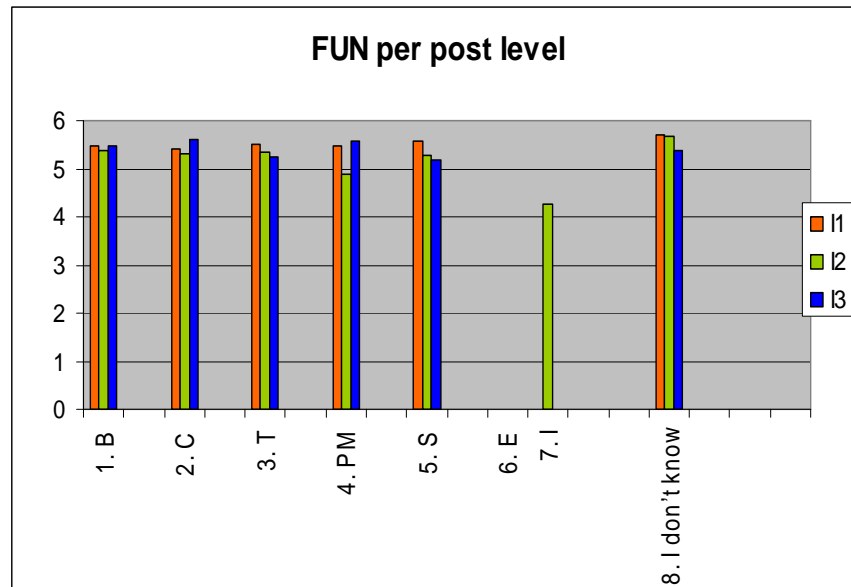


Figure 13: FUN per post level employed at in Absa Bank



AICF participants across all other post-levels appear to have experienced singing in the Absa choirs as a fun activity. The lowest score was assigned by respondents appointed on post-level I during I2 – this was the only intervention where respondents appointed at this post-level participated in the AICF, unless they chose not to participate in this survey. No post-level E employee participated in the 2006 or 2008 AICF.

The summative ratings for FUN are presented on the following graph (*figure 14a*). It is evident that AICF participants perceived participating in the choir project as an enjoyable experience.

Figure 14a: Summative ratings for FUN: I1-I3

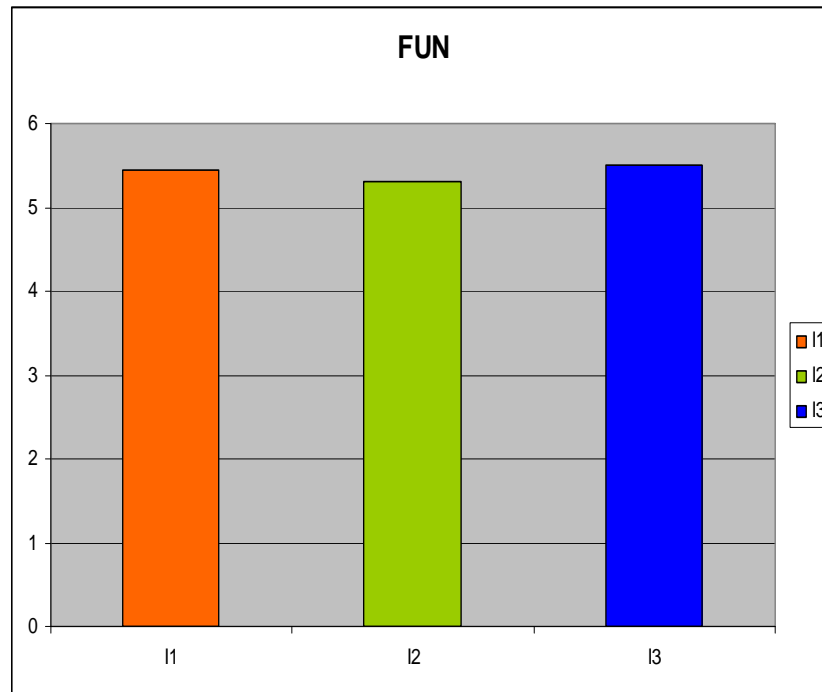


Figure 14b: Table of mean and Standard Error of FUN summative ratings

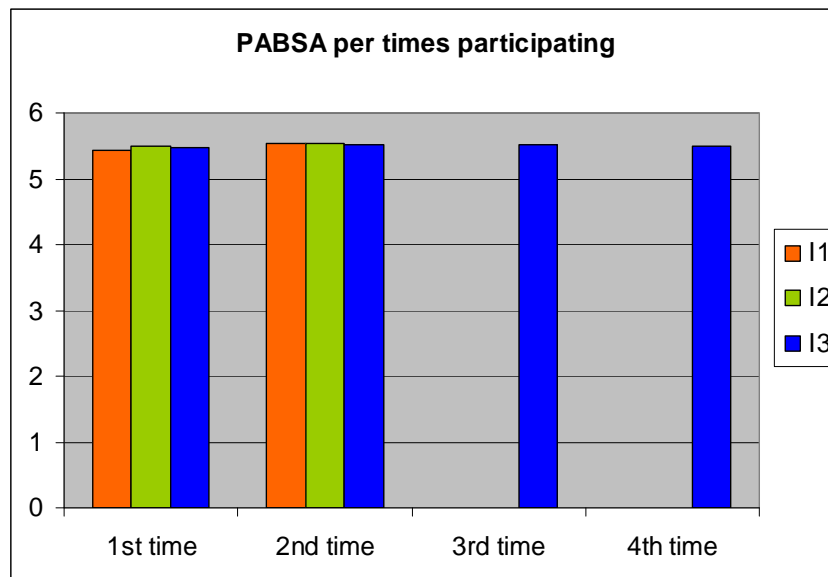
	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.45	5.3	5.5
SEM:	0.033	0.048	0.055

The overall scores for fun clearly indicate that AICF participants had a great deal of fun in the choir process. The lowest score (5.3 out of 6) was designated in I2, while the highest was in I3. This indicates that the AICF is not fading as a source of fun and stress relief – on the contrary, this factor continues to be very highly rated. The following graphs reflect the respondents’ evaluation of choral singing in regards to FUN by group (Section A).

5.3.2 Factor 2 - Proudly Absa (PABSA)

The questions relating to this factor examined if participation in the AICF produced an increased sense of pride in Absa.

Figure 15: PABSA per number of times participating in the AICF



First to fourth time participants clearly conveyed that the AICF brought about an increased sense of pride in Absa. The raise in Absa pride between interventions one and two is worthy of note as I1 and I2 occurred within two months of each other. The greater commitment that is required of each choir member, as well as the manner in which the AICF process is managed in its final phase (preparing for, and including the final event), seem to have created a genuine source of pride in Absa.

Figure 16 shows that, in all ten of the Absa provinces throughout the country, I1, I2 and I3 respondents clearly communicated that the AICF gave them reason to experience an increased sense of esteem for Absa:

Figure 16: PABSA per Absa region in South Africa

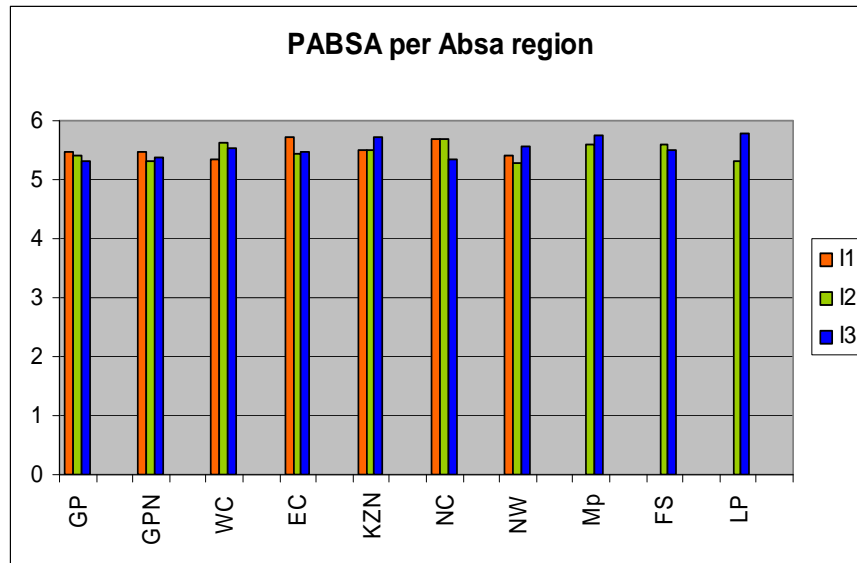
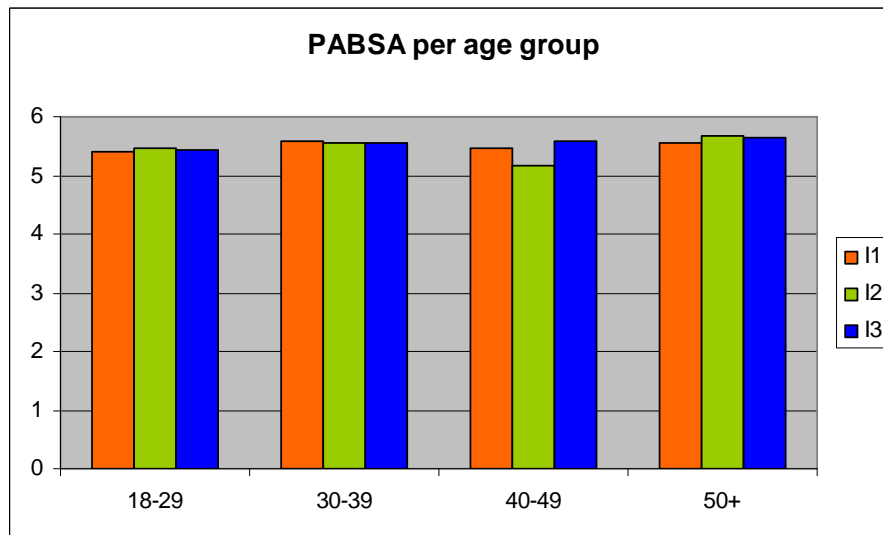


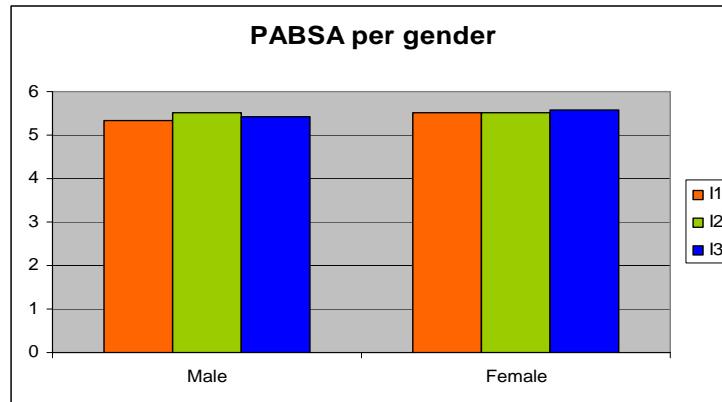
Figure 17: PABSA per AICF age profile



The above graph (*figure 17*) reflects optimistic views held by respondents re increased pride in Absa through the AICF. The choir project seems to generate a sense of pride in Absa for participants in the 50+ age group in particular. It is interesting that both the

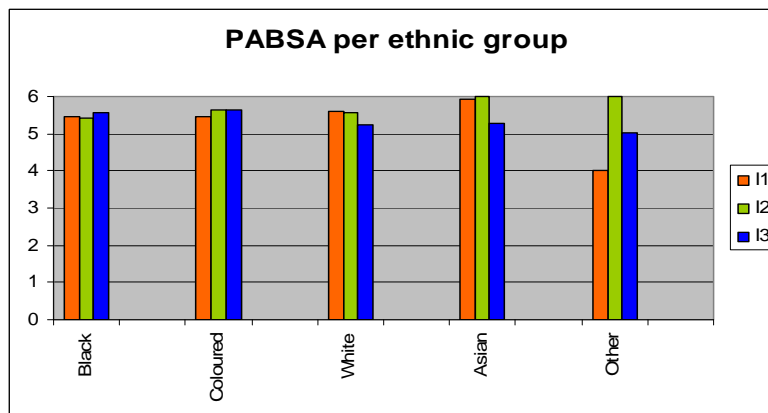
lower (40-49 age group: $m=5.16$) and higher (50+ age group: $m=5.66$) ratings for this factor were given in I2. Since this intervention took place immediately before the 2006 Finals, the question arises if people in the 40+ age group could perhaps be particularly prone to competition-related stress while the opposite is true of the 50+ age group.

