

Chapter 1

Orientation to the study

1.1 Introduction

In 2005, Dr. Steve Booyesen, as Group Chief Executive of the Absa Group, the biggest banking corporation in South Africa (previously the *Amalgamated Banks of South Africa*), initiated the Absa Internal Choir Festival - an endeavour for all interested Absa employees. This happened in the wake of the Barclays investment of billions of rands that would translate to its controlling share in Absa. Recognising the Barclays merge as a potential threat to the morale of the Absa work force, Booyesen envisaged the choir project as a tool for team and spirit building for Absa employees during this phase of transformation in the bank.

On the topic of Mergers and Acquisitions, Claire Gordon-Brown (2005:47-51) observes:

It is the people issues, more than the process issues. Processes themselves don't have emotions that have to be dealt with. People do, and this is what makes them more complicated ... it is about people at the end of the day ... and often companies do not understand their feelings, fears and aspirations.

Booyesen saw the choir project as an opportunity for Absa employees, across the full scope of cultural, ethnic and language diversity, to participate collectively in a stress-releasing, bonding pursuit. The Absa Internal Choir Festival further presented a channel for embracing the "bigger Absa family" and the Absa brand on a personal level, in the midst of the Absa-Barclays merger. Ashkenas and Francis (2000:108-116) state that a successful integration manager is someone who:

- is emotionally and culturally intelligent, understanding that Mergers and Acquisitions affect people's lives and
- has the ability to (amongst others) bridge gaps in culture and perception.

The author would argue that through the initiation of this project, Booyesen distinguished himself as just such a manager.



The Absa Internal Choir Festival plays out in an authentic South African multi-cultural corporate context and as such it is particularly significant in the present-day South Africa. During the apartheid era, separate development policies necessitated differentiation on the grounds of language and culture in a multi-linguistic country rich in cultural diversity. Apartheid segregation laws fostered great isolation of the separate communities in the country. In the business world hardly any opportunities existed for the different ethnic and language groups to work together on equal grounds. Opportunities to develop understanding of and appreciation for ethnic and cultural differences were scarce. These factors propound particular difficulties for meaningful interaction, let alone actual teambuilding, in the workplace.

Businesses worldwide invest mammoth amounts in corporate teambuilding endeavours. Towards the end of the 2005 project, Dr. Booysen and the top management of Absa were of the opinion that the success of the project exceeded all expectations. It was decided to repeat the process until such time when Absa employees would indicate a lack of interest in the Absa Internal Choir Festival. 'Such time' has not yet come. The fact that Absa has invested and continues to invest millions of rands in their choir project is collateral to suggest the success of the project to date, and indeed, the benefits of choir participation to the ordinary employee.

Set in a context of a broader South African society in need of authentic transformation and unity, the Absa Internal Choir Festival could propose a model for fostering societal harmony, thus ensuing improved societal wellbeing, through the practice of choral singing. The complexities of racial and cultural diversity are not unique to this country. Robert Putnam, prominent international academic and social capital theorist, points to the serious implications of ever-increasing ethnic and cultural diversity worldwide - an outcome of the current global rise in immigration.

It will be worthwhile clarifying if the perceived benefits of choir participation could be converted in a meaningful and ultimately financially profitable way for organisational development re transformation and teambuilding in the corporate environment. The Absa Internal Choir Festival offers a unique opportunity for such an investigation.

1.2 Personal motivation for the study: a reflection

In the many years of working with choirs in South Africa and elsewhere, I have come to believe that participating in a choir has beneficial results for the individual on social, emotional, cognitive, creative, aesthetic and psychosocial levels. The importance of the development of musical understanding through choral singing and training as well as the magnitude of its widespread benefits has been an interesting subject for me over years of involvement in music education training. My keen interest in the subject of choirs, choral training and specifically the multi-faceted benefits of choral singing for non-music specialists has been developed through many years of involvement in this discipline.

In 2005 I was first commissioned by Absa to write a ‘corporate song’ (Absa song) for the Absa Internal Choir Festival. Based on the role of this song in the success of the 2005 project, I have been invited to compose similar works for the Absa Internal Choir Festival, 2006-2009. The beneficial nature of music, and more specifically choir singing, is generally accepted amongst musicians and their industry. During the 2005 Absa Internal Choir Festival, I personally witnessed the power of choral singing as a means for developing team spirit and transformation in the Absa choirs – made up of non-music specialists in the corporate world. This reinforced my belief in the benefits of choir participation for the ‘everyday man’.

The success of the Absa Internal Choir Festival has been accepted on the grounds of instinctive perception. Showing evidence of the extra-musical benefits of choir participation for employees in a corporate setting will enhance and improve the perceived value of music for the broader society. This study aims to establish the viability and sustainability of such a project in a financially-driven corporate world.



1.3 Research questions

The main research question on which this study is based is:

How and to what extent can choir participation be a successful tool for accomplishing transformation and teambuilding in a corporate environment like Absa?

Sub-questions:

- Based on current theories of the concepts, what is the meaning of transformation and teambuilding in a post-Apartheid South African society?
- To what extent are the values presented by the African philosophy of Ubuntu reaffirmed through choral singing and the Absa Internal Choir Festival?
- How does the process of developing an Absa choir link up with the concept of social capital in a corporate South African context?
- Which elements inherent in choral singing could be contributing factors to attaining extra-musical outcomes?
- To what extent does the Absa Internal Choir Festival achieve the outcomes envisaged from its introduction?

1.4 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the efficacy of choral singing as a tool for teambuilding and transformation in a corporate environment. The results of the research on the Absa Internal Choir Festival should indicate whether such projects could be extended to the broader corporate world and general South African society in need of transformation and unity.



1.5 Research design

The Absa Internal Choir Festival affords a platform for the validation of the value of music-making practices, and specifically choir participation, to the ordinary worker in the corporate world.

1.5.1 The opportunity

This study deals with the experienced impact reported by participants of the AICF, affording the author, as a music educator, the opportunity to validate the value of participation in music-making in a much broader context than that which is normally associated with music education (school based curricular and extra-curricular music activities and private instrumental training).

1.5.2 Relevant knowledge

The focus of this study necessitated the investigation of a spectrum of fields that are not normally associated with traditional music education research. Minimum understanding of theories relevant to the context of the investigation - such as transformation, change theories, social capital, Ubuntu and teambuilding - needed to be established for interpretation of the process and outcomes of the Absa Internal Choir Festival.

1.5.3 Observing and analysing data

This study was totally dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of Absa. A banking giant like Absa is obviously underpinned by hierarchical structures, which need to be understood (not a simple task for an outsider) and respected. Absa managers are busy people and responsible for the successful operation of business procedures of the bank: the bank must make money and the clients and shareholders must be satisfied with its performance. Research access to the organisation was thus dependent on their belief that some commercial advantage can be derived from the research, and that confidential

issues would be respected as such. The research process therefore had to be carried out with great sensitivity re the above factors.

Every step of the actual investigation intruded, to some degree, on the procedures of the Absa Internal Choir Festival. This posed a number of challenges to the planning of collecting data:

- Understanding acceptable procedures as well as preferences within Absa;
- Respecting and accommodating procedures, preferences and requirements of Absa management so as to avoid the study being seen as an unnecessary problem in a business environment where the main objective is that of doing business;
- Showing consideration for the sacrifice of personal time and energy required to participate in the Absa Internal Choir Festival, such as practicing and related activities, when arranging interviews and/or completing of questionnaires; and
- Being sensitive to the apprehension (observed) on the side of management of possible negative impressions (of Absa) that could be created, should the outcomes of this study indicate that there were not sufficient benefits for participating Absa employees.

1.5.4 Evaluating

The outcomes of all planned investigational processes (questionnaires, formal and informal interviews) are compared to concepts and theories found in the mentioned fields that relate to this research project. Evidence is analysed and arranged in a way conducive to clarity and the verifying of conclusions drawn from the obtained evidence.

1.5.5 Evidence

Absa employees participating in the Absa Internal Choir Festival, external service providers and other observers (members of audiences and adjudicators at the different choir competitions) acted as the informants/providers of evidence. This study recognises

the challenge in gathering information and evidence that favourably compares to the quality and scope of the concepts underpinning the different related subject areas.

1.5.6 Limitations and delimitations of the study

The Absa Internal Choir Festival is an official Absa project and the author was therefore obliged to respect all boundaries set by Absa. Gathering the large range of information for this project, in its diverse fields and disciplines, should ensure appropriate understanding to ask the relevant questions and be confident to interpret the answers in a meaningful way.

This study is rooted in music – investigating the capacity of choral singing for facilitating transformation and teambuilding. However, an adequate theoretical framework to the study needs to be founded on a comprehensive examination of non-music fields related to the context of the Absa Internal Choir Festival – the human capital of Absa Bank. Through the multi-disciplinary nature of the research, this music educational study will aim to establish an understanding of the fields related to transformation and teambuilding. The focus of the study is human development *through* music. Analyses of the music (choral works) sung in Absa’s choir project will not be endeavoured in this study.

1.5.7 Value of the study

Establishing the success of the Absa Internal Choir Festival project, as a tool for corporate teambuilding and transformation, would improve the perceived role of music in the corporate world. Further, this could promote the use of choral singing to facilitate meaningful transformation in the broader South African society. The spin-off of this success could be beneficial to the music industry and possibly generate a larger monetary investment in music.

1.6 Research methodology

This investigation of the Absa Internal Choir Festival was predominantly a quantitative research project (numerical data obtained from measurements of counting). Questionnaires were used as the main instrument for data collection. However, to obtain authentic findings in a survey of a multi-faceted phenomenon such as the Absa Internal Choir Festival, it was clear that triangulation (applying a combination of several research methods to the study of the same the phenomenon) was to be an essential requirement.

Views on triangulation include:

Gathering data on the same topic through a variety of means is a way of validating research findings through triangulation. Concepts do not wave red flags and denote their significance to the re searcher (Somekh and Lewin 2005: 50);

[An] attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint (Cohen and Manion 1986: 254); and

[Triangulation] gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation (Altrichter et al 1996:117).

1.6.1 Research methods used

For the purpose of drawing a more balanced and detailed picture of the Absa Internal Choir Festival, quantitative as well as qualitative research methods were applied.

- **Quantitative research**

In quantitative research, data is obtained from measurements of counting. Sampling techniques, such as surveys, are used and the findings can be expressed numerically (statistically). Specifically appropriate to the Absa Internal Choir Festival survey, Kuhn (1961:180) notes:

When measurement departs from theory, it is likely to yield mere numbers, and their very neutrality makes them particularly sterile ... But numbers register the departure from theory with an authority and finesse that no qualitative technique can duplicate, and that departure is often enough to start a search.

Sections A and B of the questionnaire provided the quantitative data for this study. The statistics obtained through the above suggest that the surprisingly positive outcomes of the Absa Internal Choir Festival survey could be accepted as valid.

- **Qualitative research**

In qualitative (phenomenological) research, meaning is “... socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world ...” (Merriam and Associates 2002:3). In the instance of this study, the word “world” specifically refers to the participants’ interaction with:

- The choir as a group;
- Fellow members of the choir of differing backgrounds (cultural or otherwise);
- The process of the Absa Internal Choir Festival; and
- The employer or the brand (Absa).

Phenomenological qualitative research deals with questions about “... common, everyday human experiences ... believed to be important for our time or typical of a group of people” (Merriam and Associates 2002:97). In this study, ‘group’ refers to the group of participants in the Absa Internal Choir Festival and their experiences of the project. Richard Wolf suggests that phenomenology

... focuses on lived experience. It looks at people’s experiences of phenomena and how the experiences are structured, focusing the analyses on the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Merriam and Associates 2002:97).

The following was used as a guide when developing qualitative questions for interviews and questionnaires:



Phenomenological Paradigm
Basic beliefs
The world is socially constructed and subjective
The observer is part of what is observed
Science is driven by human interest
Researchers should
Focus on meanings
Try to understand what is happening
Look at the totality of each situation
Develop ideas through induction from data
Preferred methods include
Using multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena
Small samples investigated in-depth and ideally, over time

(Adapted from Shaw et al 1999: 12)

The literature review explores a range of concepts related to the Absa Internal Choir Festival. The study further incorporates action research, descriptive research methods, historical research methods as well as narrative inquiry.

