The development of crime prevention strategies through traditional leaders at school in the OR Tambo District Municipality, South Africa

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Abstract: Schools worldwide tend not to provide a conducive environment for all children to learn and realise their academic aspirations. Daily at school, children are exposed to various atrocities; some become perpetrators, whilst others are victimised. Educators are also not ideally protected as some are easy targets. This article explores the prospects of building partnerships between traditional leaders, police, and families in communities under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders for the prevention of crime and/or juvenile delinquency at school. This study is guided by the following research objectives: a) To extrapolate the partnership and strategies of crime prevention that are used in the areas under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders for crime prevention; b) To identify methods that are used by traditional leaders for the smooth running of the school with the onslaught of crime in the OR Tambo District Municipality; and c) To explore methods of traditional leaders on building relationships between schools and families in the quest of crime prevention at school level in areas of their jurisdiction. The study employed a qualitative research approach that used semi-structured interviews for data collection. In the study, there are 58 traditional leaders that served as participants from the following local municipalities, which fall under the OR Tambo District Municipality: KSD, Enyandeni, Port St Johns and Ingquza-Hill. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to identify participants. Results of the study reveal that although crime prevention in South Africa is subsumed in the police servies, traditional leaders play a viable role in preventing the manifestation of crime or juvenile delinquency in areas under their jurisdiction. Thus, the study is in a quest to advocate for the empowerment of traditional leaders, as they are exposed to the challenges of their communities daily. Their empowerment will strengthen as insulators of criminal behaviour in areas under their jurisdiction. Crime and juvenile delinquency need to be addressed at primary level by the family, before the child is exposed to the challenges that a street life will present. The school must take over from where the family has left off and traditional leaders need to strengthen the partnerships of different agencies in their communities on a zero-tolerance measure towards crime.

Keywords: Crime prevention, family, school, traditional leadership, violence.

Introduction

To win the fight against crime at school in the O.R. Tambo District Municipality (ORTDM) and elsewhere, the police are forced to establish partnerships (Zenzile, 2021; McCarthy & O'Neill, 2014; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The partnership can be between other government departments, citizens, community leaders like traditional leaders, business owners, schools, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other service providers and other criminal justice agencies (Zenzile, 2021; Department of Safety and Security, 1997). According to McCarthy and O'Neill (2014), the basis of this partnership is advocated because of the belief that citizens' role in crime control can be viewed as an outcome of wide commitments. The relationships, norms and values are situated within communities and serve to generate informal social control, which is often viewed as a powerful insulator against crime (Zenzile, 2021). McCarthy and O'Neill (2014) further opine that police officers have limited expertise in dealing with certain social problems. Furthermore, as motivation behind these aforementioned responses there was the pragmatic emphasis on cost savings (Jacobs, 1961; Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Sampson, 1987; Sampson

& Groves, 1989, cited in Bullock, 2014). This partnership is further viewed as plausible because it is envisaged for the creation of understanding and trust between the police, the community and other relevant role players (Zenzile, 2021).

Despite that partnership is important for it to be formed, the concept of crime prevention is absorbed by the police (Crawford & Evans, 2017). In South Africa, it is the government's responsibility to provide the basic level of protection to all citizens (Kole, 2015). However, traditional leaders in the ORTDM are recognised by their communities, as they have a useful role to play; first, at the primary crime prevention level. Lab (2004 cited in Zenzile 2021) postulates that at primary crime prevention level, conditions of the physical and social environment that provide opportunities for criminal acts are identified. Included here are environmental design, neighbourhood watch, general deterrence education about crime and crime prevention. Furthermore, at the secondary crime prevention level, the community can further identify potential offenders and seek intervention. In this paper, it is also important to note further that traditional leaders can also identify existing problems at the micro level and institute interventions that are developed specifically for the given problem.

