

## “Do We Stay or Do We Leave?” The Role of Trust and Engagement in Students’ Decision Whether to Remain in South Africa

Tina Uys<sup>1</sup> and Anton Senekal<sup>2</sup>

*University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa, 2006*  
*E-mail:*<sup>1</sup><tuis@uj.ac.za>, <sup>2</sup><asenekal@uj.ac.za>

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**ABSTRACT** This paper focuses on University of Johannesburg (UJ) students’ views on remaining in or leaving South Africa. These views are based on the degree of trust students perceive the government (broadly defined) to be worthy of, and the degree of engagement in the affairs of the country that students are prepared to expend in the context of perceived threats to South African citizens. A survey of 1214 undergraduate students on all four UJ campuses was conducted in 2011. Care was taken that the sample reflected the overall picture of the research population. The data is analysed in terms of a typology that considers the extent to which people either respond to real or perceived threats based on trust or distrust in the government’s ability and willingness to protect their interests as citizens. On this basis, they could furthermore either engage the threatening reality or disengage from it altogether. The paper analyses the extent to which patterns can be identified among different groups of UJ undergraduate students with regard to the four possible responses that emerge from the developed typology: Trusting engagement, trusting disengagement, distrusting engagement and distrusting disengagement.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most fundamental relationships in any society claiming to be democratic, is the relationship between state/government (broadly defined) and citizen. Within this relationship the element of trust is of exceptional significance. It is probably safe to say that the extent to which this relationship and the critical dimension of trust within it, is under strain, or perceived to be under strain, to a very large extent influences what happens in other institutional spheres of society, such as the economic and educational spheres. It could be argued that these institutional effects are indirect consequences of the abovementioned relationship and their impact on the hearts and minds of the people involved.

In exploring the dimension of trust in the relationship between government and citizen, it is important to consider the perception regarding whether the government of the day is not only truly committed to protect and enhance, with integrity and competence, the interests (espe-

cially with reference to safety, justice and order) of all its citizens - irrespective of race, class, gender and creed - but is also actively involved in formulating and successfully implementing legislation and policy in such a way that it will give effect to this commitment. Distrust in these terms, therefore refers to an absence of convincing evidence that a government of the day is in fact committed in this way to all its citizens. It goes without saying that trust will be much more of an issue in heterogeneous societies than in homogeneous societies.

In a racially and ethnically heterogeneous country like South Africa, one is therefore likely to find that the relationship between government and citizen becomes much more complicated and multifaceted. The potential for racially based sectionalism, ethnic schisms, hidden discrimination and overt disregard for minority interests in a country of this nature, is not only very real, but also opens up unexpected avenues through which trust in the government of the day could easily trickle away. Issues like the struggle to find a new identity clearly intensify these issues. Soudien (2001: 313) testifies to exactly this kind of struggle in identity formation amongst young people in different South African schools and comments that schools as the “Official embodiment in the symbolism of the state ... offer complex opportunities for young

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*Address for correspondence:*

Prof Tina Uys,  
PO Box 524, Auckland Park,  
2006 Johannesburg, South Africa,  
*Telephone:* +27-11-5592885,  
*Fax:* +27-11-5594140,  
*E-mail:* tuis@uj.ac.za

people to receive and make identity. This process of receiving and making ... generates identities that are profoundly heterogeneous, contradictory and susceptible to change”.

In its 2014 Youth Report, *Pondering Panda* used a mobile phone survey<sup>1</sup> to interview 199 589 young people between the ages of 13 and 34 about their hope for the future in South Africa after the death of Nelson Mandela. *Pondering Panda* summarised the striking difference in their sentiments compared to the previous Youth Hope Index (2012) they conducted prior to his death: “Young people were more pessimistic about the future, and were significantly more concerned with corruption and politics than they had been before. However, their overriding concern remained unemployment, and crime was still a significant issue” (*Pondering Panda* Youth Report 2014: 49).

An earlier study by *Pondering Panda* (November 2012) questioning 2606 South African respondents between the ages of 18-34, showed a dramatic increase in the number of South African youth who wanted to leave South Africa of 36 per cent compared to 25 per cent only three months before. The report also revealed strong racial differences with 56 per cent of Whites and 53 per cent of Indians expressing a desire to emigrate, compared to significantly lower percentages of Coloured (43%) and Black (33%) respondents. Respondents with a higher standard of living (LSM groups 7 to 10) were also more likely to want to leave (42%) (*Pondering Panda*, Media Release, 20 November 2012: np).