- **Literature review**

According to Charles (1988:184), literature related to the main question of a study is reviewed in order to determine three things:

1. Whether studies already exist that are similar to what one proposes to undertake;
2. Whether existing research provides guidance or sheds further light on the problem; and
3. Whether existing research provides a point of departure or a platform upon which the new research can build.

The literature survey across the disciplines relevant to this investigation has a three-fold function:

1. To orientate the Absa Internal Choir Festival within current South African context;
2. To gain the necessary insight regarding these subject areas for competent interpretation of the Absa Internal Choir Festival and data of the survey; and

3. To provide a sound information base for the above (Chapters 2 and 3).

The literature review on transformation, teambuilding, social capital and Ubuntu (Chapter 2) confirmed that South African society still needs to embrace the promise of the Rainbow Nation. Chapter 3 investigates the prospect of choral singing to facilitate such a process.

- **Action Research**

The social basis of action research is involvement; the educational basis is improvement. Its operations demand changes. Action research means ACTION, both of the system under consideration, and of the people involved in that system. System can mean any human social order – factories, airlines, services, schools – and people means all personnel, not just the managers, for in a democratic system the smallest part will affect the overall shape of the whole (McNiff 1988:3).

Through composing the Absa songs, training the Absa choirs, assisting and advising conductors and organisers, the above criteria have been met re social and educational bases of action research.

- **Historical and descriptive research**

This was an important source of gathering information needed for Chapter 4.

The purpose of both historical and descriptive research is to *describe* - and afterwards to interpret – present and past situations, conditions, events and trends. This satisfies our innate need to know and, in addition, provides a basis for speculating on why things were as they were, or are as they are. Interest in both historical and descriptive research is strong, even when there is no practical payoff, because it informs us about topics of interest and helps us anticipate future events (Charles 1988: 82).

- **Narrative enquiry**

This research method involves gathering information for research through what can be described as storytelling. According to Phillion (2002:268), most narrative enquiries are strongly rooted in the autobiographical. Phillion (2002:107-108) explains the four directions in any narrative enquiry as:

1. Inward: directed towards feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions;
2. Outward: directed towards the environment;
3. Backward: directed towards the past; and
4. Forward: directed towards the present and future.

1.6.2 Collecting the data

The questionnaire was the main instrument for collecting data in this survey. Every question in the questionnaire was developed with direction and consent from the Absa Internal Choir Festival project manager and the Human Resource department in Absa.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections, A, B and C. Quantitative data was gathered through sections A and B while qualitative data was obtained through section C.

- **Section A (Questions 1-7)**

In this section questions are aimed at obtaining information on respondent background re age, gender, ethnicity, home language, region and post level. This provided information needed to establish the demographic profile of the Absa Internal Choir Festival. Additionally, the information obtained through this section provided grounds for comparison of perceptions of choral singing held by different groups (such as male versus female).

- **Section B (Questions 8.1-8.45)**

This section aimed at obtaining insight into each respondent's opinions and experiences re the Absa Internal Choir Festival. To assess the value of the choir project to Absa, the study needed to establish whether the choir project facilitates the development of factors that are important to the company in regards to their staff. Absa identified six factors for this purpose. Each factor was investigated through six to eight questions (posed as statements) relating to different components/facets of the particular factor. The Absa Internal Choir Festival is accessible for all Absa staff. As employees from all post levels participated in this project (from tea ladies and cleaners to managers), which represented a wide range of literacy competencies, the questionnaire had to be user-friendly to all. A decision was made to include only positive statements to minimize misunderstanding and confusion which could encumber authentic representation of participant experiences and perceptions.

Based on themes/factors developed with AICF and Absa Human Resources management, the questions/statements were developed around the following themes/factors:

- **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?

The following Likert scale options were provided in order to simplify the process of answering questions:

<i>1 =msd</i>	<i>I most strongly disagree</i>	<i>2=sd</i>	<i>I strongly disagree</i>
<i>3=d</i>	<i>I slightly disagree</i>	<i>4=a</i>	<i>I slightly agree</i>
<i>5=sa</i>	<i>I strongly agree</i>	<i>6=msa</i>	<i>I most strongly agree.</i>

- **Section C (Questions 9-11)**

In this section three open ended questions were given to allow respondents to give their views on personal impressions and experiences in the Absa Internal Choir Festival:

9. List in order of priority the three most important obstacles your choir encountered in the process of building your choir;
10. List one greatest achievement of your choir; and
11. Please indicate the single greatest benefit to you personally by participating in the choir.

1.6.3 Sampling

In 2006 the sample for the first intervention consisted of choirs from seven of the ten Absa regions: Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Gauteng North, KwaZulu-Natal, North West and Western Cape. For the second intervention the questionnaire was administered to all members of the final ten choirs, representing all Absa regions: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Gauteng-North, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape. In 2008, during the period between the semi-finals and finals, choir conductors/organisers were asked to select a representative sample of twelve to fourteen respondents per choir to reflect the composition of their choir re age, ethnicity, gender and post-level in bank. One choir per South African province was engaged: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern

Cape, North West and Western Cape. This amounted to a much smaller sample than was used for intervention one or two.

1.6.4 Interventions

The questionnaire was administered in three interventions. Interventions one and two took place in 2006. In the light of the overwhelmingly positive results of intervention one and two, a decision was taken to once again administer the questionnaire as a means for triangulation of the data outcomes. The purpose for this intervention was to substantiate whether 2008 Absa Internal Choir Festival participants perceived their choral experience in an equally positive way as 2006 participants conveyed in intervention one and two. This could ascertain if sustainable success of the choir project exists over time.

Interventions through questionnaires took place as follows:

- First intervention (I1): before the 2006 regional Absa choir competitions;
- Second intervention (I2): during the last two days of the 2006 final national choir competition;
- Third intervention (I3): before the 2008 final.

1.6.5 Interviews

Structured and unstructured interviews were a further source of information. Interviews were conducted on a continuous basis. Initial interviews with Absa management were crucial in order to:

- Establish a working relationship between the researcher and the bank;
- Obtain relevant information about Absa's choir initiative for both the questionnaire and the study in general;
- Gain an understanding of the perceived aims and role of the AICF; and
- Gain insight into the corporate hierarchical structures relating to the AICF in the bank (Absa).

Ongoing interviews (structured/formal as well as informal) were conducted with the following informants/sources:

- Dr. Steve Booysen – Group Chief Executive and initiator of the Absa Internal Choir Festival;
- Annemarie Mostert – Absa Internal Choir Festival project manager;
- Members of Absa management;
- Members of audiences at competitions;
- Selected Absa Internal Choir Festival participants suggested by management.

In *Finding your way in qualitative research*, Henning provides examples of “Intermediate Questions” (2004:158), which served as a guideline for the planning of interview questions.

Questions for structured interviews:

1. What is your position in Absa?
2. What has your role been in the Absa Internal Choir Festival?
3. What was your initial response when you were first introduced to the concept of an internal Absa choir competition?
4. Please explain if your perceptions changed regarding the benefits of choir participation for transformation?
5. In relation to teambuilding, what have you observed in the development of the Absa choirs?
6. In your opinion, what were the challenges for participating in the choir project?
7. Please describe any positive outcomes of the Absa Internal Choir Festival.
8. Would you welcome another choir festival/competition in the future? Please motivate.

The perceptions of Absa choir members as well as Absa management, reflected in the questionnaire and interviews, provided an extensive impression of the Absa Internal Choir Festival.

1.7 Further chapters

Chapter 2 Literature review

This chapter aspires to establish an understanding of:

- 2.1 Transformation, and specifically as relating to the current South African context;
- 2.2 Ubuntu, as an influential African philosophy;
- 2.3 Social Capital; and
- 2.4 Teambuilding.

Theories of the above concepts will serve as a standard to evaluate the meaning and merit of choir participation through the Absa Internal Choir Festival against.

Chapter 3 Why Choir?

Schoen (1940:87) notes that poets have sung for ages about the power of music over the emotions “to stir, soothe and inspire”.

More than six decades later, in a 2006 world-first study, a group of Australians travelled to New Orleans and used choir singing to help ease the effects of post-traumatic stress in the wake of hurricane Katrina. “People [involved] now see the choir as a way of uplifting themselves and raising themselves, and making new friendships, understanding how other people have been affected and how they can help each other” (Simkin 2006).

This chapter investigates the suitability of choral singing to facilitate social change in the South African context:

- 3.1 Eminence of choral singing in South Africa;

3.2 Singing: reasons and outcomes;

3.3 Choir participation and transformation; and

3.4 Findings of the 2008 Winter-Summer Institute (WSI) choir survey.

Chapter 4 Absa and the Absa Internal Choir Festival

Through interviews (with role players in Absa management, the Absa Internal Choir Festival team and external service providers) as well as historical and descriptive research, a brief look will be taken at:

4.1 The Absa Group

Information on the origin of Absa, its history of mergers and transformation, vision, values, and role in social upliftment role in South Africa will be presented.

4.2 The Absa Internal Choir Festival

The origins, planned outcomes, process and management of the choir project will be described. The relation of the history, vision, missions and branding to the choir project will be discussed.

4.3 The role of the Absa song as a branding tool

According to Macauly (2005:76), “branding” is another key issue for successful M&As:

Each company has its own brand. Its people identify with this brand and many of them have chosen to work for the company because of this brand. In an M&A environment they do not know what the new brand will stand for and whether they will like what it stands for.

The process, music and messages contained in the 2005-2008 Absa songs will be discussed. DVD recordings of these compositions will be provided. A DVD, capturing

revealing moments, events and interviews of the 2005-2008 AICF processes, is included in this study to afford an enhanced impression of the subject of the study

Chapter 4 concludes with an orientation and overview of the supplementary DVD.

Chapter 5 Interpreting the Data

In this chapter the outcomes of qualitative data are illustrated through graphs. Where appropriate, clarifications are included. Outcomes of quantitative and qualitative data are discussed.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes with a summary of the findings of this research project. Recommendations, based on the findings of the investigation of choir participation as a tool for transformation and teambuilding, are suggested.

1.8 Notes to the Reader

- Absa refers to their choir project as the Absa Internal Choir Festival (henceforth referred to as the AICF). However, this festival operates as a competition. Each year the objective of this festival is to identify the best Absa choir in the country through provincial and finally a national competition. In 2008 Booysen (DVD: Scene 5) repeatedly refers to the project as the Absa Internal Choir Competition. On these grounds the title of the supplementary DVD refers to *Absa Internal Choir Competition*;
- In South Africa Absa is referred to as *Absa* and also *Absa Bank*. The holding company is *Absa Group*;
- In a number of instances page numbers are not provided in references given in the text due to the use of internet research, or articles obtained from authors.



Chapter 2

Literature review

The title of this thesis indicates the investigation of choir participation as a means to advance *transformation* and *teambuilding* in a corporate milieu such as Absa. At the outset, this chapter aspires to establish a common understanding of *transformation*, *teambuilding* and the efficacy of choir participation for the advancement of transformation and/or teambuilding in the workplace. To this end, evidence of the beneficial nature of music, and more specifically *choir participation*, is examined. Current literature is reviewed to reveal the gist of:

- 2.1 *Transformation* as *change* in South African society;
- 2.2 Possible indicators posted by *Ubuntu*, as an influential value system in South Africa, for meaningful transformation;
- 2.3 *Social capital* in the workplace; and
- 2.4 *Teambuilding* as pertaining to the AICF.

2.1 Transformation

Much is currently said and written about transformation in every sphere of South African life.

2.1.1 What is “transformation”?

Universal connotations to the term convey implications of a process of changing position or consciousness; a paradigm shift; a translation/conversion into an alternative form. Definitions of the term include:

- Qualitative change; a transmutation; a shift (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2006);

- A complete change, usually into something with an improved appearance or usefulness (The Encarta World English Dictionary 2008);
- In an organisational context, a process of profound and radical change that orients an organisation in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness (BusinessDictionary.com 2007-2008).