Figure 18: PABSA per AICF gender profile



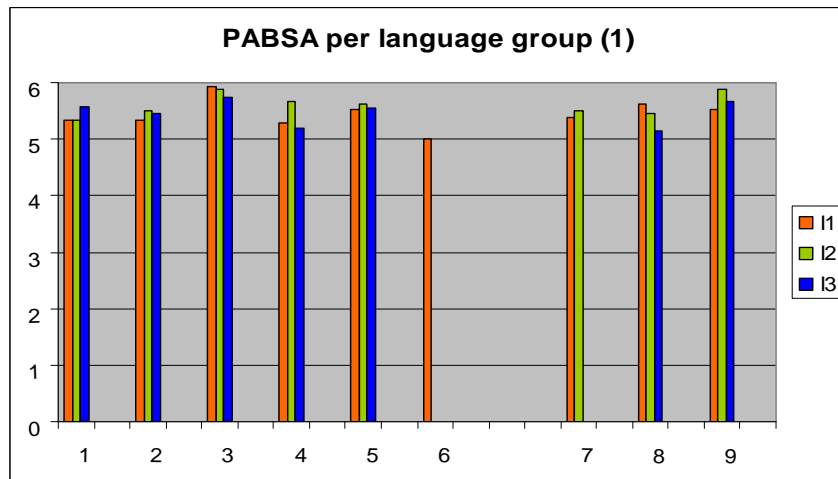
The data relating PABSA to gender exhibits a consistent ‘female perception’ of the AICF as a source of pride in Absa. This could be because a notable percentage of the men were participating for the first time. The graph below illustrates that, notwithstanding the low precedence of choral singing the Asian community, the AICF specifically afforded Asian participants an augmented esteem of Absa.

Figure 19: PABSA per AICF ethnic profile



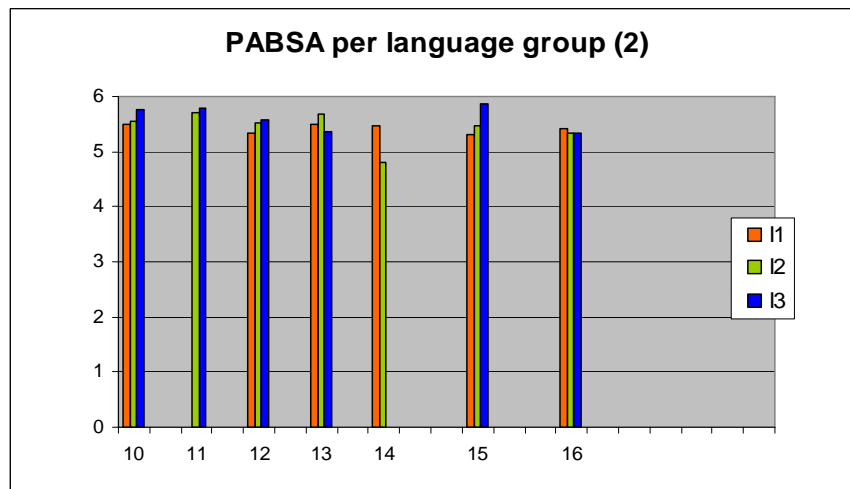
Absa employees of all ethnic groupings developed an increased sense of pride in the company through participation in the AICF. The only rating lower than 5 out of 6 was allocated in the first intervention by the “other” ethnic group of participants.

Figure 20a: PABSA per language groups 1-9



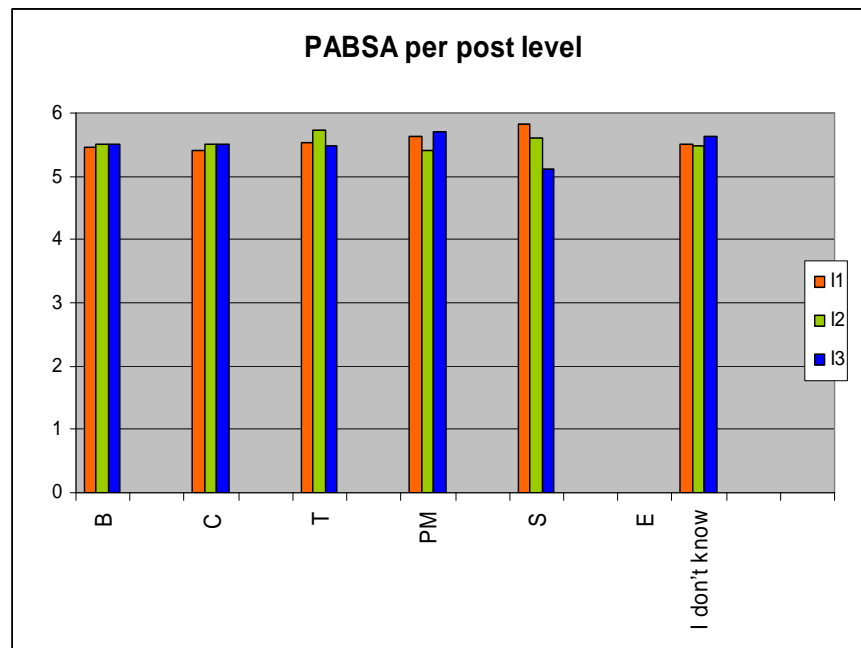
Participating in choral singing (as a communicative practice) has enhanced all AICF participants' - of language groups 1-16 - esteem for their organisation.

Figure 20b: PABSA per language groups 10-16



The following graph (*figure 21*) points out that, in I1, I2 and I3, the AICF succeeded in fostering a greater sense of pride in Absa for employees across all post levels in the bank who participated in the choir project.

Figure 21: PABSA per post level employed at in Absa Bank



As illustrated in the following graph (*figure 22a*), the summative ratings for PABSA clearly shows that the AICF succeeds in fostering pride in Absa for participants in the choir project.

Figure 22a: Summative ratings for PABSA: I1-I3

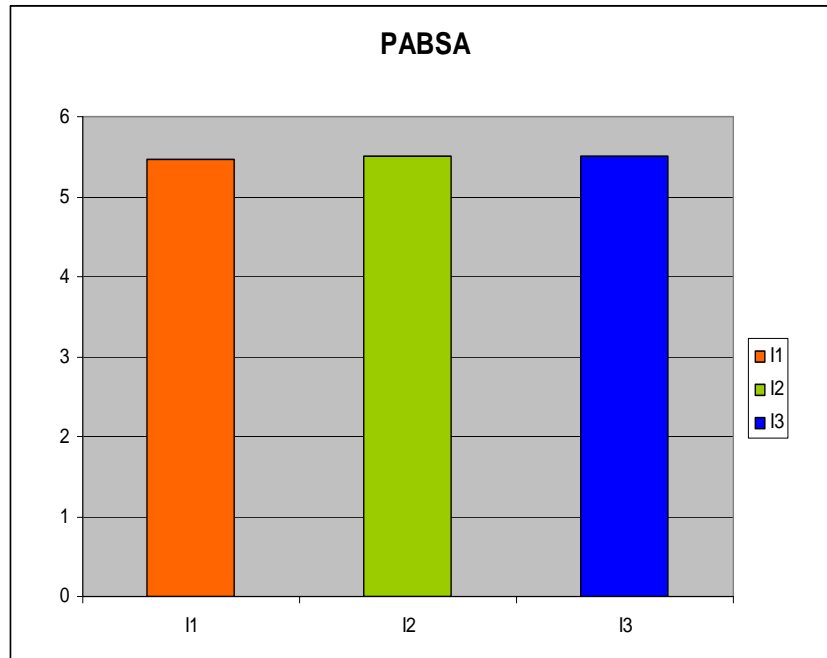


Figure 22b: Table of mean and Standard Error of PABSA summative ratings

	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.47	5.51	5.5
SEM:	0.033	0.048	0.055

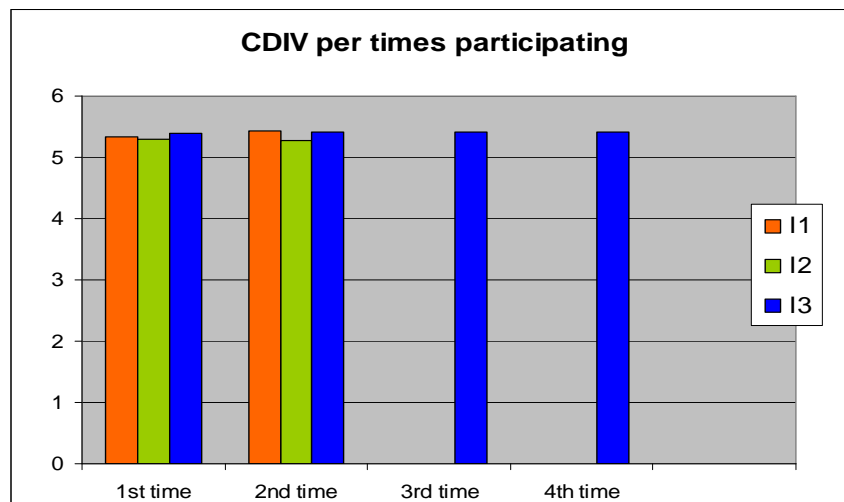
An increasingly positive perception of the AICF as a source of Absa pride has been established since I1. The reality is that even in I1 the score for this factor ($m = 5.47$) was undeniably high. It is clear that a choir project such as the AICF advances employee esteem for and pride in their company.

5.3.3 Factor 3 - Cultural Diversity (CDIV)

In South Africa the term *transformation* generally has racial implications. In Chapter 2 it was established that South Africans from differing cultural groupings need to engage in the lifeworlds of others and experience alternative communicative practices to negate superficial prejudgments of each other if true transformation is to occur in this country. Choral singing was suggested as such a communicative practice. The following graphs illustrate the opinions of AICF participants re improving understanding of differing cultures and overcoming obstacles posed by cultural diversity through choir participation.

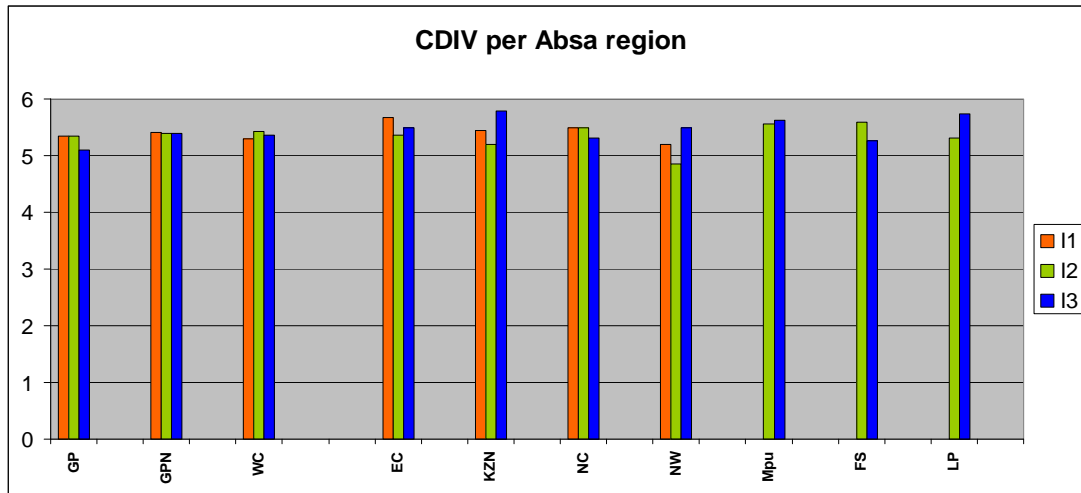
The first graph demonstrates the means of the ratings allotted to this factor by first, second, third and fourth time participants in the Absa choir project.

Figure 23: CDIV per number of times participating in the AICF



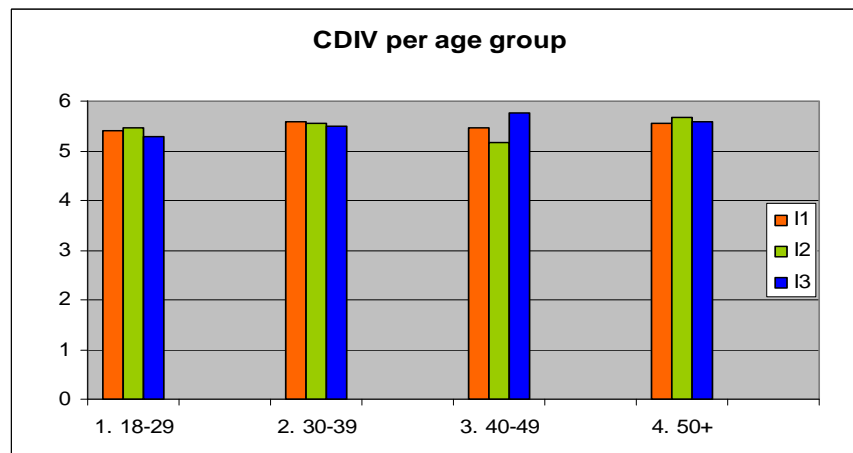
Respondents were perceived to have gained in regards to overcoming cultural hurdles through participating in the AICF. The lowest rating obtained was $m=5.28$ (I2, respondents participating for the second time).