Shirley Wakefield, spokesperson for *Pondering Panda*, highlights a major dilemma reflected in this finding: “What is also of grave concern is that those most likely to leave are those most likely to have the skills that we so desperately need. Members of higher socio-economic groups are most likely to want to emigrate ... it reveals a state of mind of wanting to get out of South Africa, due to poor prospects for its long-term future. It is probable that this sentiment will be reflected in higher emigration figures in the years ahead, exacerbating our skills shortage”. (*Pondering Panda*, Media Release, 20 November 2012: np). This issue is of particular concern when considering the views of university students as they will represent an important cohort of the population with above average skills sets upon completion of their studies.

This paper therefore explores the following question: *How do their views of the government impact on the desire of undergraduate students of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) to remain in the country?* This implies a look into the heart of the relationship between citizen and government within the South African context.

How students respond to the perceived negative features of the new South Africa is mediated firstly by the degree of trust they have in the government’s ability, and willingness to deal constructively with the negative elements that characterise South African society, and secondly by the various ways in which students might engage or disengage these perceived or real negatives.

Literature dealing with these two elements of trust and engagement will briefly be discussed so as to develop a typology in terms of which the data pertaining to UJ students will be analysed.

### The Trust/Distrust Continuum

Clearly, the dimension of trust can vary on a continuum ranging from trust to distrust. One would therefore expect that levels of trust/distrust could vary over time within a particular society as a whole, or within a particular segment of the population forming part of a given society. Various and varying degrees of trust/distrust could therefore permeate and characterise the same society at a particular point in time.

In terms of political socialisation theory, loyalty to civic leaders and the polity they represent, according to Easton and Dennis, “...flows from the young child’s sense of basic trust in the benevolence of those leaders...that is, his or her belief that they ruled with the child’s best interests in mind” (in a chapter by Flanagan 2004). Extrapolated into adulthood, one could validly argue that trust (especially in a heterogeneous society) would for all citizens translate into a belief that they (leaders and government) ruled with the best interests of all citizens in mind and would do so with integrity and competence.

The extent of trust students experience, is prominent in especially the following two areas: Firstly, their perceptions of economic prospects (that is, the likelihood of finding a job or building a career in South Africa), and secondly, per-

ceptions of safety and security in South Africa. Stated differently, these factors could be formulated in the following way: Firstly: "To what extent can the South African government be trusted to create conditions that facilitate an open, expanding and fair job-market to all its citizens?" and secondly: "To what extent can the South African government be trusted to ensure the safety and security of all its citizens?" The possible responses of students to these trust-related perceptions are taken to manifest primarily in various degrees of an engaging or disengaging response in facing and dealing with these challenges.

A recent survey amongst students at universities in the DRC, South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi by Sadie (2012:151), found high levels of distrust ranging between 24% and 75% with reference to government institutions and issues of governance in the different countries. Sixteen of the 28 measures (seven per each of the four countries) reflected levels of distrust towards the respective governments of 50% and higher.

With regard to economic prospects, the majority of South African students, Black and White, blamed the South African government for failing to address problems of crime and a lack of security adequately. While the majority of White students considered the government's lack of success in dealing with the problem of HIV/AIDS as the second most important issue, Black students were mostly concerned about the creation of jobs. Both racial groups viewed "...the government to be unsuccessful in addressing the issue of illegal immigrants and eradicating poverty" (2012: 155). On the issue of safety and security, only 33% of South African students involved in the study indicated that they trusted the South African Police Services, while 64% expressed explicit distrust of this internal security arm of the Government (2012: 151).

