CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION ACROSS THE GLOBE

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I. WHY THE INTERNATIONAL CRIME VICTIM SURVEY

The potential of victim surveys for comparative purposes led to the carrying out of the first International Crime Victim Survey (ICS at the time, later renamed ICVS), in 1989. A first proposal to organise an international victimisation survey was launched by the OECD in the 1970s. Pilot studies were carried out in the USA, the Netherlands and Finland. Further to a meeting of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, held in 1987 in Barcelona, a working group was created and started developing the survey methodology and questionnaire. Some twenty countries were invited to participate in a standardised victimisation survey.

There were three main reasons for setting up the ICVS. The first was related to the enormous problems with offences recorded by the police for comparing crime in different countries. The second was the lack of any alternative standardised measure, and the third was the promotion of the victim survey in countries that have no, or only a meagre experience of it. All the above-mentioned reasons are fully applicable to countries in transition.

Police figures are inadequate for comparative purposes because the majority of incidents that the police become aware of are brought to their attention by victims, and any differences in propensity to report in different countries will influence the comparability of the amount of crime known by the police. Police figures vary because of differences in legal definitions, recording practices, and precise rules for classifying and counting incidents. These limitations are well known.

A number of industrialised countries have launched crime or "victimisation" surveys to gain a wider and better knowledge of national crime problems - and, to a great extent, the ICVS reflects their approach and experience. Such surveys ask representative population samples about selected offences they have experienced over a given time. They deal with incidents that have, or have not, been reported to the police and in particular, with the reasons why people do or do not choose to report them to the police. They provide a more realistic record of the population affected by crime and - if the surveys are repeated - a measure of trends in crime unaffected by changes in the victims' reporting behaviour, or by administrative changes in recording crime. Social and demographic information on the respondents also provide an opportunity to analyse types of crime risks and the way they vary for different groups according to a number of factors, such as social status, age, gender, etc.

The experience gained with national and local surveys called for a comparative international survey in view of the fact that the number of countries with appropriate surveys were limited, and the surveys used different methods, thus making comparison far from straightforward.[1]

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II. THE ICVS TO DATE

There have been three rounds of the ICVS. The first was developed by a Working Group set up in 1987, leading to fieldwork early in 1989. Thereafter the Working Group reformed, consisting of Jan van Dijk (Ministry of Justice/ University of Leiden, the Netherlands; overall co-ordinator), Pat Mayhew (Home Office, United Kingdom), and Ugljesa Zvekic and Anna Alvazzi del Frate of the United Nations Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in Rome.

The second ICVS took place in 1992/94, and the third in 1996/97. In the industrialised countries, each country met its own survey costs, although much of the administrative overheads of the ICVS programme were borne by the Dutch Ministry of Justice, which has also sponsored survey activities in almost all the developing countries and countries in transition. Further financial assistance was provided by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Home Office, UK; the Department of Justice Canada; the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI); and UNDP. The Working Group managed oversight of the surveys, although a co-ordinator in each country was responsible for the conduct of fieldwork and, where necessary, for ensuring a sound translation of the questionnaire. The technical management of most of the surveys in the industrialised countries was carried out by InterView, a Dutch survey company. InterView sub-contracted fieldwork to survey companies in the participating countries, while maintaining responsibility for the questionnaire, sample selection and interview procedures. UNICRI was responsible for the face-to-face questionnaire and for monitoring of the ICVS in the developing countries and countries in transition. The data from the surveys were integrated and processed by John van Kesteren of the Criminological Institute, Faculty of Law of the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Fifteen countries took part in the first (1989) ICVS, including the cities of Warsaw (Poland) and Surabaya (Indonesia). The second (1992/94) ICVS covered eleven industrialised countries, thirteen developing countries and six countries in transition. Eight of the countries had taken part in 1989. Full details of the 1989 and 1992 surveys in industrialised countries are reported in van Dijk *et al.*, (1990) and in van Dijk and Mayhew (1992). Further information and reports on the 1992 ICVS, including six countries in transition, are presented in Alvazzi del Frate *et al.* (1993).

The second (1992/94) round of the ICVS expanded to include standardised surveys in thirteen developing countries and six countries in transition, mainly at the city level. These were taken forward largely by UNICRI, which was keen to sensitise governments of developing countries and countries in transition on the dimensions and extent of crime in their urban areas - especially as police data on crime was often poor. Results from the developing world are reported in Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate (1995). After the second ICVS, a programme of standardised surveys of crime against businesses was also mounted in nine countries. Comparative results are presented in van Dijk and Terlouw (1996).