Figure 24: CDIV per Absa region in South Africa



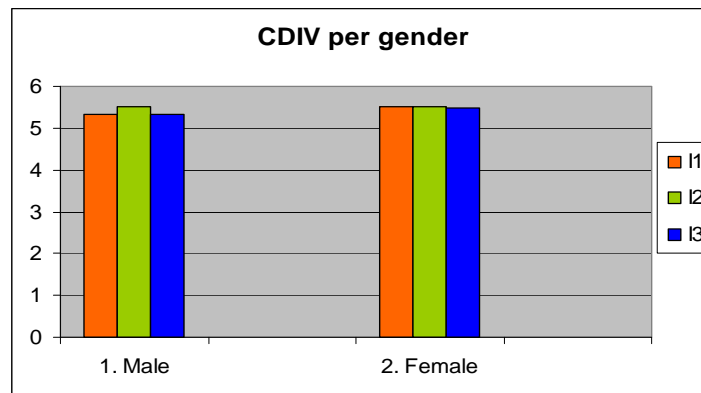
In all ten regions AICF participants seem to appreciate the role choral singing played in aiding them to develop appreciation for and relationships with people from other cultures. The overall highest score was allocated by the 2008 winners of the national competition of the AICF: KZN (I3: $m=5.79$).

Figure 25: CDIV per AICF age profile



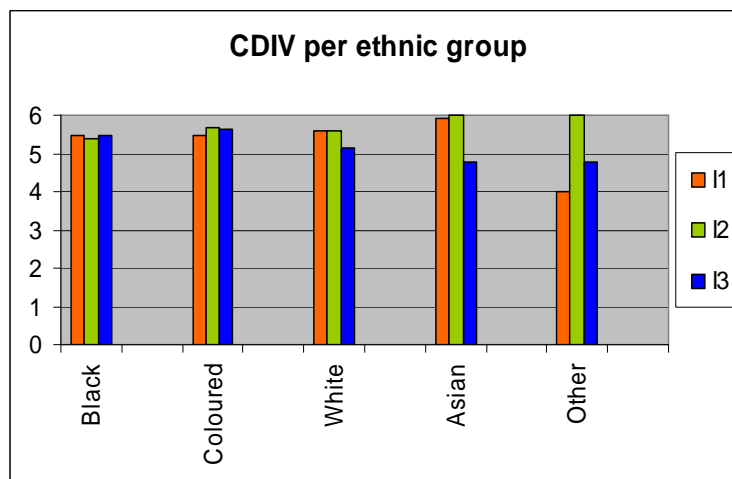
The ratings allocated by the age group 40-49 fluctuate notably. The lowest of all the ratings also occurs in this age category (I2). However, this lowest score is still indicating that respondents have indeed experienced improved relationships across cultural diversity: $m=5.16$.

Figure 26: CDIV per AICF gender profile



In their view of CDIV, male respondents seem more erratic than their female counterparts. This may indicate that female participants find it easier to form relationships with fellow choir members from differing cultures.

Figure 27: CDIV per AICF ethnic profile



The perceptions of different language groups are particularly significant to this factor, as language is an important element of culture.

Figure 28a: CDIV per language groups 1-9

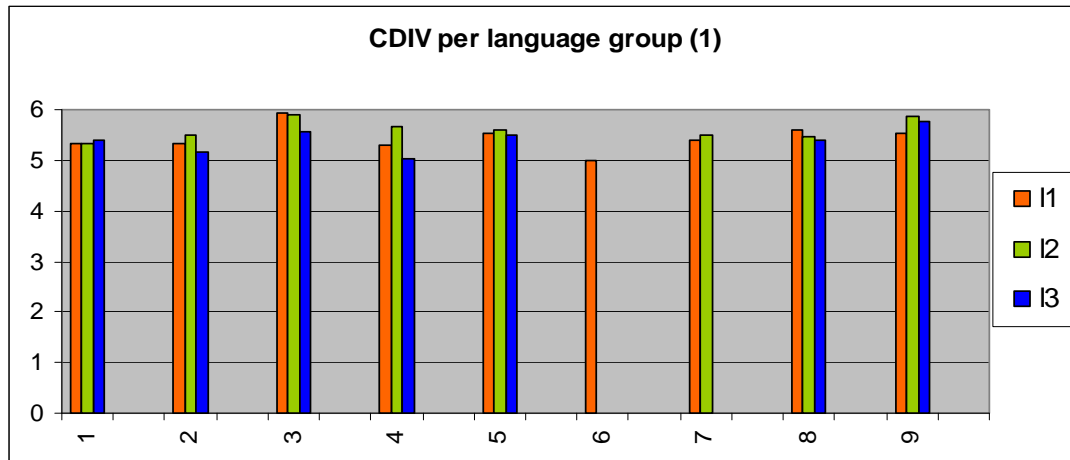
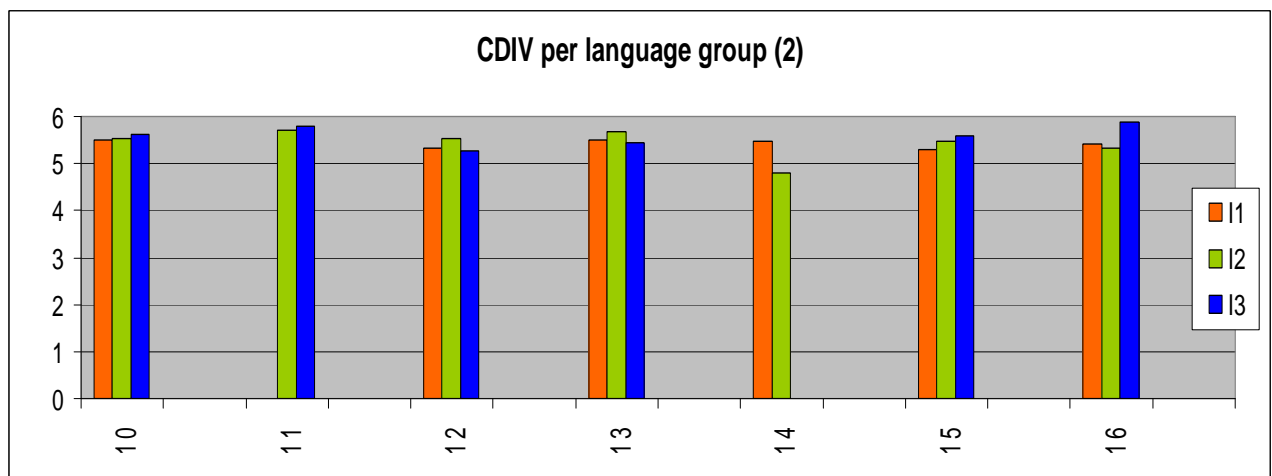


Figure 28b: CDIV per language groups 10-16

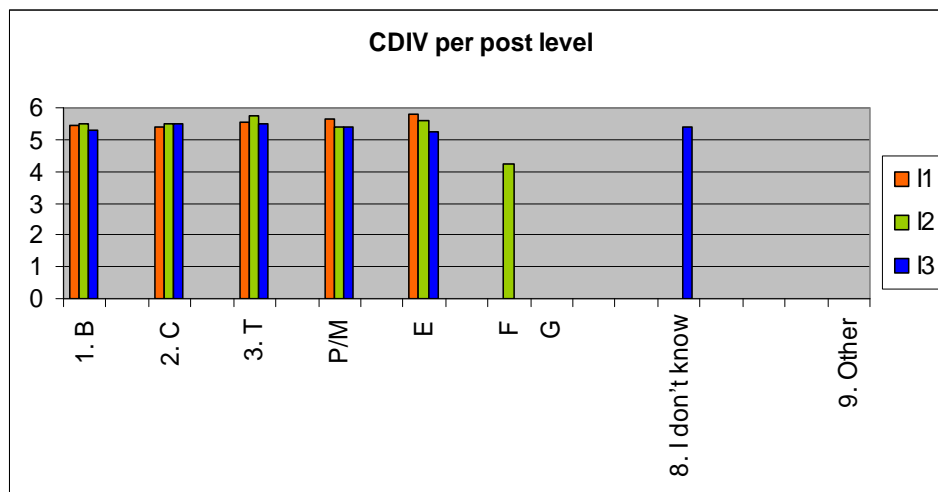


All language groups seem to perceive the AICF as an opportunity to gain better understanding of and appreciation for other cultures, and make contacts and build relationships with fellow Absa choir members from differing cultural orientation. The highest ratings were allotted by *group3*, the Ndebele (I1: $m=5.93$; I2: $m=5.89$) and *group*

9, the Tswana (I2: $m=5.88$), while the lowest ratings came from English speakers/group 4 (I3: $m=5.03$) and those indicating that they speak English and one African language at home/group 13 (I2: $m=4.81$).

When examining the ratings given to improved understanding of and respect for the range of diverse cultural backgrounds represented in the Absa work force as a result of singing together in an Absa choir, post level F respondents seemed to have evaluated this factor with more caution (I2: $m=4.25$) than any other group.

Figure 29: CDIV per post level employed at in Absa Bank



The summative ratings for CDIV are presented in *figure 30a*. This graph demonstrates that respondents experienced their choral participation as an opportunity for improved perceptions and understanding of differing South African cultures as represented in the choir.

Singing together in a choir created opportunities to build relationships with choir members from other racial and cultural backgrounds. It is significant that, through singing together in an Absa choir, participants experienced increased respect for other South African cultures and races, as illustrated in *figure 30a*.

Figure 30a: Summative ratings for CDIV: I1-I3

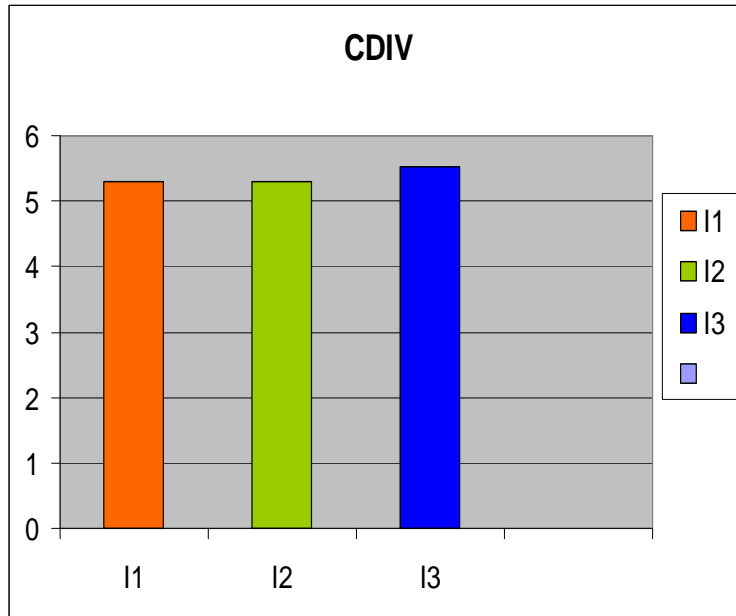


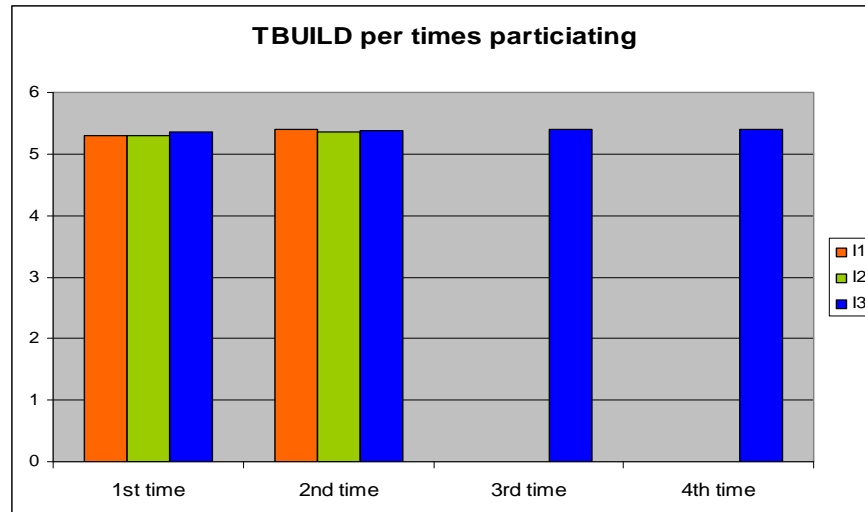
Figure 30b: Table of mean and Standard Error of CDIV summative ratings

	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.3	5.29	5.53
SEM:	0.035	0.047	0.054

The following graphs reflect the efficacy of choir participation as a tool for teambuilding.

5.3.4 Factor 4 - Teambuilding (TBUILD)

Figure 31: TBUILD per number of times participating in the AICF



Respondents – 1st to 4th time participants - recognise choir participation as a tool for teambuilding. First time participants have indicated the lowest ratings for this factor in all interventions. Respondents’ esteem for the teambuilding qualities inherent in choral singing is not diminished by repeated participation in the AICF.

Figure 32 (below) points out that AICF participants across all Absa regions reported teambuilding as a by-product of building a choir. The lowest scores for this factor were obtained in I2, allocated by North West ($m=4.82$) and Limpopo ($m=4.71$). Considering that these scores equate to 84% (North West) and 78% (Limpopo) respectively, the AICC seems to be of particular value for teambuilding in Absa Bank.