It is against the information presented in the approaches that traditional leaders play a pivotal role when consulted by organs of the state, including the criminal justice system. This may be evident during instances of consultation where their views about local crime problems are solicited for the development of crime prevention measures (Hughes & Edwards, 2002). As crime varies from locality to locality and requires different solutions, the impetus for community-based solutions is crucial. Finally, Lab (2004) opines that at the tertiary crime prevention level, most of the activities to be performed rest within the workings of the criminal justice system. The activities that are carried out on the tertiary crime prevention level include a) arrest, b) prosecution, c) incarceration, d) treatment and rehabilitation of offenders. Non-justice system input to this process includes private enterprise of correctional programmes, diversionary justice in the community and some community corrections. In this paper, it is also advocated that traditional leaders are well positioned to help the police, as the police are often charged with the duty of addressing a wide range of social problems that affect public safety. In addition, dealing with the sum of these problems and with each problem individually is complex, both in understanding the social conditions that give rise to them and in meeting legal requirements for responding to them. As a result, the argument that the police should bear the primary responsibility for addressing these problems is weak, although these duties often fall to the police, nonetheless. This means that problems become the responsibility of the police when other formal and informal mechanisms to control them have failed (Tilley, 2005).

Research rationale

Mmusinyane (2008) states that a more positive approach involves examining the quality known as resilience and the capacity of traditional authorities, communities and individuals to respond adequately to crime and avoid crime and victimisation despite their circumstances. So-called protective factors help to build or strengthen the resilience of communities and individuals to risks. They include factors such as well-governed rural communities with adherence to a human rights culture, with low levels of inequality, effective and fair leadership, as well as effective and transparent traditional courts that mirror the wider criminal justice system (Mmusinyane, 2008).

Some members of the community become involved in instances of victimisation, which can be briefly outlined as an act of being fearful of crime because, for example, a friend or any other person had informed the member of the community about a harmful act against a third party (Lab, 2004). Other victims of crime turn to the criminal justice system for help; however, the ability of criminal justice to single-handedly alleviate crime and fear in society has been seriously questioned by both proponents and opponents. This latter supposition adds to the growing recognition that victims are neglected within the criminal justice process (Shapland *et al*., 1995, cited in Crawford, 1998; Berg & Shearing, 2011).

Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- Which partnerships and strategies of crime prevention are used in the areas under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders for crime prevention?
- What are the methods that are used by traditional leaders to promote the smooth running of the schools and to combat crime in the OR Tambo District Municipality?
- How do traditional leaders build relationships between schools and families in the quest for crime prevention at school level in areas under their jurisdiction?

Research objectives

This study is guided by the following research objectives:
- To extrapolate the partnership and strategies of crime prevention that are used in the areas under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders for crime prevention
- To identify methods that are used by traditional leaders to promote the smooth running of schools and combat crime within the OR Tambo District Municipality.
- To explore methods of traditional leaders for building relationships between schools and families in the quest for crime prevention at school level in areas under their jurisdiction.

Literature review

The School Governing Body (SGB)

The Department of Basic Education in South Africa asserts that the School Governing Body (SGB) must, amongst other things, help principals, educators and other staff members to perform their professional duties (Department of Basic Education, 2018). The SGBs are also assigned a duty of adopting a code of conduct for learners at school, promote the best interests of the school and, further, ensure its development. Despite the outlined procedures of SGBs, Mestry and Khumalo (2012) postulate that schools in South Africa and globally are in trouble. All government spheres (national, provincial and local) are searching for ways to strengthen their school systems, at all levels, more effectively and respond to the rapid changes that constantly manifest themselves. All efforts are embarked upon to find better ways to educate children (Senge et al., 2000; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Joubert & Squelch (2005) opine that, to date, effective measures to ensure that learning takes place in a safe, secure and positive environment is a critical goal. The Department of Education (2008) remains resolute that the school is committed to providing an environment for the delivery of quality teaching and learning by promoting the rights and safety of all learners, educators and parents. Hence, a call is extended to the SGB that it should play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of sound discipline in a school environment (Joubert & Bray, 2007:80).

However, Mngomezulu and Mabusela (2021) posit that there are challenges posed by the dearth of strategies for retaining qualified teachers in rural schools and that may somewhat be attributed to the process of selecting competent teachers; this assertion buttresses sentiments upheld by Mokoena (2012), Mafora (2013) and Masinire (2015).