The third round of the ICVS was carried out in 1996 and 1997 and encompassed

[1] Differences in survey design and administration influence both the amount and type of victimisation measured. The technical differences at issue include: the number of people interviewed in the household; sampling frame and age range; mode of interviewer, "screening" methods and number of "screeners", "recall" period; and respose rates.

eleven industrialised countries, thirteen developing countries and twenty countries in transition. Two volumes (Zvekic, 1998, and Hatalak, Alvazzi del Frate and Zvekic, 1998) report the findings related to countries in transition, while the results of the 1996 ICVS for industrialised countries are reported in Mayhew and van Dijk (1997) and, for developing countries, in Alvazzi del Frate (1998). All in all, with the 1996/97 ICVS, more than 130,000 people were interviewed in 40 languages around the world.

TABLE 1

International Crime Victim Survey - Overview of Participation in the 1989, 1992-94 and 1996-97 "Sweeps"

Industrialised Countries	1989	1992-94	1996-97
Australia	*	*	
Austria			*
Belgium	*	*	
Canada	*	*	*
England & Wales	*	*	*
Finland	*	*	*
France	*		*
Germany	*		
Italy	*		
Japan	*		
Malta			*
The Netherlands	*	*	*
New Zealand		*	
Northern Ireland	*		*
Norway	*		
Scotland	*		*
Spain	*	*	
Sweden		*	*
Switzerland	*		*
USA	*	*	*

Countries in Transition	1989	1992-94	1996-97
Albania			*
Belarus			*
Bulgaria			*
Croatia			*
Czech Republic		*	*
Estonia		*	*
F. R. of Yugoslavia			*
FYR of Macedonia			*
Georgia		*	*
Hungary			*
Kyrgyzstan			*
Latvia			*
Lithuania			*
Mongolia			*
Poland	*	*	*
Romania			*
Russia		*	*
Slovak Republic		*	*
Slovenia		*	*
Ukraine			*

TABLE 1 (continued)

Developing Countries	1989	1992-94	1996-97
Argentina		*	*
Bolivia			*
Botswana			*
Brazil		*	*
China		*	
Colombia			*
Costa Rica		*	*
Egypt		*	
India		*	*
Indonesia	*	*	*
Papua New Guinea		*(°)	
Paraguay			*
The Philippines		*	*
South Africa		*	*
Tanzania		*	
Tunisia		*	
Uganda		*	*
Zimbabwe			*

(°)Data set not available

III. SURVEY METHODS

The ICVS was carried out by using two main survey methods: computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and face-to-face. As a rule, CATI was adopted in the industrialised countries, with the exception of Northern Ireland (1989 and 1996), Spain (1993) and Malta (1997), and face-to-face was used in the developing countries and countries in transition, with the only exception being Slovenia (1992 and 1997).

A. Sampling

In all developed countries and in some countries in transition, a national sample ranging between 1000 to 2000 respondents was used, while in most developing countries and countries in transition a city sample of 1000 was used.

B. The Count of Crime

The ICVS enquires were about crimes against clearly identifiable individuals, excluding children. While the ICVS looks into incidents which, by and large, accord with legal definitions of offences, in essence it accepts the accounts that the respondents are prepared to give to the interviewers of what happened. Therefore, the ICVS accepts a broader definition of crime than the police who, once incidents are reported to them, are likely to select those which merit the attention of the criminal justice system, or meet organisational demands and parameters to allow for further processing.

Eleven main forms of victimisation are covered by the ICVS, three of which allow for further grouping. Household crimes are those which can be seen as affecting the household at large, and respondents report on all incidents known to them. For personal crimes, they report on what happened to them personally.

Household Property Crimes:
- theft of car
- theft from cars
- vandalism to cars
- theft of motorcycles
- theft of bicycles
- burglary with entry
- attempted burglary
- robbery

Personal Crime:
- theft of personal
- property pickpocketing
- non-contact personal thefts
- sexual incidents
- sexual assaults
- offensive behaviour
- assaults/threats
- assaults with force
- assaults without force

In the surveys in developing countries and countries in transition, consumer fraud and corruption were also covered. Consumer fraud was asked about in the industrialised countries in 1992 and 1996, and corruption in 1996/97.