Figure 32: TBUILD per Absa region in South Africa

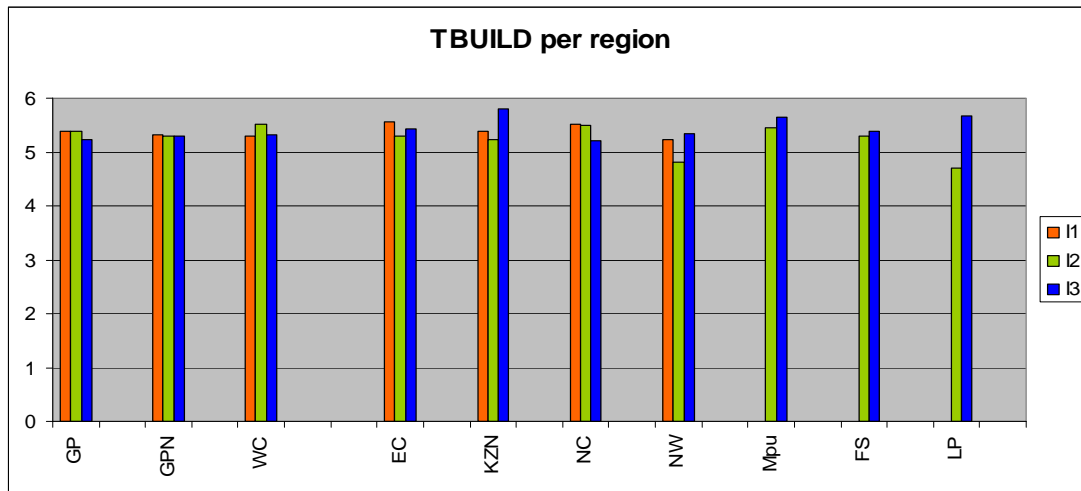
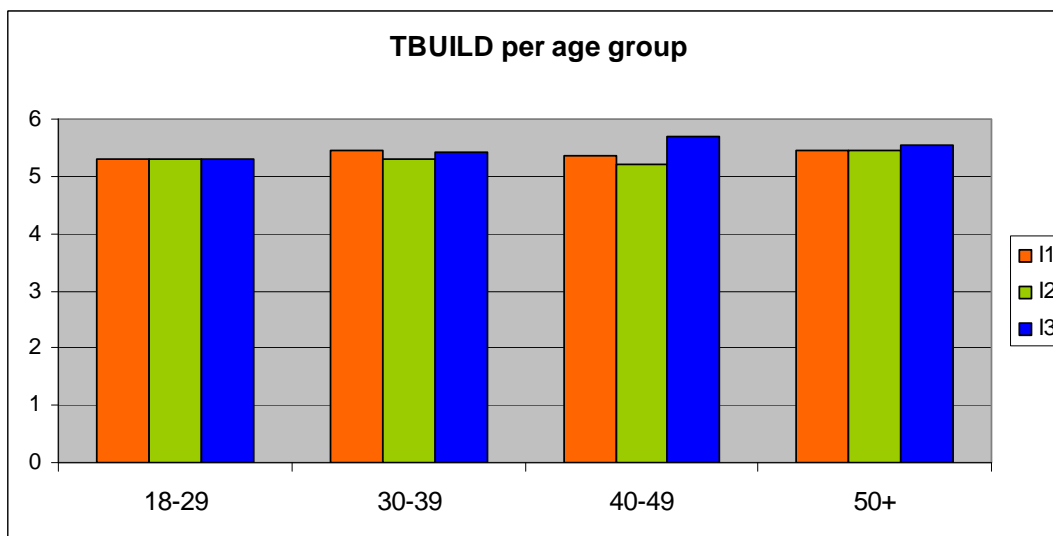


Figure 33: TBUILD per AICF age profile



Respondents in the age group 50+ indicated a consistent esteem of the value of singing in an Absa choir for teambuilding. The lowest score obtained was in I2, age group 40-49: $m=5.22$. However, significant fluctuations may appear: the lowest ratings are Male (I1): $m=5.27$; Female (I2): $m=5.28$; and the highest (Female (I3): $m=5.49$) on a scale of six.

Figure 34 illustrates that choir participants from both genders appreciated their choir participation as an opportunity for teambuilding within the greater Absa team.

Figure 34: TBUILD per AICF gender profile

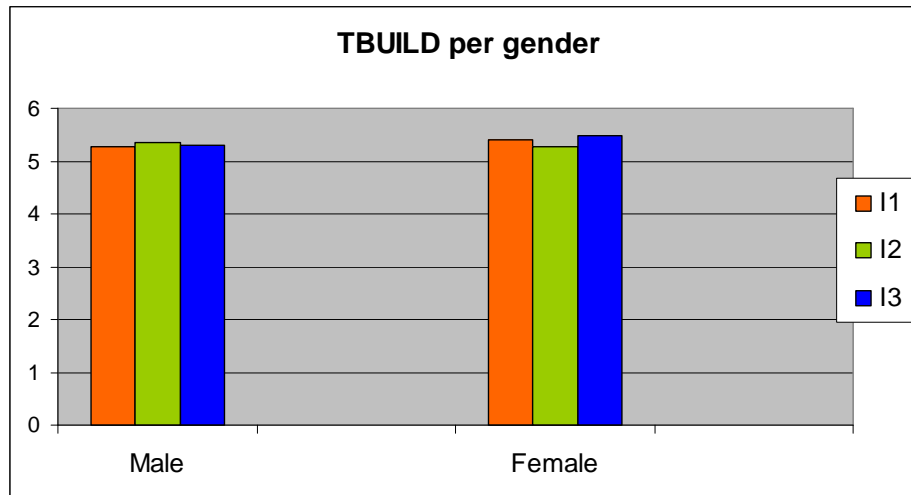
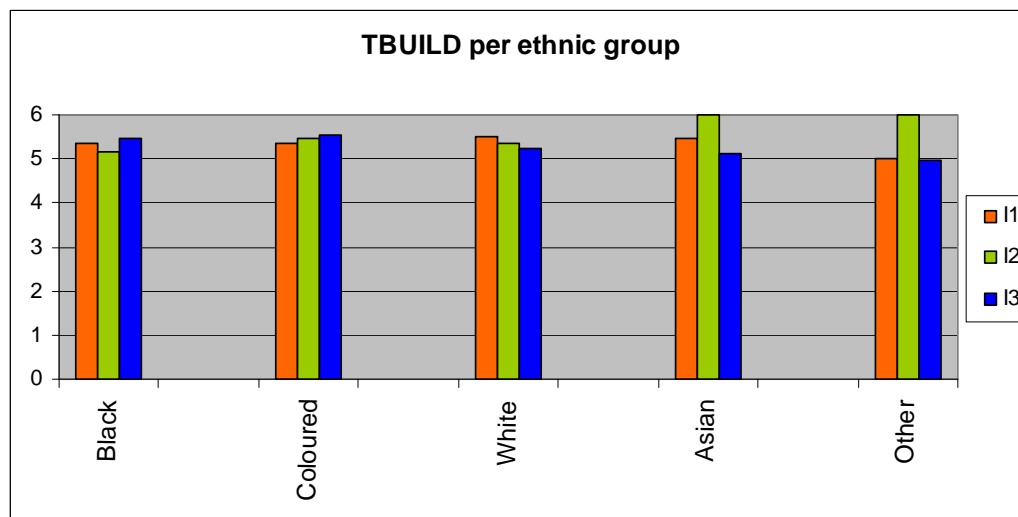


Figure 35: TBUILD per AICF ethnic profile



It is significant that all ethnic groups valued their participation in a multicultural choir as a profitable opportunity for teambuilding. In *figure 35* (I2) both Asian and “Other” ethnic groups awarded choir singing as teambuilding exercise a rating of 100% ($m=6$).

Figure 36a: TBUILD per language groups 1-9

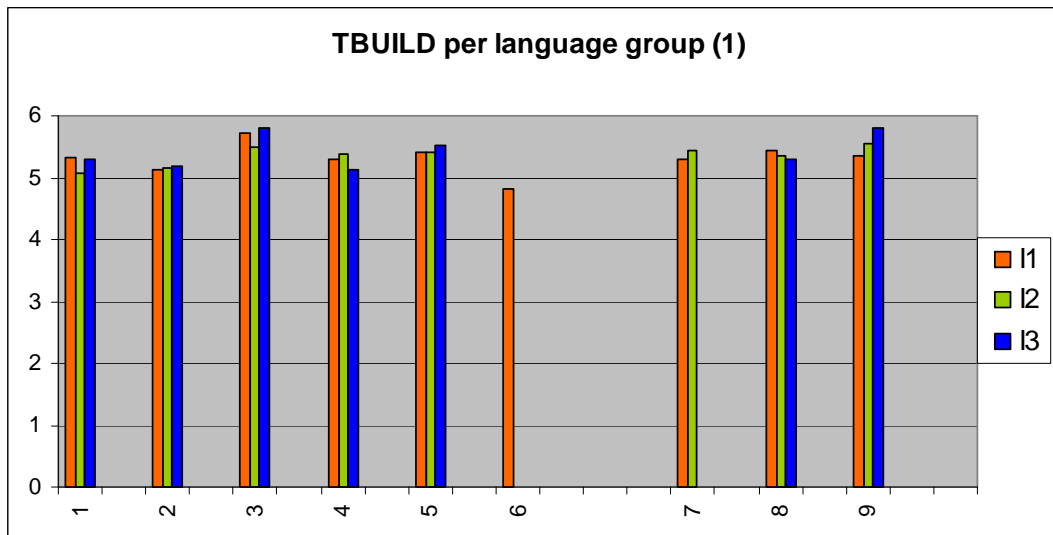
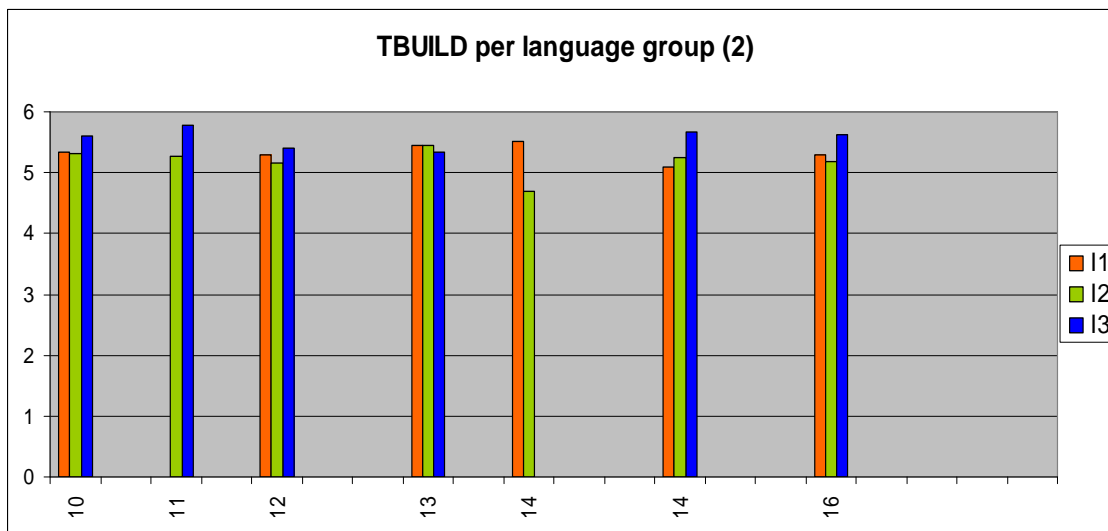


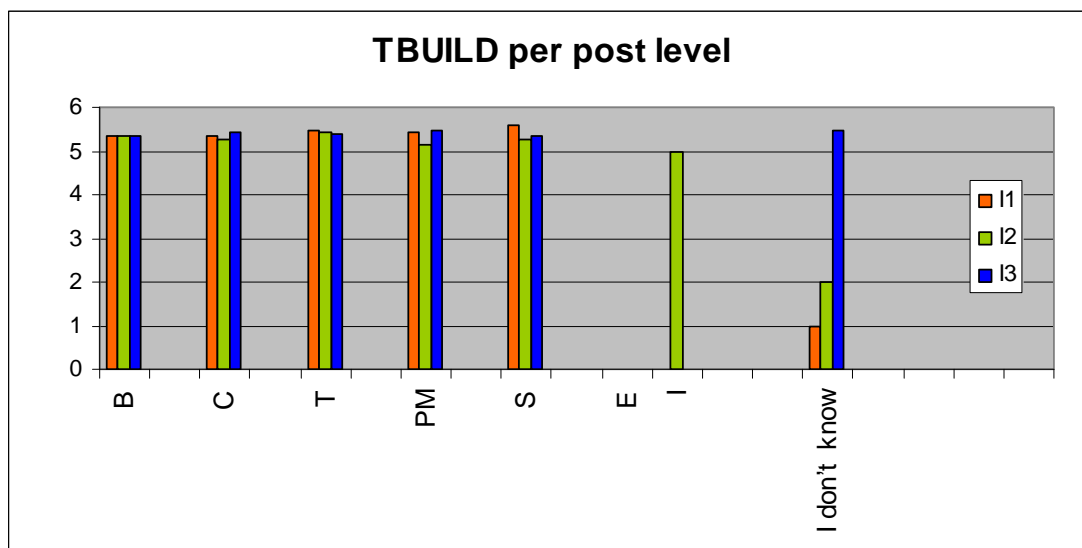
Figure 36b: TBUILD per language groups 10-16



The lowest score for TBUILD awarded by a language group was $m=4.12$: I2, by *group 13*: English and one or more African language. The highest score, $m=5.78$, was found among the Northern Sotho respondents/*group 11* in I3: *figure 36b*.