In all its applications, *transformation* is a noun referring to a verb. Contrary to *transformed*, *transformation* implies an ongoing process – always continuing, yet always applicable in the now: an in-progress phenomenon. The term points to the future, anticipating and even creating future competencies. Cebrowski (2002) indicates that transformation deals with “...the co-evolution of concepts, processes, organizations and technology” and that change in any one of the areas infuses change in all. He further states that transformation is meant to “... identify, leverage and even create new underlying principles for the way things are done”, thus identifying and leveraging new sources of power. Transformation is a vital part of life itself; we are unavoidably born into this continuous route of evolution.

Transformation unavoidably implies *change*. In the work environment, the employer needs to identify the kind of change desired and provide strategies for employee engagement to accommodate the processes needed for this desired change to occur. To avoid failure, the nature of the tactics implemented must be dictated by the nature of the change needed. Anderson and Anderson (2001:39-48) note that while change management can effectively support developmental and transitional change, it is “woefully insufficient” for transformational change. It is critical to understand the type of change the organisation is going through in order to determine if traditional approaches can be functional to abet the needed change. They distinguish between three types of organisational change:

Developmental change focuses on improving current business procedures which can include existing skills, methods, standards and conditions through improved sales/quality, interpersonal communicational training, team development and problem-solving efforts. *Transitional change* is evident in simple mergers or acquisitions, creation of new

products or services and implementation of new IT or other programmes in the organisation. The aim of the change can be pre-determined and therefore fully managed. This type of change only impacts people at levels of skills and actions, and not at the more personal levels of mindset, behaviour and culture.

Transformational change is by far the most challenging. There can be no clear picture of the end result (future state) and therefore the process of change in this case cannot be managed with

... predetermined, time-bound and linear project plans. The actual change process must emerge as you go. Furthermore, the future state is so different from the current that the people and the culture must change in order to be able to implement it. This requires new mindsets and behaviors and often all involved need to shift their worldviews in order to invent the required new future, let alone effectively operate in it (Anderson and Anderson 2001:40).

Transformation of the individual is affected by transformation of his/her world. Since 1994, South Africa has been a country in the process of transforming itself. South Africans are familiar with this term which is woven through most discourses dealing with the fabric of our society. To quote but one early example:

I want to begin by emphasising the pressing need for transformation in our country. As we are all aware, Transformation is one of the great challenges facing our country (Bengu 1997).

2.1.2 Transformation in a South African context

While it is not the intention of this research to become entangled in the *political* discourse on transformation in South African community, it cannot fail to notice that, in this country, the term seems sentenced to be coupled (loaded) with racial issues inflicted on our society by Apartheid ideologies. It would be an act of imprudence to make light of the impact of Apartheid thought on our perceptions and related emotions and behaviour in 2008. Recent events of racism in South Africa have again highlighted the reality of the shortcoming of transformation in our “Rainbow nation”: the so-called “Walg video” at

the University of Bloemfontein and the Federation of Black Journalists' (FBJ - founded in post-Apartheid 1996) exclusion of white journalists at an address by ANC president Jacob Zuma. In June 2008 the scandalous wave of xenophobic attacks that swept through the country accentuated once more the inadequacy of "transformation" in South African society.

In South African daily life, *transformation* typically refers to an adequate number of black employees/managers/players in an organisation/sports team, or lack thereof. However, the possibilities which transformation holds should not be limited to mere implications of redressing our past in public/formal structures. Common and much debated terms equated to *transformation* in South Africa are Affirmative Action, BEE (Black Economic Empowerment), Equity and 'ratios'. The destination/outcome for each of these has been determined in detail and authorities strive to manage the process. It is also clear that the process has not impacted on more personal levels of change of mindset, behaviour and culture. The problem remains that, even if legislation succeeds in implementing equal opportunities for all South Africans across all sectors of our society, much more opportunities are needed to create a truly transformed society. That which has been termed as *transformation* in South Africa has thus far emerged as *transition*; falling short of presenting an apparatus for meaningful healing and change in our society. Mary Bast (1999) notes that the *clients'* ¹ resistance to change can be used to identify the "sore spots" in the change situation and therefore their concerns (*key defenders of the status quo*) re change need to be taken into consideration. She suggests asking the following questions in this regard: What do they perceive as threats to their well-being? What might be dysfunctional about the change that has so far been overlooked? What is not yet understood about the sources of their mistrust?

The 2008 debacle in the South African cricket selection for the national Protea team for the test tour to India presents a sample of the intricacy of transformation in current society. Managers of sports teams in South Africa find themselves in the challenging

¹ Refers to the individual undergoing the change.

situation of having to select teams that could aspire to be the best in the world while, at the same, they must fulfil transformation targets for racial equity in sport. After white player Andre Nel received the Man-of-the-match award in the final test match against England a few weeks earlier, he was subsequently replaced by Charl Langeveldt (black/“coloured”) for the upcoming test series against India in March 2008.

Nel (International Cricket Council (ICC) ranking: number 6) declared candidly in the press that he was offended by the process, stating that SA cricket authorities were insulting both players by this step. An emotional Langeveldt (ICC ranking: no. 23), equally hurt by the event, withdrew from the India test tour. Some keen comments in reaction to this misfortune were posted on the News 24 electronic news website (19/03/2008 08:47). Your Story: *This is not transformation!*. The following excerpts reveal a good deal of society’s resistance to interpretations of *transformation* in South African society.

... to choose national level players who have proved themselves in the national squad and imply that they are only there because of colour is definitely not transformation and in my opinion nothing but a recipe for disaster (Peter Neil).

Transformation is a very tricky business, and the best way to deal with it is definitely not to discontinue it, but to debate and orientate it to all the sporting values which include representativity and form. The problem is, if you leave it in the hands of the Previously Advantaged, they'll frustrate it; if you leave it with the Previously Disadvantaged, an outcry of 'dropping standards' will be heard (The One).

No black person wants to be chosen because of the colour of their skin, it is an insult to the person's skill. We all work hard to be good at what we do and ... [to] say 'I choose you, not because you're good, but because you've the right colour skin', then thank you very much, no self respecting black person wants that (Zk).

[This] ... is a classic example of transformation gone wrong! How much longer will this poor guy have to prove himself before he is finally regarded as being "transformed"? (Anon).

In my opinion there is more racism in this country than ever before... People should be selected for sport or employed in companies because of merit & qualification not colour ... What happened to the "rainbow nation"? This is a "thunder cloud" nation (ALS).

... My heart goes out to all the players of colour. Many perceive that they are there on that basis alone, yet their stats prove otherwise (Saliem).

Observations like these suggest definite concerns of South Africans for the process of *transformation* and could, as such, identify a number of “sore spots” in this change track. The dysfunctional elements of the transformation process in our society must be acknowledged and the sources of people’s mistrust should be identified and understood.

Often viewed and prejudged as mere “affirmative-action appointments” in the work environment, black employees are grappling with *transformation-associated* suppositions. Professor Mkhize, head of the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, notes:

In some circles, there is an unspoken assumption that black appointees, being “affirmative action” candidates, are not capable or deserving of their positions. This occurs despite the black incumbents’ professional qualifications. It is not far-fetched to hypothesize that this is because race has been a major determinant of professional mobility in South Africa. On the whole, blacks have played the subservient roles as gardeners, messengers, domestics, and the like. It is therefore possible that, in interpersonal and even inter-group encounters, an unconscious racialised process kicks in (2007:1).

Any endeavour to transform society without addressing these “racialised” perceptions will be superficial and contradictory to the imbedded meaning of the term, which is certainly not that of mere window dressing. The process of transformation in South Africa is challenged by its own tension and conflict caused by the clashing of existing and new values, and addressing equity and workplace imbalances (Mkhize 2007:3).

This tension and conflict cannot simply be ignored. Acquiring and internalising new perspectives (learning and changing) create tension between what already existed in our understanding and that which is new. Piaget refers to the *alpha compensation* – to remain in our human equilibrium which exists as an inner sense of adapting to one’s environment (McCarthy Gallagher and Reid 2002:94). To facilitate actual learning, this state must be

shattered in fundamental ways to thwart the learner from interpreting the new in terms of what was already there, thus robbing the new of its disconcerting power.

Similar to actual learning, change is not an effortless experience. The 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (employer to about one per 30 inhabitants) states that change is “very often a complex and controversial process, almost invariably accompanied by anxiety and resistance in some quarters” (1995).

2.1.3 Change theories

A common principle in change theory is the notion that change is a process, a journey, which is neither painless nor uncomplicated. Fawcett (1996:8) notes that common principles in differing models proposed by change theorists are:

- Change is a predictable series of stages;
- Change is a process;
- Change is individualized;
- Anxiety and uncertainty are a part of change; and
- People involved in change need personal and technical support.

Fullan (1985:396) identifies change as a "process whereby individuals alter their ways of thinking and doing. It is a process of developing new skills and, above all, of finding meaning and satisfaction in new ways of doing things". He interprets the characteristics of cultural change principles as: moral purpose, understanding of the type of change needed, improved relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and increased coherence.

In the early 20th century Kurt Lewin, widely regarded as the founder of modern social psychology and the father of change theory, identified three stages of change that laid the foundations for many current approaches. Lewin, psychologist and social scientist with a background in physics, drew a parallel between social change and changing a block of ice into a completely different form. His basic model is packed in three stages: *unfreezing*, *cognitive restructuring/changing* and *refreezing*.

Unfreezing: Human nature has a preference for contexts in which people can feel relative safety and a sense of control. They attach their sense of identity to their environment and find comfort and stability in that which is familiar (past influences and learning). This creates a stasis – a state in which there is an absence of motion and development. The need to preserve this equilibrium transpires in a resistance to any form of change. This represents the initial frozen state. Just like the block of ice, individuals/organisations will naturally resist *unfreezing* if they do not become receptive to change. Schein (1995:2) identifies a second type of anxiety, *learning anxiety*, as the primary restraining force in the *unfreezing* process. He unpacks Lewin's *unfreezing* as three processes that must be present in order to generate readiness and motivation for the change needed:

- *Disconfirmation*: dissatisfaction or frustration generated by information which disconfirms our expectations or hopes;
- *Survival anxiety*: the feeling that if we do not change, we will be unsuccessful in meeting our needs or achieving our ideals to take effect; and
- *Psychological safety*: this safety allows the change targets to accept the disconfirming information, feel the survival anxiety and become motivated to change.

In an interview with Coutu, Schein observes that *learning anxiety* stems from “fear of failure, of looking stupid, of having to change” and has to be balanced with enough psychological safety to allow a willingness to change (Coutu 2002:100). The need for change should be established and motivated. Kent notes:

... go where the hurt is. Go where there is some feeling that things aren't working out right. That is where it will be more likely that change will be accepted ... or there will be this natural resistance. Go beyond that ... go where the hurt should be felt. Maybe it isn't being felt where it ought to be felt (Kent 2001:14).

Kent (2001:12) identifies “unfreezing motivators” (such as a doctor's report of impending death) that often attain immediate change of a patient's eating/smoking/exercising habits. In South African society displeasure with the abysmal incidents of

racism and frustration with deficient mutual respect and reciprocity should act as such an “unfreezing motivator”.

Cognitive Restructuring - Making the Change: In this step the actual change is made. Those in need of change start making the needed adjustments (like starting the diet/exercise programme). It is a phase of re-thinking and re-learning. “[W]e learn that the anchors we used for judgment and comparison are not absolute, and if we use a different anchor our scale of judgment shifts” (Schein 1992:2). In situations where collective change is required, the relation between the individual and group standards is important. Most individuals feel safer when they belong to a group with similar standards and values as they themselves adhere to. To facilitate individual change in South African society, it is thus important to establish group values that relate to the desired/changed state: a truly transformed society. Further, for the needed improvement of our human system to occur, this society needs to be navigated and coached by the examples set by key role players (political, business, social, educational and religious leaders) as *agents of change*.