Louw (1997: 137), in exploring trends and perceptions of crime in South Africa, indicated that crime "...causes widespread feelings of insecurity and fear ..." and that this "...undermines popular confidence in the democratization process". This once again raises the issue of trust in the South African government's ability to contain crime successfully. Shaw and Gastrow (2001: 255) show that crime in post-apartheid South Africa is lowering the confidence in the new democratic order for Whites, and for

the majority of South Africans, crime undermines the promise that democracy brought of a better life. Powdthavee (2005: 542) indicated that increased crime leads to significantly lower levels of wellbeing in SA amongst victims of crime compared to non-victims, and lower levels of perceived quality of life also result from crime on others. This is confirmed by Møller (2005) who found that "fear of crime" and "concern for personal safety" had a negative influence on life satisfaction amongst respondents in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

*Pondering Panda's* mobile phone survey (2014) unequivocally displays young people's sentiments in this regard:

*Young South Africans do not have a high opinion of the SAPS. A significant majority (especially older and higher LSM groups) believe police in South Africa are mostly dishonest and corrupt, and they're most likely to say they don't feel good about them. Feeling safe is a big issue for young South Africans, and they feel less safe at home than they do at school. About a fifth say they never feel safe in the area where they live. And as for the police making it safer? With only about a quarter believing police do their best to catch criminals, it's clear that young people do not feel that they can rely on police, either to protect them or to make their neighbourhood safer (2014: 44).*

It is thus glaringly clear that issues of safety and security are closely related to doubts about economic prospects in South Africa, as many South Africa citizens leave or consider leaving the country due to the levels of crime pervading the South Africa social landscape. This is confirmed by Sadie (2012: 160) who found that six out of ten students in South Africa consider leaving South Africa after completing their studies.

Looking at crime and perceptions after two decades of democracy in South Africa and highlighting differences in perceptions amongst different groups in South Africa, Louw (2007: 252) emphasises that these concerns go deeper and affect identity issues of different segments of the South African population: "The deep divisions in public perceptions of crime and safety can also be linked to views of governance in general (not just in the areas of safety and justice), which in turn have been associated with issues of identity and political inclusion". This is reflected in the race and class differences evident in evaluations of governance aimed at

creating a climate conducive to improvements with regard to a wide range of areas such as job creation, basic health services and educational needs (Louw 2007: 252).

### **The Engagement/Disengagement Continuum**

Regardless of the extent of trust or distrust that characterises the relationship between state/government and citizen, the concept that perhaps most accurately describes the response of the trusting or distrusting citizen in these circumstances, is “engagement”. Broadly speaking, engagement/disengagement in effect refers to either progressively being involved in societal challenges based on the hope that this engagement will result in a significant improvement in the challenging societal conditions, or progressively withdrawing from societal challenges based on the lack of hope that engagement will result in significant improvement of the challenging societal conditions.

In the school context, Wilms (2003: 8) identifies the following as the essence of engagement: “identify with...to value...and participate in”. Applying these to a country like South Africa on a national level, would imply that South Africans “identify with, value and participate in” the South African social system in order to contribute to improved living conditions for all. Disengagement would entail the opposite.

People could on the one hand become so overwhelmed by these threats that they start engaging the situation to the extent of going to the dangerous and desperate extreme of taking the law into their own hands. This happens especially where they perceive the government, through its police force, to be either unwilling, unable or both to do something effectively to contain crime. Shaw and Gastrow refer to Mapogo a Matamaga and PAGAD as South African examples of vigilante groups going to this extreme (2001: 254-255). Some people may simply disengage from what they believe to be an intolerably unpleasant reality.

This paper argues that South Africans respond to bleak economic prospects and crime by either engaging the problem or disengaging themselves from the problem. Furthermore, trust or lack of trust in the government and the future of South Africa plays an equally important role in the way people react to these problems.

### **Typology of Possible Responses to Perceived Threats**

For the purposes of this paper, the relationship between the dimensions/dynamisms of trust and engagement will be constructed in the following way: First of all, the two dynamisms from the average citizen’s point of view, are to be understood within the following context:

- ♦ A country is faced with problems or challenges, and the prime responsibility to deal with a particular problem or challenge is taken to be that of the country’s government;
- ♦ The government then to some extent deals with the problem or challenge ranging from competently and fairly, up to failing to deal with problems or challenges at all;
- ♦ Citizens (as individuals or members of particular sectors, organisations, or movements within broader society) look on or participate in this process and then based on the outcome of the government-led or government’s intervention, conclude that that particular government can either be trusted to competently and fairly deal with societal problems or challenges, or cannot be trusted.