The lowest scores obtained throughout the survey were allocated for teambuilding in I1 and I2 by those respondents who were unsure of their level of appointment in Absa at the time of these interventions (see *figure 37* below). Not understanding how they fit into the greater Absa team; and/or employment insecurity could have been a determining factor in their negative perception of teambuilding through the AICF.

Figure 37: TBUILD per post level employed at in Absa Bank



The collective ratings for teambuilding as a benefit of singing in an Absa choir are illustrated in the final TBUILD graph (*figure 38a*). .

Figure 38a: Summative ratings for TBUILD: I1-I3

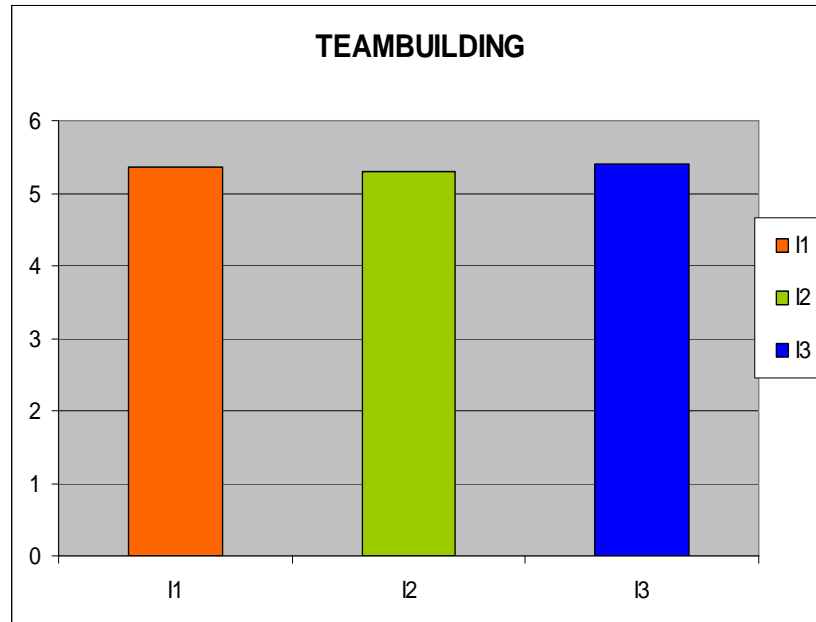


Figure 38b: Table of mean and Standard Error of TBUILD summative ratings

	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.36	5.29	5.41
SEM:	0.032	0.043	0.061

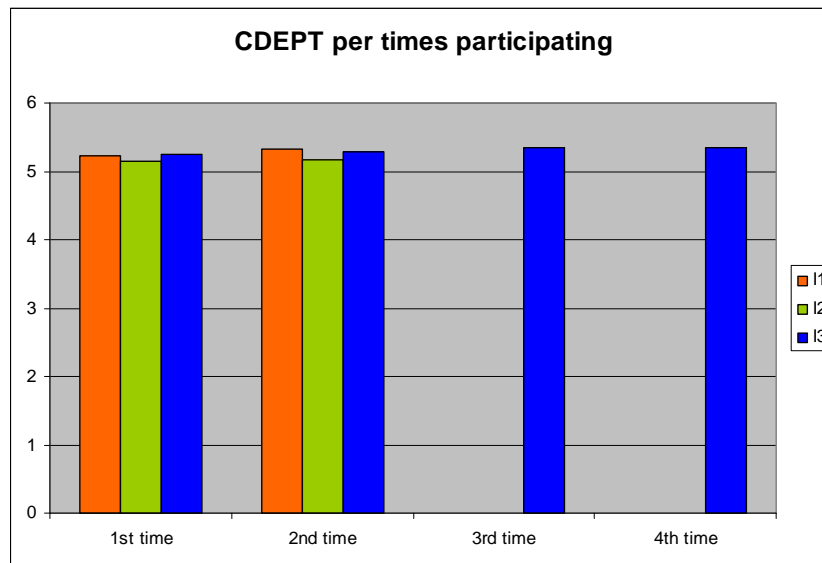
The data clearly indicates that participants experienced their choral activities in the AICF as an avenue for teambuilding. The qualitative data obtained through interviews as well as Section C of the questionnaire substantiates the efficacy of choral singing as tool for teambuilding in a corporate environment such as Absa Bank.

5.3.5 Factor 5 - Improving cross-department collaboration (CDEPT)

In a large organisation such as Absa, transactions occur across a significant number of branches, departments, business units and divisions. This factor (CDIV) is based on the hypothesis that when people associate with other employees from different business units and learn more about their work, it produces an improved global understanding of the organisation. This understanding, as well as the networks created – knowing the person on the other side of the line/screen – could facilitate better communication, cooperation and ultimately transactions in the organisation (Absa).

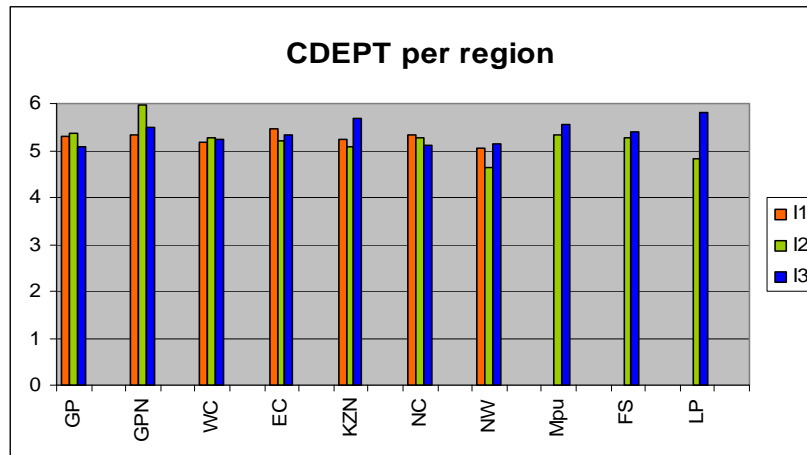
The graph below (*figure 39*) demonstrates the means of the ratings allotted to this factor by first, second, third and fourth time participants in the Absa choir project.

Figure 39: CDEPT per times participating in the AICF



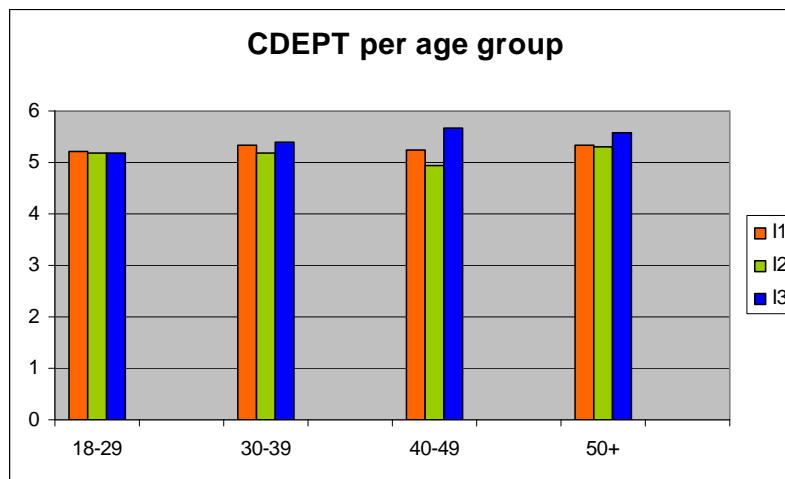
First time participants’ perceptions of the AICF as an opportunity to build networks across business divisions were least optimistic at the time of I2 ($m=5.15$). Respondents from all regions seemed to have benefited professionally by building connections through singing in choirs with Absa employees from different business divisions.

Figure 40: CDEPT per Absa region in South Africa



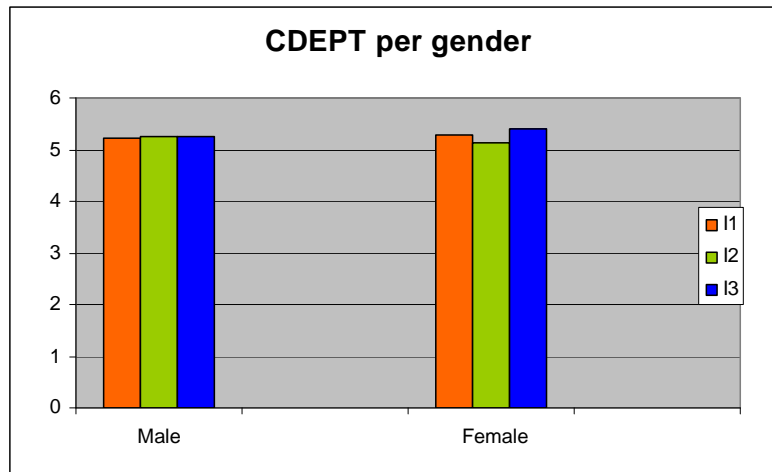
As seen in *figure 40*, Gauteng North participants seemed to have especially appreciated the value of networks built through choir for professional transaction at the time of I2: $m=5.98$.

Figure 41: CDEPT per the AICF age profile



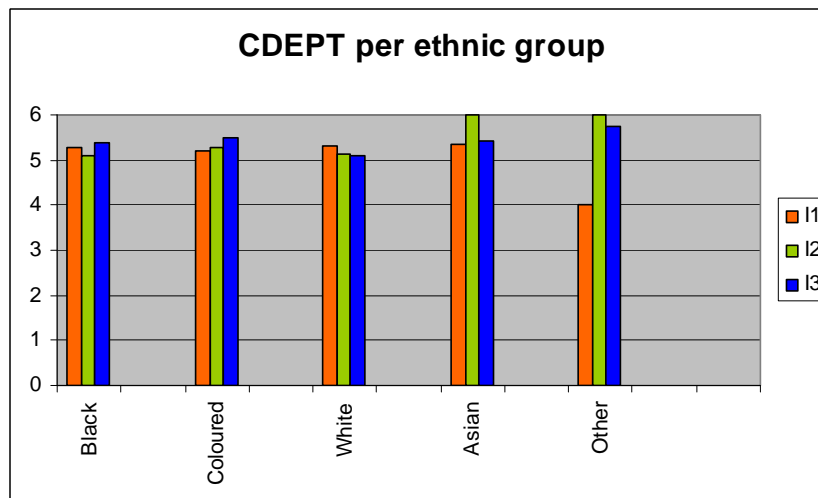
Inconsistency of opinions re the positive impact of singing in a choir with people from different business divisions upon efficiency in the work environment occurs in the age group 40-49 (see *figure 41* above).

Figure 42: CDEPT per the AICF gender profile



Female respondents display a somewhat more erratic view of CDEPT than their male counterparts (*figure 42* above).

Figure 43: CDEPT per the AICF ethnic profile



All ethnic groups seem to perceive the AICF as an opportunity to improve their professional interaction with other departments through the knowledge and relationships built with fellow Absa choir members from a wide range of departments/

branches/business units. In I2 (*figure 43*) Asian participants particularly seemed to value this aspect of the Absa choirs ($m=6$). CDEPT received the lowest rating from respondents from “other” groups in I1 ($m=4$).