Situation at home

In criminological theories, it is well attested that family environment and parenting practices can have a significant influence on the future and criminality prospects of a child (Schneider, 2015; Zenzile, 2021). Families that are at higher risk of producing criminal offenders are characterised by parents who are antisocial or criminal and who practice poor child-rearing methods. Considering these assertions, it is pivotal to note that family can largely be a breeding ground for criminality. Schneider (2015 cited in Zenzile, 2021) groups family environmental risk factors into the following three categories:
- Family dynamics and functioning (poor parenting practices, lack of supervision, parental criminality, family violence, child mistreatment, parental substance abuse);
- Family characteristics (single-parent families, large families, broken families); and
- Area of residence (living in socially disadvantage neighbourhoods).

Zenzile (2021) in agreement with Schneider (2015) posits that the following are the four main clusters of family influences that increase the risk of offending:
- In areas like ORTDM neglect, where parents spend little time interacting with and supervising their children.
- Conflict with children, where parents exert inconsistent or inappropriate discipline, and one party rejects the other;
- Instead of parents serving as conventional role models, they are involved in offending and/or condone law-breaking; and
- disruption, where neglect and conflict arise from marital discord and the breakup of the marriage, with the subsequent absence of one parent (usually the father).

Prevention of potential offending behaviour

Findings in the research conducted by Zenzile (2021) reveal that traditional leaders are of the view that strengthening families and support of good parenting remain key aspects to ameliorate the root causes of criminal behaviour, which will subsequently improve parental supervision, strengthen schools and reduce school truancy. According to Schneider (2015), some communities may be breeding grounds for criminal behaviour, as they are

characterised by different levels of poverty, poor housing, physical deterioration, rapid population growth, instability, the availability of illegal weapons and drugs, a high concentration of unemployment and undereducated young males, and the absence of strong local institutions, social cohesion and informal social control. Schneider (2015) opines that poverty and related negative circumstances at the neighbourhood level are also viewed as contributors to antisocial behaviour among children. Levels of informal social control are often much lower in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which allow criminal and disorderly actions to go unchecked. It can therefore be concluded that children who are living in the aforementioned circumstances are frequently exposed to norms that are favourable to criminality (Nicholas *et al.*, 2005; Wang, 2010; Schneider, 2015).

Theoretical framework

The social control theory, as propounded by Travis Hirschi (1969) was found to be the most appropriate theory to frame this study. The theory explains how the different environmental systems are key to the development of the child. This theory examines particular social groups, especially families and schools and the process that links juveniles to both delinquent and non-delinquent actions (Hirschi, 1969; Braithwaite, 1989, cited in Barclay *et al.*, 2007). Social control may vary across communities based on factors related to change and heterogeneity. This theory further asserts that individuals with strong ties to family and friends will be protected from criminal involvement (Barclay *et al.*, 2007).

Elements of social bonding

For conformity in this study, the following four different elements of social bonding, as identified by Hirschi (1969), will be incorporated (Adler *et al.*, 1995; Bartollas, 2000; Brown *et al.*, 1996; Maguire, Morgan & Reiner, 2000, cited in Zenzile, 2008; Barclay *et al.*, 2007; Bezuidenhout, 2020):

Attachment

This includes attachment to parents, school and peers. Hirschi (1969) opines that a child who has formed a significant attachment to a parent is unlikely to participate in deviant acts out of fear of damaging the relationship with his/her parent(s). The strength between a child and his/her parent(s) depends on the depth and quality of the interaction between the two entities. This bond is strengthened through the amount of time the child spends with his/her parent(s) and the intimacy of communication between the parent and the child. Sensitivity to the opinions of others (e.g., teachers) forms the gist of the matter as far as this element of bonding (attachment) is concerned, especially as it relates to the essence of internalisation (learning) of norms (laws and regulations) and to the conscience or super-ego. To the extent that an individual cares about what others think of him or her, he or she is controlled.

The inability to function well in school

Academic incompetence leads to poor school performance, which, in turn, leads to a dislike of administrators. This chain of events may lead to juvenile delinquency. On the other hand, attachment to school is facilitated through a youngster's appreciation for his/her school and the education system itself, perceptions of how he or she is viewed by teachers and peers and, lastly, the level of achievement in class..