Secondly, based on this contextual scenario, the average citizen then concludes that engagement with major stakeholders and processes in this particular society is either a worthwhile endeavour, or not, resulting in either engagement or disengagement. One could perhaps argue that the lower the levels of trust, the less constructive the engagement will be, whereas higher levels of trust will be more likely to result in more constructive engagements from the government’s perspective. With reference to the former response one could argue that some citizens could choose to “help” or “assist” the government to do its job.

Superimposing trust in and engagement with each other, provide an interesting typology of responses as reflected in Table 1.

In terms of the typology it is clear that people could either respond to real or perceived threats on the basis of trust in the government’s ability and willingness to protect their interests as citizens and the derived trust in the future of the country, or from a position of distrust in this regard.

**Table 1: Typology of possible responses to perceived threats**

	<i>Engagement</i>	<i>Disengagement</i>
<i>Trusting</i>	<i>Trusting Engagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involved solution seeking</li> <li>• Economic and social development initiatives<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> <p>1</p>	<i>Trusting Disengagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relaxed anticipation that others will find solutions</li> <li>• Primary involvement in ordinary everyday activities<sup>2</sup></li> </ul> <p>2</p>
<i>Distrusting</i>	<i>Distrusting Engagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benign responses (for example, BAC)</li> <li>• Usurp responses (for example, Pagadand Mapogo previously)</li> <li>• Other self-defence postures (for example, buying weapons)<sup>3</sup></li> </ul> <p>3</p>	<i>Distrusting Disengagement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alienation/fatalism/re-treatism</li> <li>• Slumbering anger</li> <li>• Early retirement</li> <li>• Emigration (geographically or psychologically)<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> <p>4</p>

On this basis they could furthermore either engage in the threatening reality or disengage from it altogether. Four possible responses thus emerge:

1. Trusting engagement
2. Trusting disengagement
3. Distrusting engagement
4. Distrusting disengagement

Response one (trusting engagement) is obviously the most preferable response for the wellbeing of any country as it implies involvement in seeking solutions – within the boundaries of conventional institutions - out of a position of trust in the government and the future of the country, the assumption being that the government is worthy and deserving of this trust. Without discounting the critical importance of community involvement in addressing societal challenges, the fact remains that government bears the ultimate responsibility in this regard.

Response two (trusting disengagement) is probably the least harmful. It could however deny the country valuable and creative inputs in the fight against society's problems when citizens opt for this response.

Of the responses identified in the typology, response three (distrusting engagement) probably poses the greatest threat to the long-term stability and prosperity of any country and therefore also of South Africa.

Response four (distrusting disengagement) could in a certain sense cause a country to develop socio-economic anorexia due to an outflow of knowledge and skills. South African students considering such an option could contribute to just such an outflow of knowledge and skills.

### The Desire to Emigrate

From the above motivations, it is clear that one way of responding to the problem, is to disengage oneself from the situation in a geographical sense, that is by emigrating to another country. In a study on countries across the globe, Dutta and Roy established how

*...political instability can be an important reason for the skilled labour force of an economy to move to other countries. Our detailed analysis reveal that relative conditions of government stability, socio-economic condition, investment profile, democratic accountability, internal conflict, and ethnic tension in countries are important for the retention of a skilled workforce in the domestic country.....Thus, to retain this invaluable section of the population, the government should strive to provide them and the country as a whole with sound political conditions (2011: 454).*

Looking at emigration from Germany, Uebelmeier (2006: 226) shows that the probable emigrants are young, with an above-average school level, and without school children causing a brain drain of people with above average capabilities. Similarly, with reference to people with more than average skills and their reasons for wanting to leave, Monteleone and Torrisi (2012) found that among 4700 Italian researchers (assistant professors), that the brain drain can generally be linked to dissatisfaction with the economic and social situation of the country.

Two other authors, van Dalen and Henkens (2007: 58), with reference to emigration intentions of native born inhabitants of the Netherlands, found that the "...potential migrant is predominantly young, better educated, with a high

income, and with family or friends abroad". Three elements in the public domain, implying lowered trust, relating to social problems such as crime, pollution and ethnic conflict, environmental problems e.g. increasing population density and institutional shortcomings in dealing with welfare and social problems in the educational, social security, health care, law and order and old-age pension domains, play a role in decisions to emigrate. All of these relate to perceptions of the Dutch Government having become increasingly negative in recent years (2007: 58).