Refreezing: The change that has been obtained now needs to be cemented into the collective culture. The system has to incorporate the change as a permanent part of its operation. Like refreezing of water holds the new shape permanently, the systems in society (the way things are done) have to be adjusted to refreeze the change to become a permanent feature of that society and its culture.

Mbigi and Maree (1995:102) observe that the cultural dimensions have a significant impact on the management of transformational change in a society. Swartz notes that the very grounds of human communication and interaction are found in culture (1997:1). Without transformation of human interaction and communication in South Africa, a truly transformed society is unlikely to occur. There has been an increasing interest in the role that culture plays in determining human relations (Murithi 2006:25). This necessitates an understanding of what culture is, to navigate transformation of human interaction and communication and improved human relations in this society.

2.1.4 Culture

Much effort has gone into defining *culture*. It encompasses all the practices through which a community engages with life: beliefs, language, religion, rituals, manners, norms of behaviour, art, etc. These practices are then passed down from generation to generation, but are in no way static or unchangeable. Different theories for understanding human activity are reflected in different definitions of *culture*. In 1874, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, British anthropologist (1832 -1917), defined culture as follows:

Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (1920:1).

UNESCO (2002) defines culture as:

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO 2002).

Sindane (1995:12) notes:

Culture by and large is prescriptive. It says, ‘This is how such and such is done’. Hence it is common to hear people say, ‘in our culture, this is how we do it’ ... Culture therefore tends to identify a person more strongly with a particular group. You either belong to a culture or not. In other words, you are or you are not one of ‘us’. However, people can be assimilated into other cultures once they have adapted to the ways of life of a new group.

Schein (1992:12) notes that culture “is built up through its continuing enhancement of an organization’s [or society’s] ability to deal with its problems in a way that fixes its identity.” He moulds culture on three levels: 1. Artifacts; 2. Values and beliefs, which include judgments of what is good or bad; and 3. Basic assumptions. These assumptions include our deepest and most comprehensive explanation of reality – our perceptions of fundamental truths about people and the world.

Apartheid ensured little, if any, informal interaction between people of different races, depriving them of gaining insight into the spiritual, intellectual or emotional features of other social/cultural groups. Consequentially, the different ethnic groups' assumptions and judgments about each other were tainted: this in turn created superficial and often erroneous perceptions of fundamental truths about fellow South Africans. The past lack of interaction and genuine communication is aided by a present inability to access communicative practices of other groups in the country and affects current ways of living together in the greater South African community:

For example, in mainstream western culture, communication is conceived as an abstract, context-free activity: it is an expression of the individuality of the speaker. On the other hand, communication in African settings is largely a *responsive* activity ... transformation should involve willingness and an effort by all parties to immerse themselves into the lifeworld of the other as equals. It is not a process by which one group adapts or assimilates to others' ways of life. It involves a transformation of our modes of being in the world with others. Let the genuine dialogue begin (Mkhize 2007:5).

To transform the values, beliefs and consequent attitudes and behaviour in South African society, opportunities for informal interaction between people of different race and language groups need to be initiated. In working toward unity in diversity, experiences need to be afforded where glimpses into the others' lifeworlds are gained. Chapter 3 explores the possible role of choral singing in facilitating such experiences.

Upon entering the Oliver Tambo International Airport one is challenged by a giant mural with a sketch of the late Tambo accompanied by the following defining statement of his political philosophy:

**It is our responsibility
To break down the
Barriers of division
And create a country where there will be neither
Whites nor Blacks,
just South Africans;
Free and united in diversity.**

Aspiring to be free from historic heritage and its profound and complicated impact on present society is, at the very least, ambitious. In William P. Young's *The Shack*, challenging Mack on the nature of *freedom*, Elouisa eloquently converses:

Does it mean that you are allowed to do whatever you want to do? Or we could talk about all the limiting influences in your life that actively work against your freedom. Your family genetic heritage, your specific DNA, your metabolic uniqueness, the quantum stuff that is going on at a subatomic level ... Or the intrusion of your soul's sickness that inhibits and binds you, or the social influences around you, or the habits that have created synaptic bonds and pathways in your brain. And then there's advertising, propaganda, and paradigms. Inside that confluence of multifaceted inhibitors, [she sighs,] what is freedom really? (2007:95).

Inside the South African confluence of multifaceted inhibitors (generating multiple grounds for fear of change), what precisely is *transformation*? Transformation occurs on a deep personal level and requires inner shifts of mind and culture. For genuine transformation dialogue to begin in a complicated and "race-sensitive" society, a framework that is endowed with substance to accommodate meaningful change processes must be found. Relative and significant in the South African context, such a framework could possibly be found in the principles and ideas of *Ubuntu*, "a deeply moving yet intangible African soul force that has been demonstrated most powerfully by personalities like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther" (Nussbaum 2003a:2).

2.2 Ubuntu

Mbigi and Maree (1995:8) assert that "South Africa owes the birth of its nation to the emancipating spirit of Ubuntu". However, fourteen years into democracy, more meaningful ways of living together need to be found if the promise of Bishop Tutu's "Rainbow Nation" in South Africa is to be manifested. The principles of Ubuntu could possibly provide a buttress and funnel in finding such new ways. Gladwell (2000:132) notes that "[t]here is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible. All you have to do is find it." He terms this the

“stickyness factor” - the effect of persuasion - and identifies it as a key ingredient in modern day “tipping points” - occurrences of major and often sudden change. Ubuntu could well be the *stickyness factor* and desired packaging for change in South African society. An improved understanding and internalisation of the values of Ubuntu could support citizens in embracing their interconnectedness and doing so in the spirit of compassion.

In his address at the annual opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders, 23/02/07, then State President Thabo Mbeki, reminding the Houses of Parliament of great challenges posed by the disturbing levels of moral decay in the country, said:

I believe that these challenges are sufficiently acute to inspire and energise our traditional leaders vigorously to defend and promote the basic values of Ubuntu, and thus use our age-old value-system to defeat all that seeks to define and confirm the stereotyping of our people as barbaric and savage, which they are not. This will not succeed merely through making appeals for the return to the values of Ubuntu, but by collaborating with other institutions in our society to integrate the Ubuntu value system into the ordinary daily activities of all our people, young and old (Mbeki 2007).

The ideology of Ubuntu could afford society a possible way to handle resistance to transformation; acting as a “sponge” to soften the blows which past and present realities deal to meaningful change. A Nguni word from South Africa, Ubuntu points to human interconnectedness and the responsibility to each other that flows from our connection. Ubuntu, which centers on compassion, can be regarded as an African code of conduct which can certainly benefit all South Africans across all racial divides.

2.2.1 Ubuntu defined

For IT enthusiasts, the term *Ubuntu* may bring to mind an operating system similar to Microsoft’s Windows, developed by South African Mark Shuttleworth - a multi-millionaire from the .com-boom. Shuttleworth made 400 million pounds before his thirtieth birthday and has given away half of his fortune to charity. He is now spending his time and money on “taking on” Bill Gates; working hard on software that could one

day rival Microsoft. Shuttleworth's *Ubuntu* is an operating system similar to Microsoft but with one big difference: it is free of charge. The spirit reflected by Shuttleworth stems from a pre-colonial concept rooted and practised in Africa.

Nelson Mandela, inspiring symbol of tolerance and humanity, is regarded as a personification of Ubuntu. Mandela reflects: "In the old days, when we were young, a traveller through our country who stopped at a village would be given food – he did not have to ask. That is only one aspect of Ubuntu, there are many aspects" (Modise 2006). In his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu (1999:34-35), Nobel Peace Prize winner who was also awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize by the President of India in 2007, reflects on his role of Chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He emphasises that he leaned on both his Christian and cultural values, and specifically referred to the beliefs of Ubuntu to guide both perpetrators and victims during these hearings. Tutu explains that it is very difficult to render "Ubuntu" into a Western language: this African world-view eludes precise definition and classification and therefore the common depiction of the term is inadequate. He believes that such neat categorisation and definition would only be an oversimplification of a more unrestrained and philosophically accommodative idea. Constitutional Court judge J.Y. Mokgoro (1998) reiterates this view. Reflecting on *Ubuntu and the Law in South Africa*, she notes that the concept of Ubuntu, like many African concepts, is not easily definable. To her, Ubuntu is something that can best be recognised upon witnessing it experientially, yet one can never claim the last word on the subject.

Ubuntu is a rhetorical expression that depicts the significance of group solidarity and team spirit on matters vital to the survival of African communities. It depicts personhood and morality. Respect is reciprocal irrespective of race, ethnicity, class, age and gender. Ubuntu requires one to respect others if one is to respect oneself (Liwani 1990:194).

Ubuntu serves as the spiritual root of traditional African societies. It is a unifying world view preserved in the sayings:

IsiZulu: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*

IsiXhosa: *Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu*

Sotho: *Motho ke motho ka batho*).

This translates into the understanding that a person can only be a true person through the aid of others (*I am what I am because of you*). The principle of the individual gaining selfhood through others is the fundamental principle of Ubuntu. Fundamentally, this traditional African maxim expresses a central respect and compassion for others. Ubuntu can be interpreted as a rule of conduct or social ethic. It does not only describe being human as being *with others*, but stipulates the nature of and gives clear guidelines for the being with others.

Ubuntu represents *personhood, humanity, humaneness* and *morality*. It is a metaphor implying that the individual's entire existence is qualified by that of the group. It is a basic point of reference towards fellow beings that becomes evident in *anti-individualistic* conduct within the group *for the sake of individual survival*. Key social values include *group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity*, thus forming a basis for a morality of *cooperation, compassion, communalism* whilst constantly emphasising the virtues of dignity in social relationships and practices. The 1997 White Paper on Social Welfare (South Africa) officially acknowledges Ubuntu as:

The principle of caring for each other's well-being ... a spirit of mutual support ... Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with other and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the right and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.

Nussbaum (2003b:13) states that, in Africa, Ubuntu is the "capacity to express compassion, justice, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building, maintaining and strengthening community". It speaks to the human interconnectedness and the responsibility to each other that flows from this connection. It is about *mutual affirmation* and *communal responsiveness*. It is about the self being so rooted in the community, that the personal identity is defined by what you give to the community - 'It is through others that one attains selfhood.'

Ubuntu cannot easily be condensed into an automatic or mechanical practice. As articulated by Nussbaum (2003b:13): “It is rather the bedrock of a specific lifestyle or culture that seeks to honour human relationships as primary in any social, communal or corporate activity.” She points out that Ubuntu begins with simply knowing how to greet someone and provides the following examples of Shona greetings (from Zimbabwe) in the morning:

“Mangwani. Marara sei?” (*Good morning. Did you sleep well?*)

”Ndarara, kana mararawo.” (*I slept well, if you slept well*); and at lunchtime:

”Maswera sei?” (*How has your day been?*)

”Ndaswera, kana maswerawo.” (*My day has been good if your day has been good.*)

The above illustrates that, in the understanding of Ubuntu values, humans are so connected to each other that if one did not sleep well, or is not having a good day, it is unthinkable that the other could sleep well or have a good day. Compassion is a central part of Ubuntu. Nussbaum reflects on two practices of compassion that Africans are known for: 1) *Ukwena*, an act of giving or sharing without expecting any returns; and 2) *Ukusisa*, a 'yin', a form of investment that does not require collateral and also maintains the dignity of a poor person who has no assets.

According to the custom of ukusisa, those who have cattle or sheep give a cow or ewe to those who do not, to give the family an opportunity to acquire their own cattle and sheep over time. This is how newcomers in villages are helped. And this is how poorer communities and poorer countries could be helped. African values have a great deal to contribute to world consciousness, but Africa is greatly misunderstood in the West. Our world must embrace a sense of interconnectedness as a global community if we are to survive. Perhaps ubuntu is a framework that could inform our thinking in the twenty-first century (Nussbaum 2003b:3).

Societies informed by Ubuntu place a high value on communal life and everyone is involved with and responsible for maintaining positive relations within the society. Murithi, United Nations Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy programme officer, notes that traditional Ubuntu societies “developed mechanisms for resolving disputes and

promoting reconciliation with a view to healing past wrongs and maintaining social cohesion and harmony” (2006:25).