Commitment

This assumes that people (including youngsters) are rational; they will contemplate the consequences of their actions before acting. An individual is committed to the degree that he or she is willing to invest time, energy and himself or herself in conventional activities, such as educational goals, property, or reputation and other valued conditions that discourage delinquent behaviour. Hirschi (1969) contends that if juveniles are committed to conventional values and activities, they develop a stake in conformity and will refrain from delinquent behaviour.

Involvement

Involvement is another element that plays a part in the achievement of societal goals that are social conventional orders. This element focuses on the types of activities that occupy the individual's day and assumes that individuals who engage in conventional activities may be too busy to find time to pursue deviant behaviour. In society there are structures such as schools, which have extracurricular activities such as school plays, clubs, and athletic events. Involvement in any or all of these structures may prevent an individual from engaging in delinquent activities. Hirschi (1969) contends that a person who is involved in conventional activities is tied to appointments, deadlines, working hours, plans and the like. Directed or motivated by all these involvements, a person may not have time to engage in delinquent acts.

Belief

Hirschi's (1969) control theory postulates that although people have been socialised into a common set of beliefs, such as respect for the law and social norms, delinquency is likely to develop due to the ineffectiveness of such beliefs – if they happen to be ineffective.

Research methodology

This discussion paper is qualitative in nature. It builds on certain original thoughts in the earlier research findings. Analysis methods of data that were carried out include semi-structured interviews, focus group meetings and observations. This discussion paper follows a paradigm of interpretive research. In contrast with statistical methods used in the positivist study, the interpretative paradigm focuses on the meanings from a participant's viewpoint (Noon, 2018).

Sample of the study

To achieve the objectives of this discussion paper, a purposive sampling method was used to ensure that the participants were ideally suited to the research of traditional leaders' role on crime prevention. Furthermore, the other considerations were on participants' views regarding the role of community members in addressing the phenomenon of crime at school level. Without proper screening of individuals, data processing could be challenging and time-consuming. The key attributes evaluated were whether participants had some skills (e.g. considerable expertise in the field of work) that rendered them eligible to research or had in-depth background or expertise of crime prevention and community policing (Zenzile, 2021). The research also incorporated the techniques of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is compatible with purposive sampling, where a group of individuals propose possible research participants (Buttle, Davies & Meliala, 2016; Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017). Data collection from multiple sources requires triangulation, using different techniques.

The author concluded that after interviews with 58 participants, this study achieved concentration. Creswell (2013) opines that with 10 to 25 interviews it is possible to reach saturation and that is commonly advised to be observed by researchers. For the purpose of illustrating the study's objectives and what was expected of participants through interviews and focus meetings, participants were presented with a clear statement for their approval (Zenzile, 2021). The written consent of all participants to participate was confirmed. All interviews were written up and recorded descriptively. In adherence to codes of ethics, the documents were subsequently coded to secure participants' information. Furthermore, the identities of the individuals concerned were not indicated in terms of privacy and confidentiality, including the towns, villages or districts in which they are situated. In addition, the positions of the participants were not stated in the study, to maintain privacy and confidentiality. After the interviews were completed, transcripts were created in order to ensure continuity. At the point of data processing, the data collected were thematically classified. The established categories were contrasted, and the associations were analysed. Personal statements, suggestions or memoranda were made during this process. These notes helped to focus on the study results and address them.

Findings

Data analysis produced four themes: 1) Partnerships that are found in the community; 2) Strategies that are used in the community for mobilising individuals and resources for the prevention of crime; 3) Smooth running of a school in the community; and 4) Methods that are used in the community for strengthening relationships between families and school:

Theme 1: Partnerships that are found in the community

Concept	Quote	Reference
Partnerships in the community	*We are in close contact with government agencies (police).*	Participant 8
	We are working quite excellent with police.	Participant 13
	Partnership is formed with NGOs, ward councillors, and FBOs.	Participant 14
	We always promote partnership amongst community members, in instances where a certain member of the community feels that he/she is overwhelmed the Great Place is open for consultation and assist on solving such cases	Participant 31

Source: Researcher

Theme 1 shows that there are various partnerships that exist in the community and community members are involved on building and sustaining them. Each community is always encouraged to make use of facilities in the Great Place, when a need arises.

Theme 2: Strategies that are used in the community for mobilising individuals and resources for the prevention of crime.