In a study on four African countries (Ghana, Senegal, Morocco and Egypt) van Dalen et al. (2005: 775) found that great expectations of an economic nature were the predominant pull factor, while poverty and unemployment represented the dominant push factor for young males with modern values. Having a household member who has been an international migrant or was still a migrant, also played an important role in intentions to migrate.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2011, the Sociology Department at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) conducted a survey among undergraduate students on all four UJ campuses exploring their experiences as members of various student communities. The fieldwork was performed by postgraduate UJ students who conducted face-to-face structured interviews with 1214 students questioning them about a variety of issues related to their experiences as UJ students.

The distribution of the sample adequately represents the 2011 student population in terms of numbers registered on the different campuses – and in terms of race and gender. The majority of the respondents were based at the Auckland Park Campus (590), while sizable groups were interviewed at the Bunting Road Campus (255), the Doornfontein Campus (215) and the Soweto Campus (154). Approximately 80% of the undergraduate students interviewed were Black, 12% White, 6% Indian and 2% Coloured. With regard to sex, 47% (569) were male and 53% (645) female students. The mean age was 21 years and the median stood at 20. Approximately 93% were South Africans, 5% from other SADC countries and 2% from the rest of Africa.

## RESULTS

### Scale Construction

For purposes of this paper two scales were constructed. One scale measured levels of trust in the government and the other, the levels of commitment or engagement of students to South Africa. Factor analyses were conducted on the following items:

- To what extent...
- ...do you think the SA government is containing crime successfully?
- ...do you feel included in the democratic processes in South Africa?
- ...do you trust the South African government?
- ...do you feel safe in SA?
- ...do you like living in SA?
- ...do you feel that you belong in South Africa?
- ...do you feel patriotic towards SA?
- ...are you optimistic about the future of SA?
- ...do you think you are likely to get a job in SA?
- ...do you think that corruption is a serious problem in South Africa?
- ...do you feel safe on campus?

The Kayser-Meyer-Olkin(KMO)Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .836 which exceeds the requirement of .6 and meant that there was sufficient correlation between pairs of items to proceed with the factor analysis. Similarly, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed that it was feasible to proceed. However, the Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for one item was lower than .6 (to what extent do you think that corruption is a serious problem in South Africa?), and this item was therefore removed from further analysis. Two factors had Eigenvalues larger than 1 and were retained. The rotated factor matrix appears in Table 2. The two factors therefore consisted of the following items as reflected in Tables 3 and 4:

Both factors were then subjected to an item analysis to determine the reliability of the scale. The initial Cronbach alpha of the Engagement factor was 0.757 and when the item "to what extent do you feel safe on campus" was removed from the analysis, the Cronbach alpha increased to 0.766. An engagement scale was therefore constructed containing the following items as reflected in Table 5.

**Table 2: Rotated factor matrix**

	<i>Factor</i>	
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
To what extent do you feel that you belong in South Africa?	.773	
To what extent do you like living in SA?	.712	
To what extent do you feel patriotic towards SA?	.553	
To what extent are you optimistic about the future of SA?	.483	
To what extent do you think you are likely to get a job in SA?	.435	
To what extent do you feel safe on campus?	.290	
To what extent do you trust the South African government?		.730
To what extent do you think the SA government is containing crime successfully?		.584
To what extent do you feel safe in SA?		.564
To what extent do you feel included in the democratic processes in South Africa?		.356

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization with rotation converging in 3 iterations.

**Table 3: Factor 1 Engagement**

To what extent do you like living in SA?
To what extent do you feel patriotic towards SA?
To what extent are you optimistic about the future of SA?
To what extent do you think you are likely to get a job in SA?
To what extent do you feel safe on campus?

**Table 4: Factor 2 Trust**

To what extent do you trust the South African government?
To what extent do you think the SA government is containing crime successfully?
To what extent do you feel safe in SA?
To what extent do you feel included in the democratic processes in South Africa?