2.2.2 Ubuntu and opportunities for informal interaction

For employees to find their own personhood in relation to others, opportunities need to be generated for exposure to the lifeworlds of the others. These procedures/interventions, designed to deal with the consequences of insufficient experiences of informal interactions on perceptions of employees must therefore, first and foremost, activate circumstances for such interactions. Such interventions can facilitate mutual exposure, a critical element in shedding the historic tainted evaluation of other groups.

In this context, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* translates as: “To be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others in its infinite variety of content and form” (Van der Merwe 1997:1). Ubuntu encourages exposure to others and engaging with their lifeworlds. In encountering the particular characteristics of the other’s humanness, humans enlighten and enrich our own (Sindane 1995:9-13). The concept of defining oneself in relation to others implies existence within relationships. Exposure between self and others through occasions of informal interaction (and, as in the case with the AICF, sharing of cultural experiences and modes of communication from the others’ lifeworlds through the singing of their songs - often in the unfamiliar mother tongue of the other), has an effect on relationships with others. Ubuntu predicts that this influence on the relationship will influence the humanness of self. As respect for and understanding of the differing lifeworld of other cultures increases, one can expect the perceptions choir members from differing backgrounds/race/cultures hold of each other will change. “Ubuntu *defines* the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others” (Schutte 1993:46).

Relationship with others accommodates meaningful exposure to others. Ubuntu foresees that this exposure holds promise for deep level change in perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. Ubuntu embraces a flexible perception of the other, a notion of both being and becoming.

It is in this sharing that, on the one hand, cultural difference is transcended and, on the other, cultural arrogance overcome (Kwenda 2003:71).

2.2.3 Ubuntu and the workplace

In order to revive the concept of Ubuntu at the work place, employees need to be unified and work relationships need to be strengthened whilst the notion of work ethic and self esteem is instilled (Liwane 1990:1994). Liwane further states that, as part of the healing process of reconciliation, “organisations should help restore this dignity in the spirit of compassion and care which are the essential elements of Ubuntu”.

If Ubuntu perceptions could find their way to employees’ minds (cognitive understanding) and hearts (emotive understanding) the “living together” part of the culture could begin to change.

The need to embrace African values becomes crucial, especially now that white South African corporate leaders and managers still swim in the pool of reconciliation and political rhetoric, without taking practical action or showing any real understanding. This limits their ability to recognize and harness the full potential of cultural, social, political and personal diversity. This will affect the quality of our competitive edge, or product and market viability. The South African human resources development potential could be overstretched and constrained (Mthembu 1996:219).

Founding procedures (events) for Ubuntu conduct of exposure to others as discussed above could accommodate and encourage deep level transformation in how fellow South African citizens of different race/language backgrounds relate to each other in the workplace. By accommodating such procedures, Ubuntu principles can facilitate the developing of a national sense of loyalty to and social cohesion within the bigger picture, South Africa, through swaying:

- uneducated perceptions and opinions members of different ethnic/race/language groups hold of each other
- inadequate understanding of self in relation to “other”

- opinions of/appreciation for cultural diversity; knowledge and acknowledgement of aesthetic cultural traditions of other groups
- the historic (and present) lack of reference to the “lifeworld” (including languages and means of communication) of other such groups.

Ubuntu speaks to attitudes towards profit. The employee will work for additional rewards for the benefit of his/her fellow man or woman – to share in the fruit of labour. What is earned is regarded in the light of the collected good of the community, as the Afrocentric view is on collective survival. This is in contradiction to the Western notion that if each individual focuses on attaining his/her personal best to reach a state of inner fulfilment, this will involuntarily benefit the team. Ubuntu advocates group loyalty as the key issue in building a team. The Nguni word for work, *umsebenzi*, means ‘service’. Joining a company is seen as a commitment to a new community (Nussbaum 2003b:14). By affirming the sense of Ubuntu community through strengthening relationships within the community, increased employee loyalty could impact positively on productivity and success in the workplace.

In *The Spirit of Ubuntu in African Management*, Mbigi (2000:10) states that the development of the following outcomes is crucial for future success in business in South Africa:

- co-operative and competitive people
- co-operative and competitive perspectives and
- co-operative and competitive practices and processes.

The intrinsic nature of the Absa Internal Choir Festival (as choir initiative and competition) promotes both co-operative and competitive attributes amongst participating Absa employees.

Booyesen has remarked that the AICF reflects the true spirit of Ubuntu. In 2006, addressing the nation on Heritage Day, then President Mbeki stated:

The spirit of Ubuntu which enshrined the values of group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity and collective unity characterised the lifestyles of our forebears. The stories, legends, fairytales, the music and dance of this historical epoch reflect these values and norms (2006).

Developing a successful choir fosters values of group solidarity, compassion, respect and collective unity.

2.2.4 Ubuntu, racism and nation building

Racism, foremost heritage of the Apartheid era, poses a critical stumbling block to transformation in the South African community. No child is born with predetermined ideas about others; human beings are socialised into racism: “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate...” (Mandela 1994:542). This is learnt when they grow up with acquired racist stereotypes. These racist implications, such as prejudice and suspicion, perpetuate inflated views of perceived differences between diverse cultural groups in the South African society, which in turn exacerbate attitudes of prejudice and suspicion. This chain reaction poses an impasse for social transformation and nation building. Mandela continues: “I have always known that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity ... and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite” (1994:542). Ubuntu principles can help counteract the implications of racism socially constructed by Apartheid ideologies. In “Practical Peacemaking Wisdom from Africa: Reflections on *Ubuntu*”, Timothy Murithi (2006:29) notes that this “notion of *ubuntu* sheds light on the importance of peacemaking through the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples. It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness”. Tutu (1999:34-35) observes:

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

Transformation efforts in South Africa need to promote acceptance, even celebration, of differences and should focus on the discovery of similarities between different people in the country. Besides the need for emphasising similarities there exists a need for creating a common survival agenda, “a new dimension of citizenship”. This citizenship entails the ability to “take personal accountability and responsibility for improving one’s situation”, and to live for one’s country (Mbigi and Maree 1995:2). Tutu confirms that all South Africans need to “embrace the full span of the South African community and recognise their own pivotal role and interconnectedness in this *community* if meaningful transformation is to take place in the country” (1999:164). The Ubuntu emphasis on human dignity, respect, collective unity and patriotism presents the apparatus to steer this process.

The final paragraph in the media statement released by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) pro the launch of a book on Ubuntu by IFP-MP Mfuniselwa Bengu provides a fine summary to this section:

In conclusion Mr. Bhengu said: "I submit this book to South Africa, as a nation, for use in our fight against the corrosion of our societal fiber, and the rebuilding of a peaceful and harmonious society - a world that is steeped in Ubuntu principles, such as human dignity, respect, honesty, compassion, brotherhood, tolerance, empathy, caring, sharing ... A world free of corruption, crime, rape, violence, oppression, racism ... It may sound like a dream world, but it is not impossible to reach (2007).

Ubuntu promoting of respect for others as a qualification for self-respect can be a catalyst for restoring colour to the faded rainbow Archbishop Tutu visualised for the South African nation.

2.3 Social Capital

Ubuntu understandings such as interconnectedness of people, positive relationships for the sake of social cohesion and exposure to others resonate with matter dealt with in the field known as social capital. The fundamental idea of social capital is that social networks have value. Derived from the value that social capital places on social

networks, the interactions between people are esteemed as structures which unlock cooperative (and beneficial) actions and transactions with quantifiable results.

Central to most definitions of social capital is the focus on social engagement, mutual reciprocity and trust and networks within communities. Relationships are considered to be significant, promoting the interconnectedness of people that underpins functioning communities with potential for productivity. Social capital concerns itself with the collective value of all social networks – those structures formed on the foundation of people who know people. The beneficial inclinations to do things for each other, known as "norms of reciprocity", arise from these networks.

2.3.1 Forms of capital

University of Chicago professor and 1992 Nobel laureate in economics, Gary Becker, notes:

To most [people]...capital means a bank account, 100 shares of IBM, assembly lines or steel plants. These are all forms of capital in the sense that they yield income and other useful outputs over a long period of time (1992 Nobel lecture).

Adam Smith (1723-1790), hailed by many as the founding father of the discipline of economics (Rothbard 1995:435)², distinguished between “circulating capital” and “fixed capital”. Circulating capital is a term also used by other classical economists such as David Ricardo and Karl Marx, and refers elements that are continually flowing in an organisation (such as raw materials, work in progress, finished goods and cash at hand). Smith defined four types of “fixed capital” - *that which affords a revenue or profit without circulating or changing masters*: 1) useful machines, instruments of the trade; 2) buildings as the means of producing revenue; 3) improvements of land and 4) human capital. Smith saw human capital as *skills, dexterity (physical, intellectual, psychological,*

² Rothbard notes: “As we have already seen, Smith was scarcely the founder of economic science, a science which existed since the medieval scholastics and, in its modern form, since Richard Cantillon” (1995:435).

etc.) and judgment. More than two centuries later, writings about human capital would branch off into social capital. Different forms of capital have been identified including:

Physical capital: refers to physical objects, and includes the most basic components of an economy - resources that people cannot create more of, but instead can only extract from the existing supply, and change from one form to another.

Economic capital: focuses on the control of and command over economic resources such as money, property and other assets (Ihlen 2005:493). At its most basic level, economic capital can be defined as sufficient surplus to cover potential losses over a specified time horizon (Mueller et al. 2004). Economic capital is at the root of all other forms of capital (Swartz 1997:80).

Human capital: represents a measure of the economic value of employees' education, skills and experience for the employer and subsequently for the economy as a whole. The concept of human capital recognises that the quality of employees improves by investment in them. Becker observes that, on an individual level, the more educated and skilled people are, the more valuable they will be to themselves and potential employers. Human capital includes the related expenditures on education, training and medical care in the interest of developing individuals. Husz (1998:9) notes that human capital embraces not only a great number of components like time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual, but *inter alia* components like self image, routine and age. Human development theory describes human capital as being composed of distinct social, imitative and creative elements, of which social capital is but one such element.

Cultural capital: "the knowledge that enables an individual to interpret various cultural codes... [affecting his/her] level of activity in a community" (Soroka & Rafaeli 2006:163). French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who is strongly associated with this discipline, distinguishes three types of cultural capital: 1) embodied - in the lives of persons; 2) objectified - such as objects of art and 3) institutionalised - a university degree or qualification through an institution (Swartz 1997:76). He notes that the acquisition of cultural capital is accomplished through a long process of education by peers, family

members and social institutions. Bourdieu provides a construction for understanding the elitism of the experimental music audience through his concept of cultural capital.

Natural capital: inherent in nature and offering opportunities for human economic endeavour. It includes the essential ecosystems of a bioregion, made up of the reserve of resources (like timber, oil, coal, wildlife, fresh water, and minerals) and living systems (such as wetlands, prairies, coral reefs and rainforests), which present opportunities for resource harvest and extraction (Costanza and Cleveland 2008). In *Natural Capital and Human Economic Survival*, Prugh and his fellow authors disapprove of conventional economic wisdom's viewing of natural capital as a small part of the economy, as the economy exists and survives within the environment and not the other way around (1999:XV).

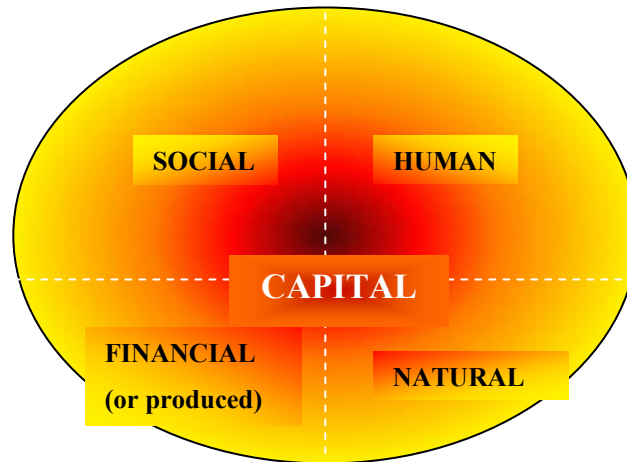
Pierre Bourdieu (1986:253) explains how certain types of capital could be acquired, exchanged and converted into other forms, and emphasises the role of different forms of capital in the reproduction of unequal power relations. He argues that unequal social relations are maintained “through a range of social processes that sustain inequalities in the interlocking phenomena of economic capital, human/cultural capital and social capital” (Campbell 2003:53-54).