Figure 44a: CDEPT per language group 1-9

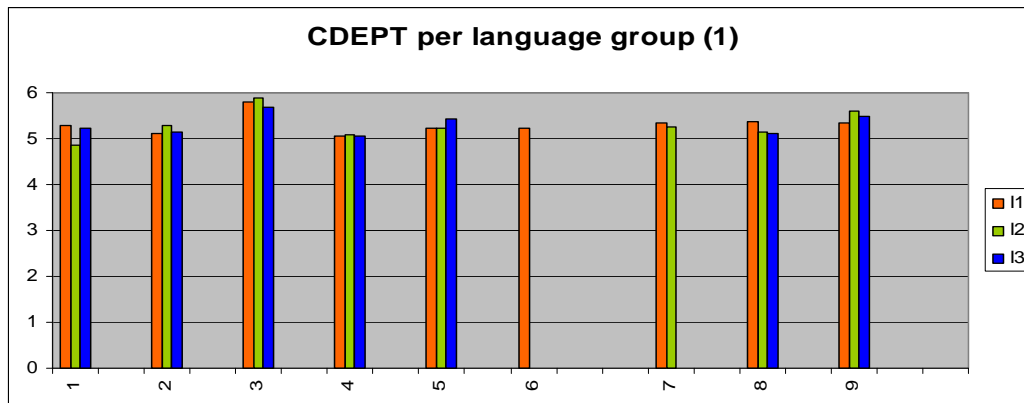
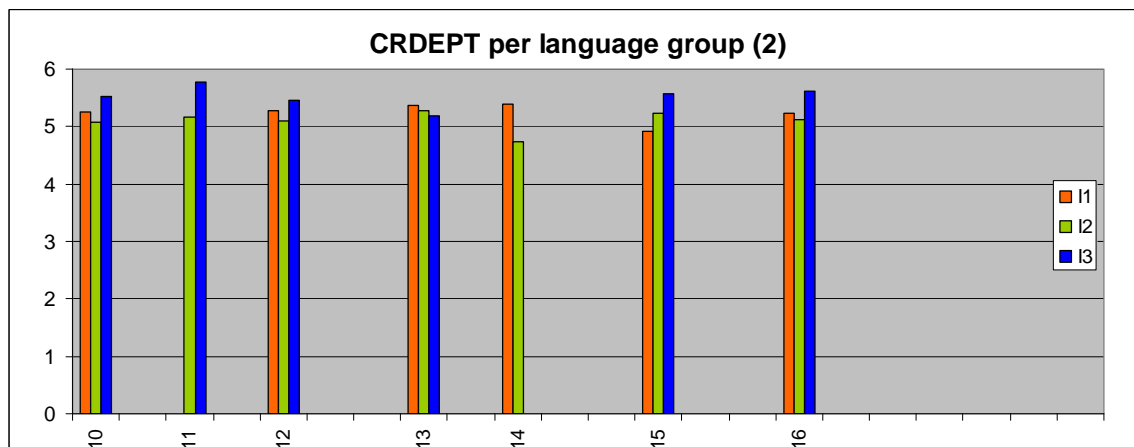
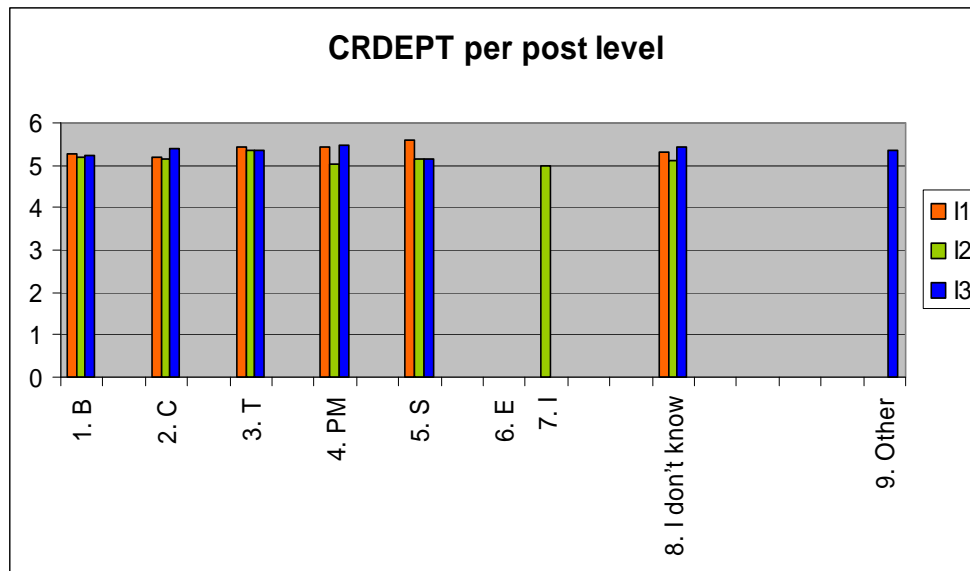


Figure 44b: CDEPT per language group 10-16



The lowest CDEPT rating, allocated in I2 by Zulu respondents/group 1, was 80% ($m=4.85$ - see *figure 44a*). AICF participants across all language groups evidently viewed the opportunity to acquaint themselves with employees from other departments/divisions (through singing together in the Absa choirs) as beneficial to their work in Absa.

Figure 45: CDEPT per post-level employed at in Absa Bank



Respondents across the range of post levels represented in the AICF seem to have valued the opportunities created through choir to establish relationships, and thus better cooperation pathways in the bank, between employees employed at differing post levels (see *figure 45* above).

The following summative ratings in *figure 46a* for factor 5 (CDEPT) demonstrate that respondents deem the networks formed through choir participation as enhancing their interactions with staff members from other departments/divisions in the bank. They thus perceive that choir participation has an advantageous impact to cross-departmental collaboration in their work.

Figure 46a: Summative ratings for CDEPT: I1-I3

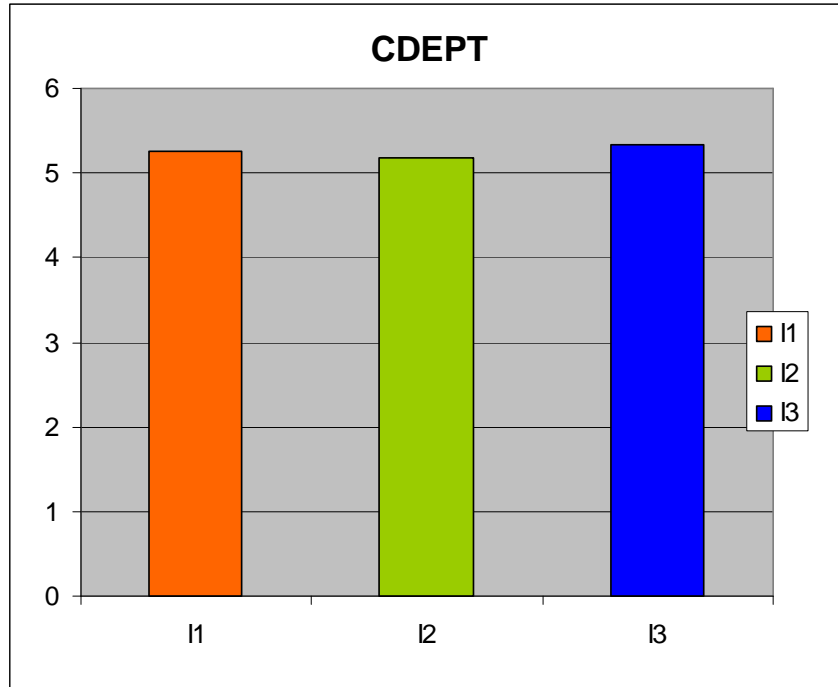


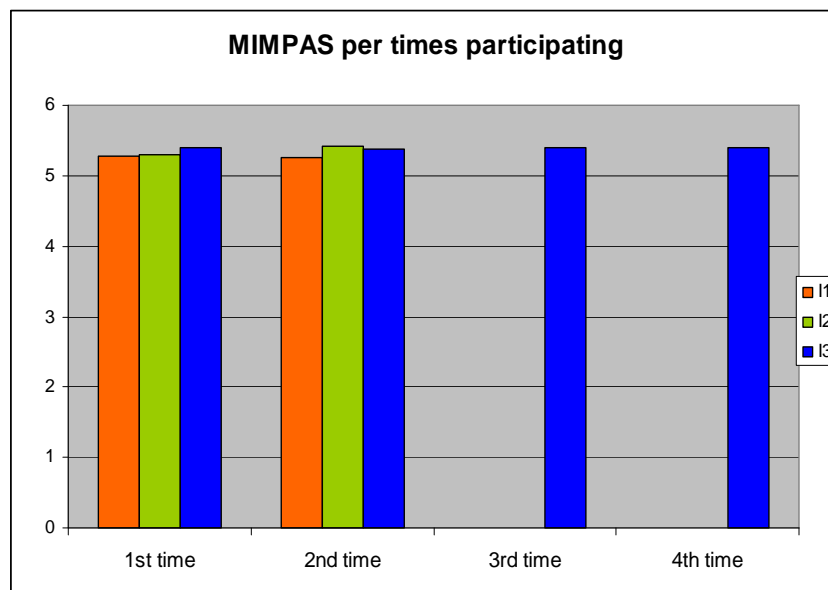
Figure 46b: Table of mean and Standard Error of C DEPT summative ratings

	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.26	5.17	5.34
SEM:	0.038	0.071	0.061

5.3.6 Factor 6 - Absa does indeed view its staff as its “most important asset” (MIMPAS)

Absa employees participating for the second to fourth time are more positive that the AICF signals Absa’s appreciation for their employees (see *figure 47* below).

Figure 47: MIMPAS per number of times participating in the AICF



The following graph (*figure 48*) shows that AICF participants across all regions in the country interprets the choir project as confirmation that Absa indeed regards its staff as its most important asset.

Figure 48: MIMPAS per Absa region in South Africa

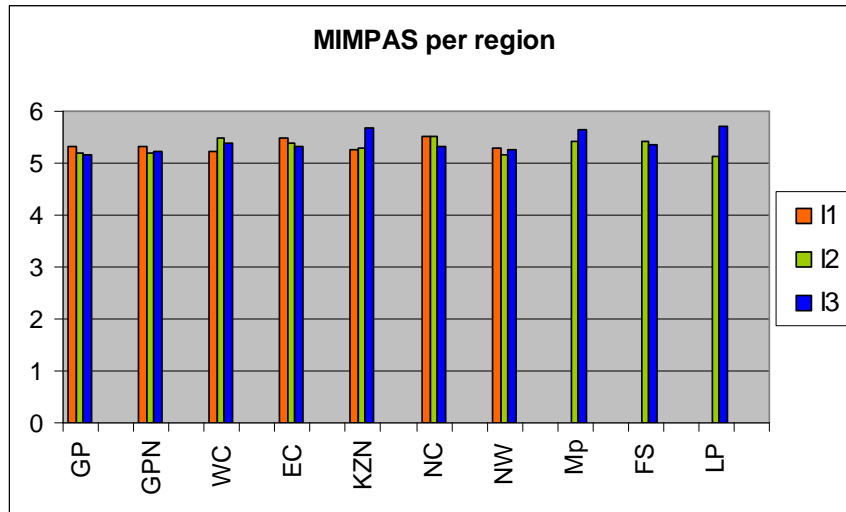
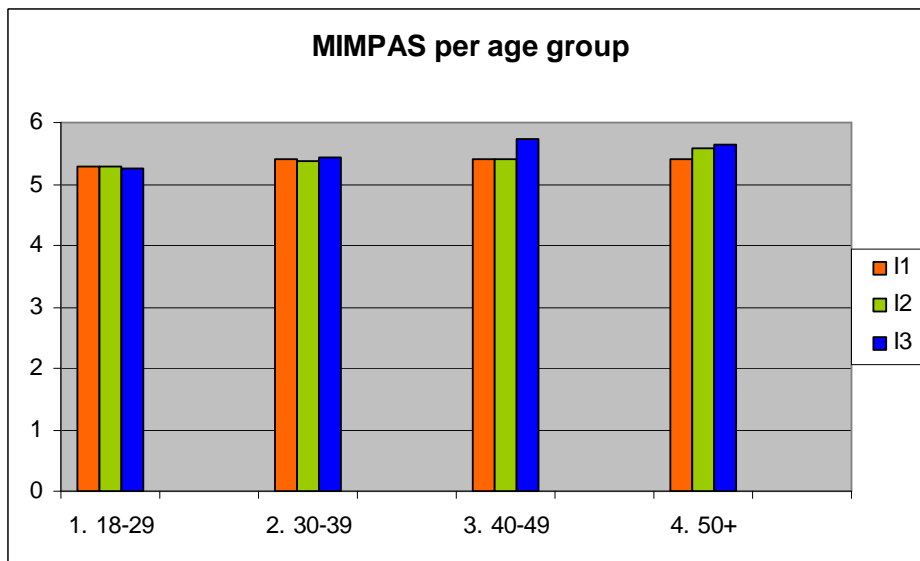
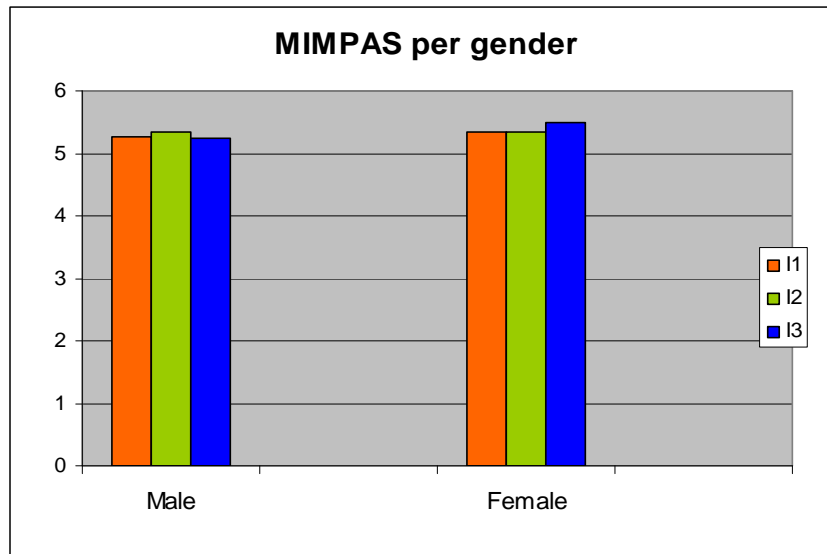


Figure 49: MIMPAS per the AICF age profile



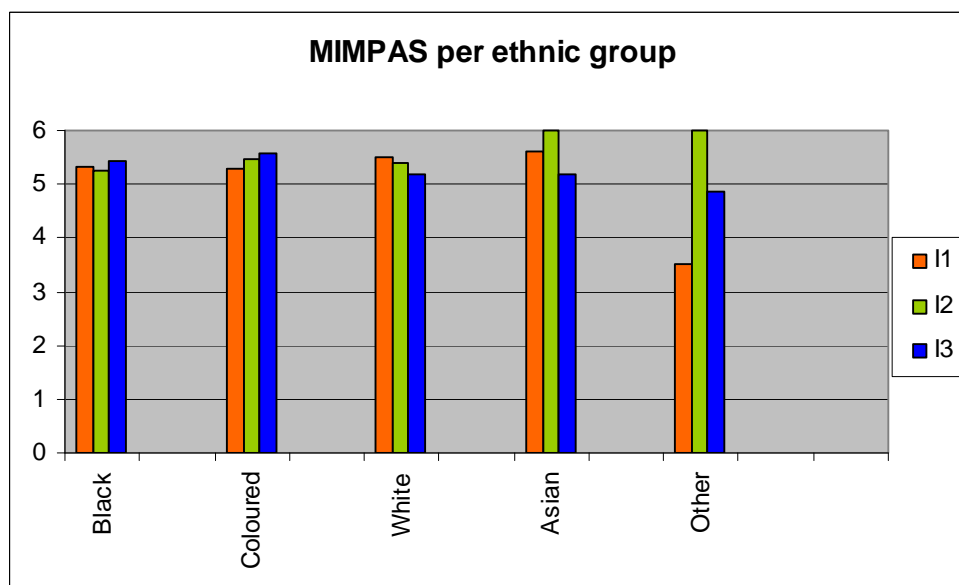
The 18-29 age group seems more critical of this factor than other groups (see *figure 49* above).