**Table 5: Scale 1 Engagement**

To what extent do you feel that you belong in South Africa?
To what extent do you like living in SA?
To what extent do you feel patriotic towards SA?
To what extent are you optimistic about the future of SA?
To what extent do you think you are likely to get a job in SA?

With a Cronbach alpha of 0.685 the trust factor was not reliable. Removal of the item “to what extent do you feel included in the democratic processes in South Africa” increased the Cronbach alpha to 0.694. Although this is slightly below the required level of 0.7, it is close enough so that the scale could be used and the trust scale therefore reflects the following (see Table 6).

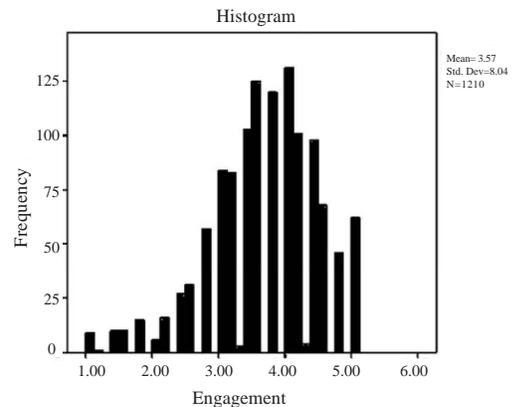
**Table 6: Scale 2 Trust**

To what extent do you trust the South African government?
To what extent do you think the SA government is containing crime successfully?
To what extent do you feel safe in SA?

**Level of Engagement**

The level of engagement experienced by the respondents is reflected in Figure 1. The mean of 3.67 (median=3.8) shows that the majority of the respondents displayed a relatively high level of engagement.

No significant differences were found between male and female students with regard to level of engagement. Significant differences were found between Black African students on the one hand and White and Coloured students on



**Fig. 1. Level of engagement**

the other. Black African students were the most engaged, followed by Indian/Asian and White students, with Coloured students being the least engaged. This result is shown in Table 7. The Dunnett T3 post-hoc test revealed that Black African students displayed significantly higher levels of engagement than White and Coloured students.

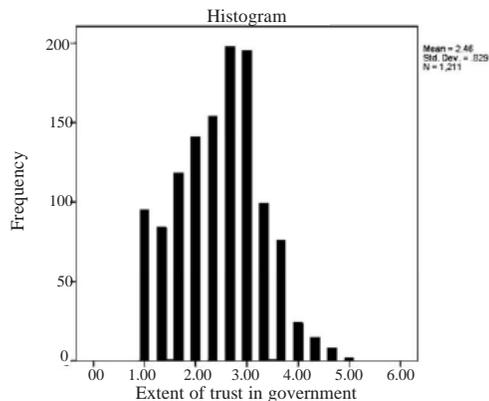
**Table 7: Race and engagement**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Black African	969	3.7412
Indian/Asian	67	3.6075
White	148	3.3541
Coloured	26	3.0462
Total	1210	3.6715

$F=16.092$ , degrees of freedom=3,  $p<0.0005$

### Extent of trust in government

The distribution of the extent of trust in government is shown in Figure 2. The respondents displayed an average level of trust in the government with a mean of 2.46 and a median of 2.67.



**Fig. 2. Extent of trust in government**

Male students placed significantly more trust in government than female students, as is shown in Table 8.

**Table 10: Level of inclusion in democratic processes**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Valid per cent</i>	<i>Cumulative per cent</i>
Not included	493	40.6	40.8	40.8
Reasonably included	434	35.7	35.9	76.7
Fully included	281	23.1	23.3	100.0
Total	1208	99.5	100.0	
Missing	6	.5		
	1214	100.0		

**Table 8: Sex and trust in government**

<i>Are you male or female?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>
Male	568	2.5141	.84254
Female	643	2.4137	.81370

$t=2.107$ ;  $p=0.035$

The students' level of trust in government follows a similar pattern with regard to race differences with Black African students showing the highest level of trust, followed by Indian/Asian and White students, with Coloured student displaying the lowest level of trust as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Race and trust in government**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Black	970	2.5739
White	148	1.9032
Coloured	26	1.8846
Indian/Asian	67	2.2786
Total	1211	2.4608

$F=36.614$ ; degrees of freedom=3;  $p<0.0005$

With regard to trust, the respondents were also requested to indicate the extent to which they felt included in democratic processes as is shown in Table 10. A substantial proportion of the students did not feel included in democratic processes (40.8%), and only 23.3 per cent regarded themselves as fully included in the democratic processes. Male and female students did not differ significantly with regard to the level of inclusion they experienced.