Attwood (2007:53-58) presents the following diagram to illustrate how interaction between four forms of capital that form the pillars of sustainable social development might be represented ³. She explains: “the white dotted lines represent the osmotic relationship between the forms of capital which permeate one another, ultimately merging together in a more holistic picture to support particular social relations. It is also important to note that while the four forms of capital are represented equally here, this does not reflect how people actually draw on these forms of capital. Patterns of access and use may shift according to local contextual factors (e.g. the establishment of tourism in the area), ecological processes (e.g. a drought or demographic increase),

³ It is important to note that each of these four broad forms has multiple sub-forms. For example, financial capital includes capital assets as well as physical assets such as property, buildings, cars and even roads (which could be considered physical capital – but have a monetary value).

macroeconomic policies and broader economic changes (e.g. a drop in the gold price resulting in the retrenchment of migrant workers)”.

Diagram illustrating the relationship between four forms of capital



2.3.2 Social Capital: origins

Even though social capital can be considered a newcomer in academic discussion, ingredients of the concept can be detected in early literature of sociology and economy. L. J. Hanifan, a state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia in the early twentieth century, was the first to use the idea of “social capital” in urging for community involvement for the development of successful schools in 1916:

... those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit ... The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself ... If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a ... substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the coöperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors (Putnam 2000:19).

The term did not gain immediate widespread usage. In *The Death and Life of Great Cities*, American academic Jane Jacobs considers the notion of social capital in comparing traditional neighbourhoods with planned estates. She notes that high density, mixed districts, where people were within walking distance of facilities and services and of each other, promoted a greater sense of community than in the case of ‘modern’ estates, segregated into zones. She further argued that *space* and *painstaking planning* had created obstacles that hindered human interaction and she solicited the authorities to amend their priorities: “[The] float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighborhood networks. These networks are a city’ s irreplaceable social capital” (Jacobs 1961:138).

Over the last two decades social capital has become an increasingly popular topic of study in fields like economics, sociology and political science. Much of the current interest can be ascribed to the writings of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. The work of Pierre Bourdieu, in a chapter on the forms of capital in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Richards 1986); and shortly thereafter, that of Coleman (1988) moved the idea into the academic discourse arena. However, it was the work of Robert D. Putnam (1993, 1995), and in particular his thoughts in *Bowling alone* (2000), that brought social capital its current acknowledgment as an authentic topic for research and scholarly discussion.

2.3.3 Conceptualising Social Capital: Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam

Few concepts in the field of sociology have gained as much recognition or as many disciples over such a short period of time as is the case with social capital; it is therefore understandable that the discipline is often criticised for lack of clarity in the conceptualisation of the term:

In this body of [social capital] literature, however, considerable conceptual confusion exists because of different uses of the term by different authors (Schaefer-Mc Daniel 2004:154).

For the purpose of establishing a relation between social capital and the AICF, this study will limit its investigation to the work and interpretations of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam in an endeavour to shape a reasonable definition/description of the term.

- **Bourdieu**

Bourdieu initially used *social capital* to explain how social and economic impetus create and maintain capitalist customs. He portrays social capital as a compilation of actual or potential resources linked to a strong network of “more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (1986:243-248). Bourdieu and Wacquant understand social capital as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (1992:119).

Bourdieu distinguishes between economic, cultural, symbolic⁴ and social capital, where economic capital provides the roots for the other forms. He believes that economic, cultural and social capital together fashion the acceptable actions in any field of operation. Conversion from one form of capital to another is possible, but Bourdieu warns that it demands effort. Long-term investment is required to produce profit, as in the case of parents making a considerable financial investment in good schooling to “buy” cultural/social capital for their children: benefit derived from activities in one area is necessarily paid for by costs in another.

The value of an individual’s human and cultural capital is an important role player in his/her desirability to the group, to building networks and to current and future employers. The value of social capital accumulated from a relationship is affected by the value of the individual’s human capital. The collective capital in the group belongs to every member and provides a permit which sanctions them to draw from this capital (Bourdieu 1986:245), amounting to social debt or credit formed through cohesive social networks. The networks act as agents through which social capital is generated and

⁴ Symbolic capital: manifestation of each of the other forms of capital when they are naturalised on their own terms (Attwood 2007:56).

sustained, and from whence it is extracted. Bourdieu recognises that feasible networks are the product of immense effort at institutional level as they constantly need to be generated, maintained and reproduced all the time. The social connections materialising from these networks are adaptable and exchangeable into economic capital and therein lays the basis of social capital (Bourdieu 1986:247).

- **Coleman**

Sociologist and academic James Coleman, who had for a long time been interested in individual behaviour in relation to the systemic, developed an alternative perspective of social capital.

In place of Bourdieu, Coleman is much more likely to be lauded as the inspiration for social capital ... Coleman transformed social exchange to social capital, reinvigorated individual as rational choice, and shifted analytical emphasis away from psychological and other factors towards the economic (Fine 2001:17,18).

Coleman identifies social capital as the collection of relationships between individuals and within groups which facilitate the achievement of outcomes which could not be achievable in its absence. Like Bourdieu, he transmits social capital to educational contexts. In employing principles of social capital to explain different educational outcomes, Coleman establishes that the nature of the relationships between the school, the home and the immediate community has a significant influence on the scholastic achievement of learners. He supports Bourdieu's view that social capital can be converted to other forms of capital but focuses on the *collective* and *functionalist* aspects of social capital:

[Social capital is] defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors (Coleman 1994:302).

Actors can be individual or corporate actors (Hardin 2003:99) who utilise a variety of resources which collectively contain the following two ingredients: 1) some aspect of social structure and 2) they facilitate the actions of the actors (Coleman 1988:98). Social

capital is a neutral resource – the merit of the impact of the action is wholly dependent upon the intention of the action. Coleman takes cognizance of three elements: *networks*, *reciprocity* and *trust*; where networks and reciprocity are in essence “outcomes of trust” (Stone and Hughes 2002).

Coleman’s understanding of social capital reconciles the relationship between human capital and organisational success. Literature on *high performance systems* has attempted to identify practices that permit improved organisational performance across a wide scope of industries and work locations. The logic of such practices lies in the recognition that the knowledge and information possessed by employees is valuable for organisational survival and success (Ramanand et al 2001). *High performance* entails the existence of high-quality productivity. Coleman’s definition of social capital points out that the kinds of training which do not directly relate to the individual skills levels of employees still impact positively on the levels of productivity in the workplace (St.Clair 2005:440). This proposition of social capital is significant to the value of the AICF as a tool for organisational development, since the intent of the AICF is not directly related to the administrative or operational skills levels of the bank employees.

- **Putnam**

The popularisation of the concept of social capital is largely attributed to the work of Robert D. Putnam, Harvard political scientist and highly acclaimed academic. In *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy* (1993) Putnam turned the spotlight on social capital and its role in the decline of reciprocity in American civil society. He derives his conclusions from a research project on Italian local government centering on social capital.

Since the publication of Robert Putnam’s *Making Democracy work*, the concept of social capital has achieved a new prominence in the social science community ... [It] has generated more discussion and debate than any work of political science in recent years (Boix & Posner 1996:1).

Putnam deems social capital a powerful resource as it facilitates cooperation. He regards the simple feat of associating together as the catalyst that spurs the social cooperation which makes democracy feasible. Of particular interest to this study, is Putnam's view that "[g]ood government in Italy is a by-product of singing-groups and soccer clubs..." (1993:176).

In *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (2000) Putnam links social capital to the recent decline in American political participation and increase in conservative right-wing politics. This decline is evident in the lower levels of trust in government and civil participation. World Bank social scientist Michael Woolcock (2001:13-14) notes that, prior to *Bowling Alone*, many of the main contributions to the concepts of social capital fell short of ascertaining the different types of social capital. Putnam (2000:23-24) distinguishes between: 1) *Bonding social capital* - the social ties and networks formed between people in analogous situations or class groups such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours. This type (Stone and Hughes 2002:2) is exclusive, inward looking and helps "getting by" in daily life. It tends to strengthen elite identities and homogenous groups; and 2) *Bridging social capital* - includes more distant social ties between individuals, such as loose friendships and surface relationships between employees. It's more inclusive, outward-looking nature allows for links between people of dissimilar social groupings, thus generating broader identities and reciprocity. This type helps "getting ahead" (Stone and Hughes 2002:3) by making the resources and opportunities which exist in one network accessible to a member of another. Putnam (2007:165) contends:

... we need to work toward bridging, as well as bonding. Senator Barack Obama, whose life story embodies ties between immigrant and native-born America, has called for ... an America where race is understood in the same way that the ethnic diversity of the white population is understood. People take pride in being Irish-American and Italian-American. They have a particular culture that infuses the (whole) culture and makes it richer and more interesting. But it's not something that determines people's life chances and there is no sense of superiority or inferiority ... [We need to] expand that attitude to embrace African-Americans and Latino-Americans and Asian-Americans, [to ensure that]... all our kids can feel comfortable with the worlds they are coming out of, knowing they are part of something larger.



Field (2003:42) notes that Putnam does not really engage with *Linking social capital*. The latter type extends to unlike people in disparate situations or groups, for example those entirely outside of a community. This presents a considerably wider scope and variety of resources than bonding or bridging social capital. Stone and Hughes (2002:3) regard this type as involving “social relations with those in authority, which might be used to garner resources or power”.

In *Bowling Alone* Putnam proposes a convincing case for the importance of social capital. He highlights its ability to generate 1) cooperation, 2) opportunities to resolve collective problems more easily, 3) benefits of shared responsibility for the individual and 4) organisational machinery that encourage collectively desired individual behaviour. In Putnam’s view, social capital is the grease that allows communities’ wheels to proceed smoothly. The trust and interactions created via social capital cause everyday business, as well as social, transactions to be less costly. Social capital also broadens individual awareness and understanding of human interconnectedness which sequentially encourages active and trusting connections to others. Trusting connections, in turn, promote the development of behavioural patterns and character traits that are in the interest of the broader society.

Putnam allots individual wellbeing to those who deal prosperously in social capital. The networks proffered by this prosperous dealing act as channels for helpful information that assists humans in reaching their goals. Connected people grow to be less suspicious, more tolerant, and also more compassionate to the adversity of others. People who lack connection to others lack opportunities to test the validity of their own beliefs and are therefore more prone to be influenced by and act upon their own impulsive and untested notions. Those whose lives are rich in social capital have improved abilities to fight illnesses and cope with stress and traumas. Putnam notes that through joining an organisation rich in social capital, an individual’s chance of dying within the next year is cut in half.

In 2007 Putnam disclosed the results of the 2006 *Capital Community Benchmark Survey*. This mammoth five year research project - a follow up to a similar survey done in 2000 - involved 41 communities in the USA. The objective of the survey was to evaluate the levels of trust and social capital in ethnically diverse societies. The outcomes present revealing information re diversity that is pertinent to the South African setting, and hence of consequence to this study. Leo (2007) reports:

Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, is very nervous about releasing his new research, and understandably so. His five-year study shows that immigration and ethnic diversity have a devastating short- and medium-term influence on the social capital, fabric of associations, trust, and neighborliness that create and sustain communities. He fears that his work on the surprisingly negative effects of diversity will become part of the immigration debate, even though he finds that in the long run, people do forge new communities and new ties.