Figure 50: MIMPAS per the AICF gender profile



Data obtained from female respondents reflect that they believe that the AICF is evidence that Absa management care for the Absa staff (see figure 50 above).

Figure 51: MIMPAS per the AICF ethnic profile



As seen in *figure 51* above, all ethnic groups (including Asian – the only cultural group in the country who do not have an established choral tradition) interpreted the AICF as a symbol of their value as employees to the employer (Absa Bank).

Figure 52a: MIMPAS per language group 1-9

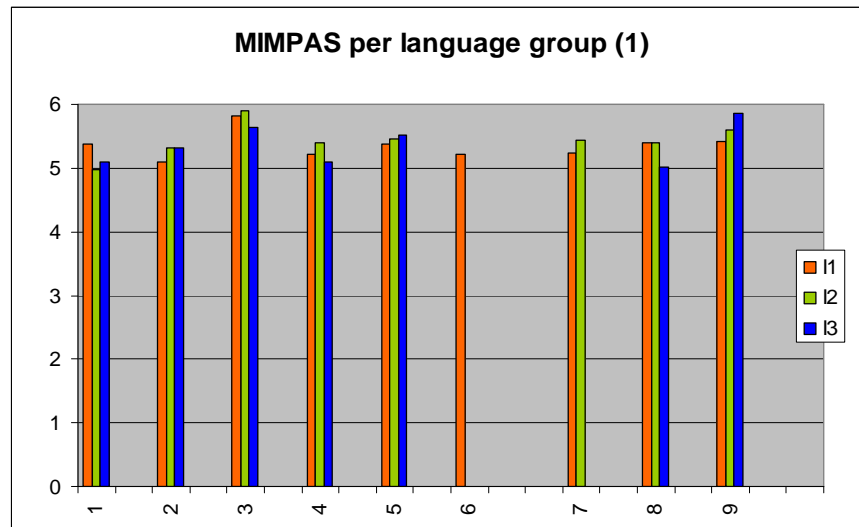
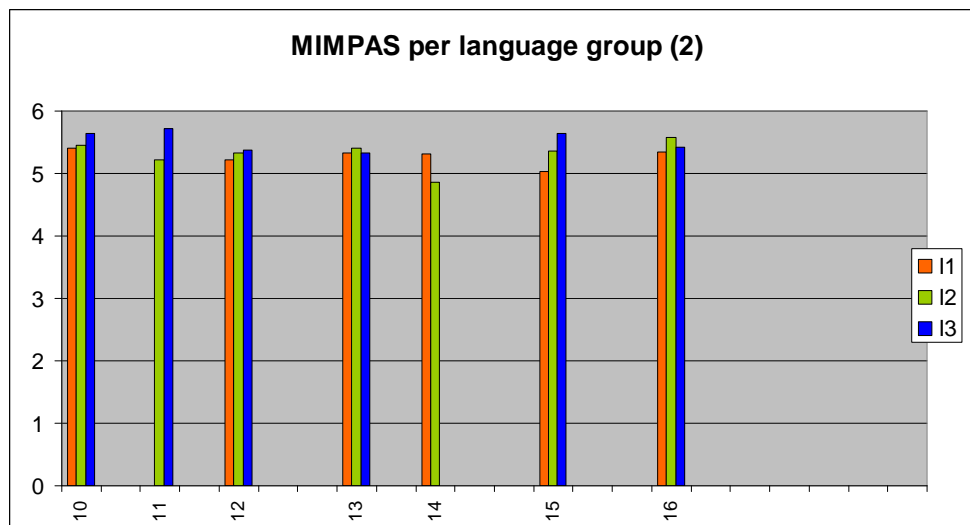
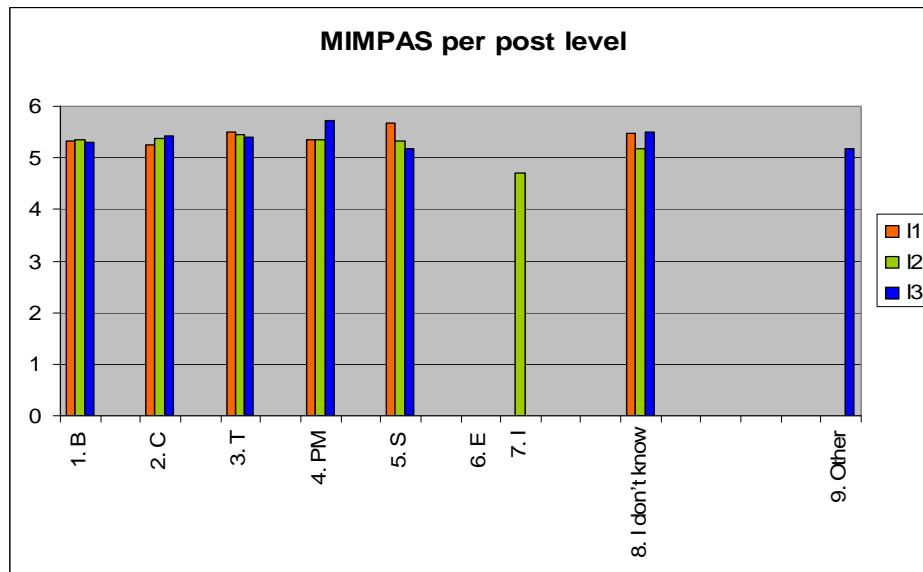


Figure 52b: MIMPAS per language group 10-16



AICF participants across all language groups positively responded to this factor in the survey, collectively expressing the view that the AICF is proof to the fact that Steve Booyesen and Absa care about their staff (see *figure 52a* and *b* above).

Figure 53: MIMPAS per post level employed at in Absa Bank



It is noteworthy that AICF participants across a range of post-levels within Absa, in I1, I2 as well as I3, have expressed the opinion that the AICF is a meaningful indication of their value to the bank.

The summative data for this factor (MIMPAS) - presented in *figure 54a* below - shows that, from year to year, AICF participants seem to be more confident that the choir project is an indicator of the esteem held by Absa for its staff.

Figure 54a: Summative ratings for MIMPAS: I1-I3

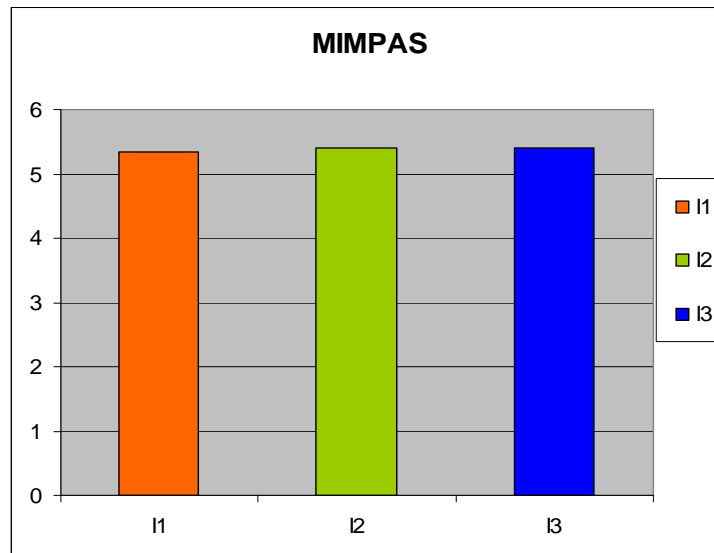


Figure 54b: Table of mean and Standard Error of MIMPAS summative ratings

	I1	I2	I3
<i>m:</i>	5.33	5.35	5.4
SEM:	0.036	0.04	0.059

5.3.7 Factor 1-6: Summative data

In conclusion, the statistics of the overall outcomes of the assessment of all six the factors by the entire sample (I1, I2 and I3) are portrayed in the final graph (*figure 55a*) and supplementary table (*figure 55b*).

The fact that the lowest collective score allocated for any factor in any intervention is equivalent to 85% ($m=5.1$) – as seen in *figure 55a* and *b* - is collateral to accept the overwhelming positive effects of choral singing experienced in the AICF.

Figure 55a: Summative data for Section B (factors 1-6)

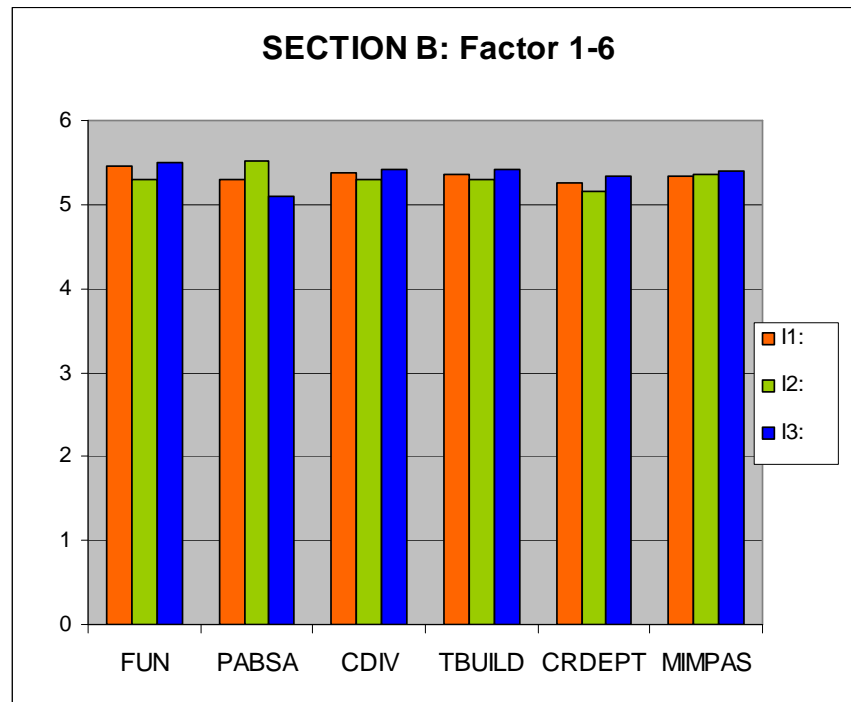


Figure 55b: Table of mean and Standard Error of Section B summative ratings

Factor:	FUN	PABSA	CDIV	TBUILD	CDEPT	MIMPAS
I1: <i>m</i> :	5.45	5.3	5.37	5.36	5.26	5.33
SEM:	0.033	0.035	0.034	0.032	0.038	0.036
I2: <i>m</i> :	5.3	5.51	5.29	5.3	5.16	5.35
SEM:	0.048	0.039	0.047	0.043	0.05	0.041
I3: <i>m</i> :	5.5	5.1	5.42	5.41	5.34	5.4
SEM:	0.055	0.050	0.054	0.049	0.061	0.06

The qualitative data obtained through the open-ended questions in Section C allows further insight of the perceptions of participants in the AICF. The following report conveys the personal views and experiences of the AICF as expressed by respondents.

5.4 Section C: Qualitative data

This section gathered qualitative data on individual participants' perceptions of obstacles, achievements and benefits experienced through participating in the AICF. Three open-ended questions (Question 9-11) were asked to investigate respondent perceptions of challenges, accomplishments and benefits presented through the choir process. In this section, the myriad comments received (through three interventions) were scrutinised to identify common themes amongst the many views expressed. Comments correlating to the themes identified were grouped together, counted and percentage values were calculated to depict the frequency of occurrence of themes. For each of the three questions in Section C, themes are discussed in sequence of the rate of recurrence²². The frequency (**f**) - calculated in percentage – is indicated next to each theme.

- **Question 9: List in order of priority the three most important obstacles you choir encountered in the process of building your choir**

Question 9 presented complications re interpreting the priority respondents placed on obstacles reported. For each intervention (I1, I2 and I3), obstacles relating to identified themes were counted and percentage values were allocated. There were three percentage values per theme (the questionnaire allocated an option per priority and the same obstacle was placed in different options by different respondents). This amounted to nine percentage values per theme. When consulting with statisticians on how to interpret the results in order to reflect the *order of priority* in a statistically responsible manner, the writer was advised to negate this condition and treat all obstacles indicated as equally important. In each case, the value indicated next to the theme represents the overall frequency percentage (**f**) of the theme. Fourteen themes transpired from the data and are numbered and introduced according to the sequence of the rate of recurrence.