The different race groups again showed significant differences as is evident from Table 11. It is significant that only 25.3% of Black African students felt fully included in the democratic process of the country. This was followed by 17.9 per cent of Indian/Asians and 14.9% of White students, while less than ten per cent of

**Table 11: Race \*inclusion in democratic processes**

		Inclusion in democratic processes			Total
		Not included	Reasonably included	Fully included	
<i>Black African</i>	Count	367	355	245	967
	% within race	38.0%	36.7%	25.3%	100.0%
	% within inclusion in democratic processes	74.4%	81.8%	87.2%	80.0%
<i>White</i>	Count	80	46	22	148
	% within race	54.1%	31.1%	14.9%	100.0%
	% within inclusion in democratic processes	16.2%	10.6%	7.8%	12.3%
<i>Coloured</i>	Count	20	4	2	26
	% within race	76.9%	15.4%	7.7%	100.0%
	% within inclusion in democratic processes	4.1%	0.9%	0.7%	2.2%
<i>Indian/Asian</i>	Count	26	29	12	67
	% within race	38.8%	43.3%	17.9%	100.0%
	% within inclusion in democratic processes	5.3%	6.7%	4.3%	5.5%
<i>Total</i>	Count	493	434	281	1208
	% within race	40.8%	35.9%	23.3%	100.0%
	% within inclusion in democratic processes	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=31.675$ ; degrees of  $f=6$ ;  $p<0.0005$

Coloured students (7.7%) felt that they were fully included in the democratic processes.

### Engagement and Trust

It is also important to consider the extent to which a correlation exists between the level of engagement that students displayed and their level of trust in government. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient produced a significant correlation of 0.462. This indicates that a moderate relationship exists between the students' level of engagement and their level of trust in government.

### Desire to Settle in another Country

A discouragingly high number of respondents is either contemplating, or definitely thinking of leaving the country after they have completed their studies, as is shown in Table 12.

Again no significant differences were found between male and female students with regard

**Table 12: Considering settling in another country**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Not considering	410	33.9
Contemplating	374	31.0
Definitely	424	35.1
Total	1208	100.0
Missing	6	
Total	1214	

to their desire to settle in another country after completing their studies. A cross-tabulation of race and desire to leave revealed significant differences between the four race groups, as is shown in Table 13. Coloured (57.7%) and White (47.3%) students were significantly more likely to consider settling in another country than Black African (32.2%) and Indian/Asian (40.9%) students.

It was also important to determine whether the extent of students' desire to settle in another country after completion of their studies could be attributed to their level of engagement, or the amount of trust they have in government. No significant differences were found with regard to the level of inclusion in democratic processes experienced by the students. The extent to which students considered settling in another country was significantly influenced by their level of engagement and their level of trust in government as is revealed in Table 14. The higher the level of trust in government and the higher their level of engagement, the less likely students would be to consider leaving the country. The Dunnett T3 test showed that all three groups of Settling in another country differ significantly from each other with regard to Level of engagement, while in the case of Trust in government, those who were not considering leaving differed significantly from those who were definitely leaving.

**Table 13: Race \*settling in another country cross-tabulation**

		<i>Settling in another country</i>			
		<i>Not considering it</i>	<i>Contemplating it</i>	<i>Definitely</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Black African</i>	Count	351	305	312	968
	% within race	36.3%	31.5%	32.2%	100.0%
	% within settling in another country	85.6%	81.6%	73.6%	80.1%
<i>White</i>	Count	33	45	70	148
	% within race	22.3%	30.4%	47.3%	100.0%
	% within settling in another country	8.0%	12.0%	16.5%	12.3%
<i>Coloured</i>	Count	6	5	15	26
	% within race	23.1%	19.2%	57.7%	100.0%
	% within settling in another country	1.5%	1.3%	3.5%	2.2%
<i>Indian/Asian</i>	Count	20	19	27	66
	% within race	30.3%	28.8%	40.9%	100.0%
	% within settling in another country	4.9%	5.1%	6.4%	5.5%
<i>Total</i>	Count	410	374	424	1208
	% within race	33.9%	31.0%	35.1%	100.0%
	% within settling in another country	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2_{-22.930}$ ; df=6; p=0.001