Derived from interviews with more than 30,000 people in the 41 selected sites, the findings of Putnam (2007:150) and his research associates are that racial diversity impacts significantly on levels of inter-personal trust. The greater the racial diversity, the weaker the inter-personal trust. Communities where significant racial diversity prevails, demonstrate:

- Lower confidence in local government, local leaders and the local news media;
- Lower frequency of registering to vote, but more interest and knowledge about politics and more participation in protest marches and social reform groups;
- Lower confidence that people can influence politics;
- Less expectation that others will cooperate to solve "dilemmas of collective action" (for instance, conserving water in a drought);
- Less likelihood of working on a community project;
- Lower likelihood of giving to charity or volunteering;

- Fewer close friends and confidantes; less happiness and lower perceived quality of life; more time spent watching television, considering television as the most important form of entertainment.

A result of the *Capital Community Benchmark Survey* that is significant to the South African context is the unearthing of a considerable dwindling of trust in racially diverse societies between members of 1) differing race groups (inter-racial) as well as 2) homogeneous groups (intra-racial). In other words, there exists a reduced amount of trust in *everyone*, not just in people of other races. Putnam concludes that inhabitants of diverse communities tend to “withdraw from collective life, distrust their neighbours, withdraw even from close friends, expect the worst from their community and its leaders ... have less faith that they can make a difference ... Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us” (Leo 2007).

If, indeed, the trust and interactions created via social capital produce less costly business and social transactions, the erosion of communal trust translates to the converse: inflated costs of transactions. It would undoubtedly be in the interest of corporate business to take cognizance of such an occurrence. Further, should the findings of this research project indicate that the AICF presents an agreeable avenue for increasing trust amongst members of diverse groups, it would hold significant meaning for the role of *music⁵* (specifically choir participation) in a diverse society in South Africa and elsewhere.

2.4 Teambuilding

Teams in many different forms are ever-present in various categories of *doing* in life.

Teams come in every shape and size – spouses in a marriage, colleagues at work, volunteers together for a good cause ... There are no lone rangers. It's a myth that one person can do something great. Strong leaders who changed our country dreamed big and were successful because they were always part of teams ... It takes teamwork to make the dream work (Maxwell 2002: from Front matter).

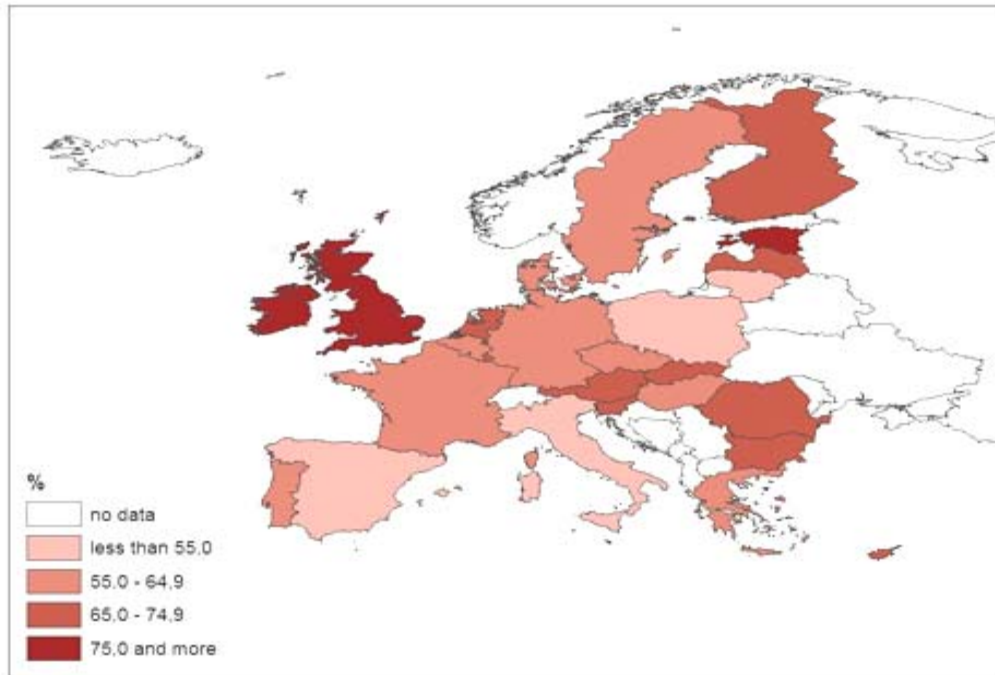
⁵ Sometimes spelt “musicking”; the act of music-making (Elliott 1995).

In 2003 the Level Playing Fields Institute with the Center for Survey Research at the University of Connecticut conducted an extensive, representative survey to measure U.S. employers' and employees' opinions on issues in the workplace (HOW-FAIR 2003:28). This venture revealed that Americans deem 'being a team player' the most important factor in getting ahead in the workplace; more important than factors such as *intelligence*, *leadership skills*, *merit and performance*, *creativity*, *making money for the organization* or even *who you know*. Lencioni (2003:35) confirms this observation: "Virtually every executive staff I've ever come across believes in teamwork." Kimball Fisher, a leading authority on managing self-directed work teams, predicts that many of the more conventional forms of operation will be replaced by the use of teams in the near future (Beckham 1998:48).

Teamwork author Glenn Parker (2008) notes that notwithstanding the significant number of highly regarded books highlighting the value of teamwork and team playing in the 1980s, teamwork was considered "nice" but not critical for the success of the corporation. Then,

... at the end of that decade, teamwork gained in importance as public and private leaders saw the tangible benefits of effective programs. Global competition, workforce changes, the impact of technology, and other factors pushed organizations in the United States to experiment with team approaches to achieve cost-effective, quality products and services (Parker 2008:1).

The following map, borrowed from Kyzlinková et al (2007), reflects the % incidence of teamwork in the European Union (EU) in 2007:



Williams (1995:46) concurringly reports that in the 1990s “...self-directed work teams are, on average, 30 to 50 percent more productive than their conventional counterparts”. He provides examples of organisations that attributed major productivity results to the advantage of such teams at the time: *AT&T* - increased the quality of its operator service by 12 percent; *Federal Express* - cut service errors by 13 percent; *Johnson & Johnson* - achieved inventory reductions of \$6 million; *Shenandoah Life Insurance* - cut staffing needs, saving \$200,000 per year, while handling a 33-percent greater volume of work; and *3M's Hutchinson facility* increased production gains by 300 percent.

2.4.1 Defining “team”

With the intention of establishing an understanding of meaningful *teamwork* it is essential to establish criteria for the concept *team*. Teams are not merely groups of people and not all working groups are teams. Mere functioning groups are often erroneously referred to as teams, for instance *sales team*, *cleaning team* and others. Members of such groups

function predominantly independently of the group, focusing on fulfilling personal goals and objectives rather than team goals.

The essence of a team is shared commitment. Without it, groups perform as individuals; with it, they become a powerful unit of collective performance ... A working group relies on the individual contributions of its members for group performance. But a team strives for something greater than its members could achieve individually (Katzenbach and Smith 1993:111).

The facets and definitions of actual teamwork are bountiful and present the differentiation between the behaviour of the individual in a *team* and the individual in a functioning *group*. Numerous unambiguous examples of successful teamwork are presented in sports where the notion that “championships are won by great teams - not great individuals” is undisputed. Belbin (2002:18) notes that the word ‘team’ appears to have been borrowed in the first instance from sport and signified “being on the same side and pulling together.”

Teamwork literature⁶ universally designates characteristics such as *common goals, cooperation, unison, interdependency* and *willingness to sacrifice individual interest for the sake of group interest* to successful teams. In a *team*, member attitudes and behaviours toward fellow team members and the team’s work are indicators of the level of team efficiency. Successful teams illustrate 1. *shared responsibility and rotating roles*; 2. *broad contribution to initiating, problem-solving and decision-making processes*; 3. *mutual support, respect and trust*; 4. *even sharing of the workload necessary to reach team goals*; and 5. *transparent and consistent conflict management* (Lee 2008).

Team definitions further portray:

Cohesive unit of people who enjoy the privileges of making decisions and continuously work to improve the organization ... The team helps to align the organization around the functions [and comprises the] ability to work toward a common vision (Lamancusa, J. s.a.).

⁶ *Team spirit* is recorded from 1928; *Teamwork* from 1828 in the literal sense, from 1909 in the extended sense (Online Etymology Dictionary 2001).

... a joint action by a group of people, in which each person subordinates his or her individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group (Webster's New World College Dictionary 2000).

A work group becomes a team when shared goals have been established and effective methods to accomplish those goals are in place (Wheelan 1999:3).

Katzenbach and Smith (2003:45) describe a team as a [1] small number of people with [2] complementary skills who are committed to a [3] common purpose, performance goals, and [4] approach for which they hold themselves [5] mutually accountable. Cadwell (1997:11) elucidates that:

- The more members in the team, the more challenging it can be to keep the team focused and keep everyone involved, and that the skills required will dictate the size of the team;
- The need to have or develop the “right mix of skills” – including problem-solving and interpersonal skills - to achieve team goals;
- The purpose and goals present the reason for being a team and therefore need to be clear to all the members;
- Teams need to agree on strategies and work ethics; and
- Successful teams understand that there must be consequences for members who do not meet their commitments or fail to support other team members.

Crucial to the performance of teams are the abilities and behaviours of their members. Relevant to this are the roles that team members play (Yen et al 2006:192).

2.4.2 Types of teams

There are various types of teams operating in the workplace. These include: Traditional teams can be departments or sections that operate as functioning groups. Leaders are appointed by the organisation. Targets are assigned by the organisation and the leader has

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Leadership teams generally consist of managers from different sections, i.e. finance, production and marketing to develop a shared strategy for delivering outcomes. At top management levels, teams are responsible for setting goals and developing strategic direction for the organisation.

Problem-solving teams are generally cross-functional (represent different areas of the organisation) and have to find solutions to problems that cannot be resolved through normal company procedures.

Project teams are formed for a defined period of time, for a specific purpose, and are disbanded when the purpose is fulfilled. The team functions under the guidance of a leader who reports to upper management.

Virtual teams are a product of development in communication technology. Members are drawn from various expert and stakeholder groups (could be consultants or contractors employed by external organisations), can be located across a country or even the world. They are chosen for their technical skills rather than their Belbin leadership roles and individual members are thus primarily committed to themselves and not to the other members of their team (Thomsett 2008).

Informal teams are usually formed for social purposes with common concerns and interests not necessarily similar to those of the institution. Leaders are selected from the membership and not appointed by the organisations.

Some vital features of the Absa choirs are contained in *cross-functional* and *self-directed work teams*. Subsequently these types are discussed in much more detail.

Cross-functional teams (CFTs)

CFTs are comprised of members from different departments or units in the organisation. Parker (1998) identifies six competitive advantages in employing CFTs: 1. Speed – they achieve results faster, specially in product development and customer services fields; 2. Complexity – since they pull together different skill sets, experiences, perceptions and

style, CFTs bring about improved organisational capacity for solving complex problems; 3. Increased creativity – as a by-product of the clash of ideas, augmented creativity can generate new product and service breakthroughs; 4. Customer focus - CFTs accommodate the focus of the whole organisation-effort on satisfying internal or external customer or group of customers; 5. Organisational learning – members grasp technical and professional skills, gain important knowledge about other departments within the organisation and learn to work with people; and 6. Single point of contact – CFTs afford a company a single location for information and decisions about a project or customer.

Self-directed work teams (SDWTs)

In the chaos of industrialisation in the 1930s, the rapidly growing industry depended on a mainly unskilled workforce. Ford automobile factories perfected the so-called *scientific management model* - the breaking down of work into specialised segments to afford workers to gain rapid proficiency - as the mechanism for order and certainty. This set off a movement to mass production and standardised factory work with the associated implication of social isolation for employees. SDWTs, on the contrary, are based on an innovative concept that restructures work around whole processes instead of the traditional reduction of processes to individual steps. Since the 1990s this concept has been contributing to productivity breakthroughs in organisations. Traditional systems reduce required skills at every level of work which creates boredom in bottom-level jobs. The SDWT system allows those closest to the job to participate in designing the job, integrating the needs of the people with the work at hand. SDWTs afford companies the opportunity to redistribute power, authority and responsibility so that those (employees) closest to the customer as well as the end product have decision-making capability (Williams 1995:51).