²²

Themes are numbered to highlight prevalence of occurrence.

1. Music-related aspects: $f = 20.8\%$

Obstacles reported include:

- Limited music knowledge of choir members;
- Lack of voice training;
- Problems with enunciation;
- Lack of music experience;
- Lack of choral singing experience;
- Difficulty finding a coach;
- Difficulty finding someone to assist with voice training;
- Training the conductor selected;
- Difficulty finding an accompanist; and
- Difficulty finding a venue conducive to practising choir.

Considering that the choirs consisted of ordinary bank employees, the fact that limited resources re music was most commonly perceived as an impediment to the development of their choir is understandable. One does not normally expect people who work in a banking environment to be music specialists. However, the high frequency of identifying the lack of music knowledge as an obstacle to choral singing could be indicative of an inadequate music education system in South African schools.

2. Discipline: $f = 12.5\%$

Members were concerned about a number of discipline-related issues. These include:

- Choir members who arrive late for choir practices;
- Talking during practices; and
- Choir members not listening to the conductor.

3. Commitment: $f = 12.1\%$

Respondents expressed great difficulty experienced in:



- Finding enough members;
- Finding more men to join the choir; and
- Persuading new members to stay committed to the choir.

Choir members conveyed that managers were not always sympathetic to the choir process and in some cases would not allow employees to join a choir. This is particularly problematic in areas where members have to travel long distances to choir practices: if a manager will not allow such a member time off to travel (often four and in some cases seven hours), he/she would arrive at the practice after it is over.

4. Time: $f = 11.3\%$

Although most of the practising takes place outside of work time, there are instances where members have to take time off work to travel or attend the AICF final.

Concerns relating to time include:

- Sacrifice of personal and family time;
- Time management became challenging;
- Time off work – respondents were concerned that where substitute staff were not employed, their work would fall behind; and
- Concerns for the times when their branches had to function without them.

5. Transport: $f = 6.3\%$

Public transport is often problematic in South Africa. Many respondents expressed struggling with transport to practice venues. Choir members in rural areas mentioned that the great distances between members were a challenge.

6. Attendance: $f = 6.2\%$

The sporadic attendance of some members encumbered the progress of the choir.



7. Diversity: $f = 6$

Comments included:

- Intolerance of people from other races;
- Discussing problems in African languages which are not understood by some members; and
- Not respecting each other cultures.

8. Teamwork: $f = 5.2\%$

Respondents noted:

- Lack of unity;
- Lack of cooperation;
- Poor teamwork; and
- Members not accommodating others' views.

9. Leadership: $f = 4.4\%$

Concerns include:

- Management not really interested in the choir;
- Choir organiser does not provide leadership; and
- Managers are negative and/or do not support choir.

10. Trust: $f = 4.2\%$

The following hindrances to building trust between members were indicated:

- Not trusting other choir members;
- Not transparent;
- Difficult to get to know one another;
- Lack of integrity;
- Lacking love for each other; and

- Lack of respect for each other.

11. Conflict: $f = 3.9\%$

Concerns raised were:

- Conflict re own choice song; and
- Clashing of different personalities.

12. Communication: $f = 2.8\%$

Respondents were concerned about:

- Poor communication between choir members;
- Misunderstandings; and
- Stereotyping of others.

13. Dance: $f = 2.8\%$

White respondents noted that they found it very hard to learn the African movements, and Black respondents noted that they found it very hard to teach the White members the African dance movements.

14. Finances: $f = 1.5\%$

Before the global economic crisis in 2008, this obstacle had never been mentioned. Although the obstacle with the lowest overall rating, upon analysing the third intervention data, finance-related obstacles received the sixth highest rating in that intervention: $f = 5.62$ (mentioned for the first time in I3). It is clear that the international recession has spread its tentacles to a choir festival in South Africa – the AICF.

The next question intended to learn what respondents perceived to be their choir's greatest achievement.

- **Question 10: List the one greatest achievement of your choir**

The seven themes which transpired from scrutinizing the data obtained for this question bear some correlation to the factors which formed the basis for the quantitative data obtained through Section B. However, in this section respondents expressed their personal perceptions of their choir's greatest achievement. Themes are numbered and introduced according to the sequence of the rate of recurrence.

1. Unity/Teambuilding: f = 41.22%

Despite the initial problems re conflict, lack of trust and teamwork reflected in the responses to Question 9, it is clear that the choirs had developed together as one team. Comments included:

- Our teamwork has become very good;
- We have great team spirit;
- I now have a sense of belonging;
- We have great cooperation in our choir;
- We have become a team;
- There is a great sense of togetherness in our choir;
- Unity – we are one; and
- Overcoming disagreements.

Booyesen and Absa's venture to utilise choral singing to attain teambuilding goals are in correspondence with current international trends. Examples of numerous business enterprises incorporating choir workshops for corporate teambuilding can be found on the internet. In the United Kingdom the insurance group Admiral is reported to have hired two vocal coaches to develop a choir of more than 40 call centre staff members to reduce "stress and sickness absence" (Guru 2009). Jonathan Welch, accomplished Australian choir conductor, has noted: "Music and singing is really the same as what we do in business ... within the structure and rhythmic formality of music, like that of running a

business, you still have to find your own way to “dance” and work as a team” (ICMI s.a.).

The above perceptions of AICC participants re the teambuilding and social benefits afforded through singing in a choir correlate with findings of related national and international surveys:

- Clift and Hancox (2001:255) state that 87% of the 84 members of a university college choir society indicated social benefits through the choir;
- Clift et al (2007) report that the vast majority of the 1,124 respondents in an extensive cross-national choral survey attributed an increased sense of coherence and community to choral singing, with 87% of respondents reporting social benefits experienced;
- Findings of a survey done amongst multi-cultural university choirs revealed that choir members experienced a genuine sense of community in their (multi-cultural) choirs (Barrett 2007:53);
- Simkin (2006) testifies to the value of choir participation for developing a sense of belonging/community in the Australian choral outreach for victims of Hurricane Katrina (discussed on page 17): “People now see the choir as a way of ... making new friendships, understanding how other people have been affected and how they can help each other”.

The results of these undertakings are echoed in the experiences of AICF participants expressed in this survey.

2. Musical achievement: f = 39.29%

Notwithstanding the awareness of and focus on lacking musical knowledge, experience, leadership and equipment reported by respondents (music-related obstacles received the highest frequency in the previous question), respondents experienced a great sense of achievement through their musical (choral) performance. The following were noted:

- Our choir achieved great success;



- Musically we did great;
- I am proud of our accomplishment;
- We were very good; and
- We did it!

3. Unity in (cultural) diversity: f = 6.2%

Comments included:

- We have learnt to appreciate each others' cultures;
- We are not so different – we are one;
- I now want to learn a Black language;
- I am now very proud of our cultural diversity;
- We understand each other much better, and each others' culture;
- We have made friends with people from other races and we love each other;
- In our choir we have overcome racism.

4. Broadened horizons: f = 5.41%

Respondents were appreciative of having had the opportunity to travel – many had never been outside their provinces and had the opportunity to come to Johannesburg and stay in hotels. A number also had the opportunity to travel by air for the first time in their lives. Some were part of the 2005 Most Popular Choir which was invited to Barclays (Britain) to perform and felt that this was the greatest achievement of their choir.

5. Discipline: f = 3.63%

Choir members have overcome their lack of discipline. Comments in this regard include:

- We have achieved discipline;
- Everybody is now committed;
- People are trying hard to be on time for practices; and
- We are listening to our conductor.

6. Cross-Department relations: $f = 2.53\%$

Relationships and friendships were established with fellow choir members from other departments, branches and divisions.

7. Fun: $f = 1.72\%$

The low frequency of this aspect should not be interpreted as participants not enjoying their AICF choral experience – this only indicates that 1.72% of respondents felt that they had so much fun becoming a choir, that they regarded it as their greatest achievement. References to “stress-relief” were also grouped in this cluster.

From the results of Question 11 it is clear that participants viewed their sense of musical achievement as outweighing the obstacles encountered (Question 9). It also bears evidence that, particularly through choral singing, non-music specialists can enjoy the experience of musical accomplishment given the opportunity and the willingness to work at it.

The last question was aimed at establishing if/how participants have benefited on a personal level through choir participation in the AICF.

- **Question 11: Please indicate the single greatest benefit to you personally by participating in the choir festival**

The results of the above question are presented in sequence of highest-lowest frequency (indicated as f). The following comments of how participants perceive having profited on a personal level from participating in the AICF were obtained through I1-I3. It was interesting to note that choir participation had affected many people in similar ways regardless of the time of the intervention (over the period 2006-2008), or belonging to different language, age, and/or other groups identified in Section A of the questionnaire.

Eight themes transpired from the data obtained through Question 11. These themes are numbered and introduced according to the sequence of the rate of recurrence.

1. Teambuilding: $f = 28.7\%$

Respondents viewed an improved sense of belonging to the ‘Absa family’. Comments include:

- I have made connections with people from other branches
- I have learnt to be a better team player;
- Getting to know my colleagues with whom I spend a great deal of time;
- Experiencing our team spirit;
- Togetherness - a sense of belonging;
- I have learnt to cooperate with others;
- I belong to a group where I feel appreciated; and
- The people in my choir respect me.

2. Mood: $f = 26.2\%$

Singing in an Absa choir had a positive influence on the mood of singers. Participants reported the following mood-related results of partaking in the AICF:

- Feeling good;
- Experiencing a sense of victory (even before the final competition);
- Increased confidence;
- Increased happiness;
- Joy;
- Stress relief;
- Personal sense of self worth;
- Increased self-esteem;
- More positive behaviour; and
- Relaxation, peace.

A growing body of research indicates the particular value of choral singing to improve one's mood. Examples include:

- A three year study, “Creativity and Aging: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” led by the director of the Center on Aging, Health, and Humanities at George Washington University in Washington, Dr. Gene D. Cohen, shows that singing in a choir keeps people “healthier and happier” (Sparks 2004);
- Clift and Hancox (2001) reported that 75% of respondents perceived choir participation as a constructive practice for emotional wellbeing;
- Clift et al (2007) convey many cases of respondents reporting that choral singing helped them through periods of personal hardship or bereavement.

3. Cultural diversity: $f = 10.1\%$

Participants appreciated the experience of learning and participating in own and other cultural songs with choir members from other cultures:

- I think differently about cultures that I didn't know much of before;
- I feel that others are more positive about my culture;
- I want to learn an African language;
- I have learnt African dancing;
- We manage to teach White people how to dance to our music;
- We have achieved real communication between members from different cultures;
- I love the new friendships with people who speak other languages; and
- We are from different cultures but we are together.

A perception of having profited through learning or teaching African dance accounted for 25% of the frequency of this theme.

4. Musical growth: $f = 9.8$

The following comments indicate that non-musicians participating in musicking activities through the AICF experienced personal growth, development and a sense of accomplishment through choral singing:

- I did not realise how musical I am;
- My family and friends are amazed at my talent;
- I now know that I can sing – I am musical;
- I know so much more about music;
- I have gained a lot of recognition for my musical talent;
- People look at me differently after I sang the solo;
- I love music more than ever before; and
- Singing in the Massed Choir was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

5. Pride in, love for Absa: $f = 4.1\%$

Participating in the AICF has impacted on the way choir members relate to the organisation. Respondents reported:

- I never want to work anywhere else;
- I am proud to be associated with Absa;
- I care about my company;
- I love Absa;
- It is a privilege to work for Absa.

The above comments indicate that the Project Manager and her team manage the AICF in a manner that contributes to participants' perception of the stature of the organisation.

6. Enrichment by exposure to new environments: $f = 1.8$

Some AICF participants felt a positive influence from traveling to and singing in places that they had not been familiar with before. They mentioned:



- Traveling to the final;
- Seeing Johannesburg; and
- Performing in different places with different people.

7. Developing leadership skills: $f = 1.55$

Comments:

- I have grown as a leader; and
- I have learnt to motivate people and give advice.

The outcomes of both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through the questionnaire, over three interventions and a period of two years, unmistakably indicate that AICF participants have a particularly high opinion of their choral experience through the Absa Internal Choir Festival. Interviews and discussions with choir members, managers and external service providers to the AICF support the outcomes of the questionnaire. Video footage captured on the DVD bears further witness to the positive perceptions that exist of this phenomenon: utilising an internal choir festival (in the format of a competition) as tool for positive change within a pre-eminent bank in Africa.

8. Singing in the choir helped me through a difficult time: $f = 1.05$

A few respondents reported that participating in the AICF helped them through a time of particular adversity in their personal lives. Comments included:

Nobody knew that I was going through great difficulty, but the choir was a life-line; and
Singing in the choir helped me through great hardship.

The outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained through Sections B and C strongly indicate that participants believe that the Absa Internal Choir Festival has promoted teambuilding and transformation amongst participating Absa staff.