**Table 14: ANOVA of extent of trust in government and engagement\*settling in another country**

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Extent of Trust in Government</i>	Not considering it	410	2.6293	22.094	0.000
	Contemplating it	373	2.5004		
	Definitely	424	2.2602		
	Total	1207	2.4598		
<i>Engagement</i>	Not considering it	409	3.9398	47.923	0.000
	Contemplating it	373	3.6702		
	Definitely	424	3.4137		
	Total	1206	3.6715		

## DISCUSSION

The results indicated a moderate relationship between trust and engagement suggesting a concomitant variation between these two variables: the higher the one, the higher the other would be inclined to go, and vice versa. This study showed that trust in government is average to low among the respondents, especially with reference to feeling included in the democratic process in South Africa, and particularly amongst Black African students. This corresponds with the findings of Sadie (2012). In her case lack of trust was linked to a shortage of jobs and safety and security concerns not dealt with effectively by governments in Southern Africa. In the sample of this study, the lowest level of trust was found amongst Coloureds, followed by Whites, Indian/Asians with Black African students displaying the highest level of trust. Interestingly enough, the only variable where a significant difference between male and

female students was found, was trust in government, with male students trusting the government significantly more than female students.

In contrast, the majority of the students demonstrated a relatively high level of engagement in South Africa with Black African students being significantly more engaged than White or Coloured students. Looking at the items on the scale of engagement (I like living in SA, I have a feeling of belonging in SA, I feel patriotic towards SA, I am optimistic about the future of SA and I believe that it is likely that I will find a job), most students are clearly displaying an engaging orientation towards South Africa, its future and their place therein.

## CONCLUSION

While the findings suggested that the majority of the students had an average to low level of trust in the government, they simultaneous-

ly displayed a high level of engagement in South Africa. Combining these two findings (distrust and engagement) would, in terms of the typology, place students at UJ generally speaking in cell number 3, where the orientation is one of "distrusting engagement". In spite of the general distrust that students display, they nevertheless express this paradoxical combination of distrust and engagement in a benign way that is, seeing themselves as part of a country they feel patriotic towards and seeing a future for themselves in South Africa. There is a danger, though, that the currently benign response of the "distrusting engaging" kind could in the long run (if distrust were to intensify and alienation and anger were to increase) be transformed into a "distrusting disengagement" kind of orientation (cell 4 of the typology). The consequences for South Africa of such a drift could be very negative.

To some extent, this drift towards distrusting disengagement (as manifested inter alia in the desire to leave South Africa) seems to be at work already among students when looking at the proportion of respondents considering to leave South Africa. As far as the question of staying or leaving is concerned, only one third of the students indicated that they are not considering settling in another country after completion of their studies. This means that almost two thirds of participants in this study are already in the "distrusting disengagement" mode. Coloured and White students were more likely to consider leaving than Black students. The results also showed that the lower their trust in government the more likely students are to consider leaving, and the more engaged they are in South Africa the less likely they are to consider leaving.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrated two overriding priorities for the South African government if the new South Africa is to become the success story we all hope it will be. First, crime and economic issues need to be addressed effectively and visibly in order to discourage the growing and dangerous socio-political vortex of distrusting citizens engaging threats themselves, or disengaging from these threats, by emigrating. The second challenge for the South African government is to conduct its affairs in such a way that

levels of trust among the youth in general, and students in particular, will rise, so that the relatively high levels of engagement will be harnessed to the benefit of South Africa, while also lowering the desire to leave the country, and thereby reducing the detrimental effects of the brain drain.

The implications of the four responses for the long-term stability and prosperity of South Africa constitute enough substance for a separate and new paper and will therefore not be explored any further here.

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### NOTE

1. As explained in the index to the report *Pondering Panda* (2014) employed their social network Mxit's respondent base in conducting interviews via mobile phones through an interactive app. In order to ensure national representivity responses were weighted in terms of age, gender and race.

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