Concept	Quote	Reference
Common offenders	*Working together with all affected stakeholders, starting with traditional institution, police, schools, churches and communities mainly youth and women representatives.*	Participant 1
	Community police forums are established in my area. At the level of headmen/headwomen in our villages people can discuss certain incidences of criminal activities and those that cannot be resolved are channelled to Great Place.	Participant 2
	People are highly encouraged to report any incidences of anti-social behaviour	Participant 3
	We promote punishment of people that are found guilty of being against the law	Participant 4
	We make sure that taverns are closed in time by 20:00 and patrol each day	Participant 13
	It becomes the responsibility of every member in my community for maintaining law and order. However, in instances that are found to be overwhelming the matter becomes brought to the attention of the police for intervention.	Participant 34
	In my community I ensure people are taught about their role and responsibility when there is crime committed. As a result, when there is allegation of crime committed each member becomes involved in the investigation of a culprit.	Participant 35
	I promote the importance of school, church, sport in general and traditional dances.	Participant 41
	I ensure that tournaments and concerts during holidays that are organised to keep the youth busy.	Participant 51

Source: Researcher

Theme 2 shows that participants in their areas of jurisdiction they developed and established agents or forums which lay groundwork for crime prevention by involving community members. Wherein their participation is highly

encouraged for ensuring that factors which can be breeding grounds for criminality or criminal behaviour in the community, are addressed like time for closing taverns and implementation of curfews. Some traditional leaders agree that they have to assume the role of maintaining law and order and are cognisant of the fact that some other cases may need to be properly dealt with by the police.

Theme 3: Smooth running of a school in the community

Concept	Quote	Reference
Running of a school in the community	*The principal can contact me anytime on my personal number, for whatever issue they face at school.*	Participant 1
	The conditions of a school in my area are unbearable, there are no toilets and some windows are broken.	Participant 3
	Close contact with the principal is found prevalent	Participant 4
	In order to ensure smooth running in the school. I visit schools in my area quarterly, each year.	Participant 5
	In my area school committees are established for ensuring issue of crime prevention and smooth running of the school.	Participant 6
	I attend each meeting and appoint strong SGB.	Participant 13
	Checking of the school is found prudent and attending meetings at school is essential.	Participant 31
	We elect a member to serve as a representative of our interest as a community and convey our feelings about the school.	Participant 35
	We are having some campaigns for crime prevention. On weekly basis I visit schools in my area of jurisdiction in order to establish problems that might be encountered and find a solution where need arises.	Participant 37
	In order to discuss school matters I arrange for a meeting with the school principals and selected committee members in the Great Place.	Participant 41
	I make sure that school begins early, and children attend school on daily basis.	Participant 47
	I attend SGB and parent meetings. Address learners when necessary. Protect leaners from criminal acts that are perpetrated by local people. Discourage learners from indulging in undesirable behaviour.	Participant 48
	During Imbizo's (community meetings) I encourage members to attend school meetings.	Participant 53

Source: Researcher

Theme 3 shows that participants had established good relationships with the school principal and that affords them the opportunity to know what is happening at school. Some participants reveal that they attend school meetings and they are able to discourage rule breaking by learners at school. They inform them about the negative consequences of

transgressing the law. Participants also reveal that during community meetings they take upon themselves to encourage community about the essence of attending school meetings, when called upon.

Theme 4: Methods that are used in the community for strengthening relationships between families and school.

Concept	Quote	Reference
Relationships between school and families	We have programmes where parents motivate children at the beginning of the year for school and life outside school.	Participant 2
	We ensure that parents are involved in the encouragement of children about the importance of school. So that they can be independent and live a better life.	Participant 3
	I call for Imbizo's for discussing matters of essential importance.	Participant 5
	There are church programmes that are facilitated.	Participant 6
	Customs, norms, traditions, and church programmes are used.	Participant 11
	We encourage formation of a School Governing Body so that they inform community members about what is happening at school.	Participant 12
	Parents are encouraged to have good communication skills with their children and become their friends so that they can make their children to open and be taught the difference between what is right and wrong.	Participant 13
	As a leader I call meetings every month in my area, and I take an opportunity to show them how to raise teenagers	Participant 14
	We encourage that every child must have birth certificate in order to receive government support and attend school for better prospects of development.	Participant 29
	As a traditional leader I take it as my responsibility to make sure that I intervene when there are families which have some crisis. I also ensure that each child that is in a school going age attend school for his/ her livelihood in future.	Participant 32
	I'm always involved in many events that are taking place in the schools in my area of jurisdiction. However, if I will not be able to attend, I appoint a representative. SGB members from time to are invited to make some update in the Great Place to the general membership of the community about the school situation.	Participant 38

Source: Researcher

Theme 4 reveals that in some communities there are established programmes wherein parents can address learners on how to behave both at school and outside. Some traditional leaders mentioned the importance of attending school for the betterment of future endeavours.