An important difference between traditional work teams and SDWTs is the level of interdependence emerging in the team (Beckham 1998:48). SDWTs demand individual as well as mutual accountability. This necessitates a common commitment in the team as all the members take responsibility for the overall effort of the group in addition to their

own individual effort. SDWTs member responsibilities include setting goals for the group and individuals and assuming full responsibility for the full scope of responsibilities to achieve those goals. They control and inspect their own work, coach and counsel teammates and assume responsibility for training new personnel (Beckham 1998:49).

SDWTs make use of external as well as internal leaders. Internal leaders are chosen by the group and are often rotated within the group. They do not have the full range of responsibilities of the external facilitator and focus on steering and encouraging the team, filling in for absent team members, assisting team members in developing interpersonal skills and representing the team at meetings.

Team members are required to fulfil new roles. In their traditional roles in the organisation (before joining the SDWT) members might never have functioned outside their technical/specialised roles in the organisation. Now they are required to develop non-technical skills relating to the Belbin team roles, learning to co-ordinate their tasks with other members in the team and generating enough know-how to act as generalists over a broader sphere of tasks than before. They may also be expected to take on leadership responsibilities for a period of time.

Building SDWTs is clearly more challenging than taking employees out of the office for a fun day of communal amusement, or some superficial and stereotypical “teambuilding activity”. Developing SDWTs require deep level transformation over an extended period of time.

2.4.3 Team roles

The proposed number of essential team roles vary from four (Parker 1998) to fifteen (Davis et al 1992). Belbin (1993:16) believes that high team performance is associated with teams which are balanced in terms of the team roles represented amongst team members. He identifies nine team roles required for optimal team functioning. He categorised these roles into three groups: Action Oriented (*Shapers, Implementers* and *Completer-Finishers*), People Oriented (*Coordinator, Team Worker* and *Resource*

Investigator) and Thought Oriented (*Plant, Monitor-Evaluator* and *Specialist*). In efficient teams the roles are fulfilled by the whole mix of team members whose preferred leadership roles provide different but complimentary approaches to the work of the team.

Thomsett International, an Australia based project management group that provides business consultancy and educational workshops all over the world notes:

Our own experience supports Belbin’s belief that leadership is not primarily resident in one person but rather shifts between team members depending upon the particular situation or problem facing the team. In a well-designed and effective team, each team member provides a set of different team/leadership roles and for a team to be effective a mix of roles and leadership is required. In general, most people can undertake only two or three of the above roles effectively. What is conclusive is that a team without all these leadership roles available at various times of crisis would fall apart and would never be a high-performing team (Thomsett 2008).

Belbin’s (1981, 1993) proposed team roles are:

Coordinator	Controlling the way in which a team moves forward towards the group objectives by proactive involvement of all team members and making the best use of team resources;
Shaper	Shaping the way in which team effort is applied, directing attention, seeking to impose some shape or pattern on group discussion and on the outcome of group activities;
Monitor-Evaluator	(1) Analysing problems in a practical manner; (2) evaluating ideas and suggestions so that the team is better placed to take balanced decisions;
Resource Investigator	Exploring and reporting on ideas, developments and resources outside the group; creating external contacts that may be useful to the team and conducting any subsequent negotiations;

Implementer	(1) Turning concepts and plans into practical working procedures; (2) carrying out agreed plans systematically and efficiently;
Team Worker	Supporting members in their strengths (e.g. building on suggestions), understanding and supporting team members in their shortcomings, improving communications between members and fostering team spirit generally;
Planter	Advancing new ideas and strategies with special attention to major issues and looking for possible new approaches to the problems with which the group is confronted;
Specialist	Providing technical direction in team work, directing purely on technical expertise; seeking to impose some shape or pattern on group discussion and on the outcome of group activities based on technical issues;
Completer	Ensuring that the team is protected as far as possible from mistakes (commission/omission); actively searching for aspects of work which need special attention; and maintaining a sense of urgency within the team.

Adapted from Thomsett International tutorial

2.4.4 Teambuilding/group development theories

In the 1960s Bruce Tuckman reviewed multiple group development studies. He combined the common factors in one of the most cited group development models ever. He describes the four stages for group decision making as: *forming*, *storming*, *norming* and *performing* (Tuckman 1965:396). In 1977, after reviewing further studies, a fifth stage namely adjournment was added to his model (Tuckman and Jensen 1977:419). Each



stage in the Tuckman model engages two aspects: *interpersonal relationships* (socio-emotional needs) and *task behaviours* (instrumental needs).

Tuckman's Five Stages of Team Development

Forming
Members become acquainted with one another, assess the group task and ground rules for the task. Team members are very polite, willing to go along with suggestions made and try to avoid making enemies by remaining patient with one another
Storming
The novelty of being a team member is wearing off and leadership struggles and interpersonal conflict begin. Task related conflicts emerge. Listening and finding mutually acceptable resolutions to the conflict becomes obligatory.
Norming
The team determines acceptable performance standards re quality, developing and team functioning. To proceed to the next stage, it is now crucial to establish harmonious relationships within the group.
Performing
The team is ready to be productive and focus on the task. Member roles have been clarified and established. Problem-solving skills learnt in previous stages simplify group interaction. However, if this stage was reached without working through issues of earlier stages, the team may disband, or regress and address those issues.
Adjourment
The team disengages after successful completion of the task. This can be a happy stage with mutual congratulations on a job well done, or regrets of possible loss of friendships

There are several other recognised theories of group development. **Tubbs** (1995:235) developed a four-phase model: Orientation, Conflict, Consensus and Closure. He recognises conflict as a vital component of the group's development, allowing the group to weigh ideas aptly and avoid groupthink⁷. In outlining four phases through which groups are inclined to progress en route to decision-making, **Fisher** (1970:53-66) takes particular notice of the reality of interaction – its content and evolution – in the process of formulating and solidifying the group decision. His proposed phases are Orientation, Conflict, Emergence and Reinforcement. **Poole** (1983:326) developed a multiple-sequences model to accommodate different groups employing different sequences in making decisions. He rejects phasic models of group development and proposes a model of continuously developing threads of activity as he considers discussions to be characterised by interwoven tracks of activity and interaction.

McGrath (1991:147-174) highlights the perception that different teams could possibly follow different developmental pathways to reach the same outcome. He suggests that teams engage in four modes of group activity and understands “modes” as forms of activity that are possible and not requisite. This leads him to believe Mode I: inception (goal choice) and Mode IV: execution (goal attainment) to be involved in all group tasks and projects, while Mode II: technical problem solving (means choice), and Mode III: conflict resolution (policy choice) may not be involved in any particular group action. The model proposes that the group is always acting in one of the four modes with respect to each of three functions: production, well-being and member support.

Another contemporary framework of group development is Gersick's (1988, 1989) Punctuated Equilibrium, which proposes that groups work on their tasks in the same chronological pattern regardless of group structure, tasks, or deadlines. Gersick observed that, for the most part, internal group processes focused on the same time frame set for team projects. Johnson et al (2002:382) expound that the framework is characterised by

⁷ William H. Whyte (1952:239) is accredited for coining the term in 1952. He notes: "Groupthink being a coinage - and, admittedly, a loaded one - a working definition is in order. We are not talking about mere instinctive conformity - it is, after all, a perennial failing of mankind. What we are talking about is a rationalized conformity – an open, articulate philosophy which holds that group values are not only expedient but right and good as well".

five time segments: three brief transition periods at the beginning, mid-point and end; and two long work periods between the transition points. The first transition point starts when the group meets for the first time, establishing strategies to realise their first tasks during the first long work period. This is followed by the second transition, midway through the group project time, setting the direction for the second long work period. This transition is characterised by the re-examining of group strategies, procedures and goals. The second long work period is comparable to Tuckman's Performing stage: the outcome becomes the focal point as the team develops and interacts. The last transition point transpires in the completion point as the group concludes the task and adjourns. Overall, the team's effectiveness and realisation of goals hinge on conflict management, fostering of roles for working together and the mutual support within the group.

Morgan, Salas and Glickman (1994:277-291) developed the *Team Evolution and Maturation (TEAM) model* which combines multiple theories as well as the development models of Tuckman and Gersick. It encompasses nine developmental stages which are described as "relatively informal, indistinct and overlapping" periods of development. Seven central stages (*storming, forming, norming, performing-I, reforming, performing-II* and *conforming*) are supplemented by two additional stages: *pre-form* (that which leads to the origin of the team), and *de-form* (disbanding). This model indicates that teams might begin a given period of development at different stages and spend diverse amounts of time in the various stages. Dynamics such as the characteristics of the team and its members, nature of tasks, milieu-related demands and constraints and even past experiences will determine any given team's beginning point and pattern of progress through the different stages.

2.4.5 Critiques of teamwork in the workplace

Critiques of teamwork highlight a number of possible negative consequences of the application of teamwork strategies in the work environment. Concerns related to teamwork in the workplace include: the incidence of rationalised conformity

(groupthink), undermining of independent individual vision, increased work stress, and friction caused by cultural differences (including differing political and religious beliefs).

A report on the findings of a recent, extensive research project investigated the issue of teamwork as pertaining to working conditions in High Performance Working Organisations (HPWOs)⁸ in European countries (Kyzlinková et al 2007), reveals the following:

- Employees who spend at least one third of their time working to tight deadlines are 20% more likely to work in teams than employees who rarely work to challenging deadlines;
- Where work involves complex tasks, the likelihood for teamwork increases by 70%; and
- Employees who are allowed to give their opinion on organisational changes have a 76% higher chance to be working in a team than others.

Additional information was brought to light regarding the following factors investigated:

Insufficient time to get the job done: No correlation between teamwork and inadequate time to get tasks done could be proven. In addition, contradictory results were witnessed in this regard: while more employees working in teams in Finland and Denmark more felt that they have insufficient time to complete tasks compared to other employees, the opposite tendency was identified in Austria with 21.2% fewer team workers mentioning problems with insufficient time for job completion than other employees.

Impact of teamwork on the learning environment: The vast majority of the correspondents highlighted the positive correlation between teamwork and employee training. Furthermore, team workers are more likely to learn new things in their work than are those not working in teams.

⁸ A high performance work organisation focuses on 1) increasing employees' impact on the business and 2) the influence of processes, methods, the physical environment, technology and tools that improve their labour (Burton et al 2005:2).

Job satisfaction: 85% of employees working in teams in EU15 countries⁹ indicated that they were satisfied with their working environment. The survey also demonstrates that those who work in teams are more likely to be very satisfied with their current job than employees who do not do teamwork.

Work-related stress: Overall, the results of this survey “suggest a conflict between high performance practices and work-life balance policies and in particular showed that group working practices were playing a larger role in work demands”.

In interpreting all of the above, it is important to bear in mind that teamwork does not exist in isolation within the organisation. Rather, it works in synergy with all the characteristics of the organisational environment (Kyzlinková et al 2007).

In closing, Adams (2008:1) notes:

The challenge of building, sustaining, continually enhancing and improving great teams is fundamental to the economic well-being of any country and also to the happiness that people gain from work. It is no exaggeration to say that, if a large organisation could increase the effectiveness of its teams by about 10 percent (according to whichever method the corporation chooses to measure team efficiency), it would massively improve its bottom line ... The point is that teamwork is not, in fact, an option for a successful organisation, it's a necessity. Teamwork can lead to achievement, creativity, and energy levels that someone working alone, or perhaps with just one other person, could hardly imagine.

In the light of the above, the investment of Absa in their employees through the AICF could certainly be deemed as profitable. The process of team development as experienced by choir members in the AICF choirs could undoubtedly prove to be beneficial to the employees (choristers) and the organisation (Absa), alike. The potential of choir participation for fostering better team players and greater cooperation between people could be beneficial on societal level.

⁹ Member countries in the European Union prior to the accession of ten candidate countries on 1 May 2004. The EU15 comprised the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.