Discussion

According to a study conducted by Zenzile (2021), traditional leaders attested that working together as a community is a governing principle for the prevention of crime. Traditional leaders make it a priority to do school visits, appointment of SGBs, keeping in contact with the school principal and organising parents' meetings. Tilley (2005) opines that effective crime prevention measures that are deployed depend, to a greater extent, on how far

interventions are appropriate to tackle the types of crimes that the community faces. It is therefore of essence to mention that resources need to be directed to where, when, and how crime incidents take place. In addition, effective implementation needs to be informed by an understanding of the physical and social characteristics of the affected area. Tilley (2005) further claims that for strategies to be effective, a number of decisions must be made. Some of the decisions made must largely target the prevention of the onset of criminal behaviour. Schneider (2015) opines that about parent training, based on the results of assessments, evidence-based interventions should be designed. This latter assertion will further assist in addressing risk factors and development initiatives.

To realise the goals of crime preventions, a multi-institutional approach needs to be considered. This approach often requires the intervention to be delivered (a) through multiple institutions (the family, the school, community, healthcare facilities, etc.), (b) by different agencies and professionals and (c) in an integrated, seamless, wraparound approach in which all service providers work in a coordinated and complementary fashion. This, in turn, will help to transform the community into socially cohesive, active, caring, and vigilant members through informal social control initiatives (Schneider, 2015).

Findings largely point out that traditional leaders deemed it important that school safety must surpass any other method for making a conducive environment for learning. During their school visits and meetings with principals and parents and during community *imbizos*, traditional leaders ensure that schools put measures in place to curtail persistent truancy and bullying. Furthermore, traditional leaders in the ORTDM wish that they can deal directly with learners that portray conduct problems at school. Schneider, (2015) further opine that each of the aforementioned categories can be divided into specific strategies that can foster school-based protective factors, such as academic success, bonding to school and learning and avoidance of high-risk attitudes and behaviours.

Limitations

This empirical study, which is qualitative in nature, was limited to 58 judgements and experiences of traditional leaders, as sampled from four local municipalities of the ORTDM. This study could have benefited more if and potential offenders in the society were involved, in order to excavate the understanding of the drive of crime in society. However, such undertakings are scheduled for future longitudinal studies in ORTDM and elsewhere. Other future research projects will further focus on the measures for examining the ability of traditional leaders on the mobilisation of the disadvantaged neighbourhoods for social cohesion and the building traditional leader's crime prevention centres.

Conclusion and recommendations

This researcher paper provides an empirical overview of the role of traditional leaders on crime prevention at schools in the ORTDM. The findings of the study show that traditional leaders are aware about several measures that can be developed to curtail criminal behaviour amongst learners at school. It is therefore against this upheld view that traditional leaders can stimulate people in their areas of jurisdiction to devote a great deal of effort towards the solution of social ills in their communities.

Some traditional leaders report that they visit schools and give principals open access to them, so that they may be contacted when a need arises. This situation opens doors for building good relationships with the school for a better learning environment.

In the study, training of traditional leaders is highly recommended, so that they assume the responsibility of developing the next generation that can face the global challenges. In return, that will lead to transformation and sustain the development of society through education. Training should include the importance of acknowledging the peculiarities of communities under their jurisdiction and family backgrounds of learners, so that they may influence the relevant policies. The strategy of involving community members is an essential element that needs to be included. Zenzile (2021) postulates that methods of sustaining continued involvement in the efforts of crime prevention should be promoted, as some members of the community tend to lose confidence and, subsequently, withdraw their consent and that thwarts the achievement of social cohesion and social control.

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