The respondents are asked first about their experience of crime over the last five years. Those who mention an incident of any particular type are asked when it occurred, and if in the last year, how many times. All victims reporting incidents over the past five years are asked some additional questions about what happened.

C. Translation of Questionnaire

In some countries the interviewers, having to work in several local dialects, were provided with the translation in the language of the majority linguistic group; while translations into dialects were provided on the spot, that is to say, during the interviewing process. It is difficult to assess to what extent this affected the responses, but it does indicate the need for closer monitoring and control of the translation procedure and reliability. Back and forth translation from the original English into and from the language in question was carried out in a number of countries, both to ensure the adequacy of translation as well as to provide for the most appropriate native wording.

D. Carrying Out of the Full-fledged Survey

Data collection lasted from eight to ten weeks in each country and was followed by

TABLE 2

Aggregate Victimisation Rates by World Regions
ICVS (urban five year rates: 1988-96)

	Total	Western Europe	New World	Latin America	Countries In Transition	Asia	Africa
Car crime	29.7	36.8	44.6	29.9	27.8	7.5	22.4
Burglary/attempt	20.4	14.4	23.3	32.4	17.3	11.3	35.4
Other theft	32.3	27.1	26.6	42.4	31.9	30.3	41.7
Violent crime	20.4	15.8	20.2	36.1	17.3	13.0	31.8
Violence (females)	7.4	5.0	8.0	14.3	6.0	4.8	12.6
Violence (males)	6.2	5.0	8.4	8.0	6.5	2.4	7.9
Any crime	63.7	61.2	65.3	76.6	62.0	45.0	74.0
Consumer fraud	29.4	12.5	7.9	24.4	39.8	27.6	48.7
Corruption	11.0	1.1	1.0	19.5	12.6	20.2	13.5

Note: Table elaborated from J.J.M. van Dijk. "Criminal victimisation: a global view", paper presented at the International Conference on *Surveying Crime: A Global Perspective*, Rome, 1998.

the data entry and logical validation process. On average, fieldwork lasted four months including translation of the questionnaire, sampling, data collection and preparation of the dataset for delivery. A final report was prepared by each national co-ordinator.

The results are based on data which have been weighted to make the samples as representative as possible of national populations aged 16 or more in terms of gender, regional population distribution, age, and household composition.

E. Face-to-face Interviewing

In most countries, the survey was carried out by an *ad hoc* team of interviewers. On average, face-to-face interviews lasted thirty minutes and could generally be understood by illiterate respondents.

IV. CRIMINAL VICTIMISATION: AN OVERVIEW

Criminal victimisation is a widespread feature of urban areas across the globe: there is no crime-free country. Victimisation by conventional crime is commonly experienced by all nations and in particular, the inhabitants of large cities. In this sense, criminal victimisation is a global statistical norm. It is not a distinct property of some countries only.

Irrespective of the part of the world, over a five year period, two out of three inhabitants of large cities are victimised by crime. It is particularly significant to note that the victimisation rates are highest in Latin America and Africa, while they are the lowest in Asia. Countries in transition show rates remarkably similar to those of Western Europe.

Specific crime victimisation rates such as those for burglary, other theft and violent crime are highest in Latin America and Africa. In these two regions, the level of violence is more than twice as high as elsewhere but it is also high in the New World (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA); Western Europe and Asia are less exposed to violent crime. Different is the global pattern of distribution for car related crimes for which the highest rates are in the industrialised world. However, car owners risk of having their cars stolen, burglarised and/ or vandalised are similar across the globe (with the exception of Asia where it is the lowest) but somewhat higher in Africa.[2] Furthermore, the rates of property crime have gone down or stabilised in several of the most industrialised countries. However, the risk of being victimised by violence across the world is at least one in five.

As regards consumer fraud and corruption in public administration it is much higher in the developing world and countries in transition, adding additional burden and cost of overall criminal victimisation to people in less affluent societies.[3]

Certain residential, age and gender groups, as well as life styles, run higher risks of criminal victimisation. While much of it is circumscribed, gender differences do appear to show somewhat more stable differential patterns. In the industrialised world, men and women run similar level of risk for assault. In other parts of the world there are clear gender differences putting women at a much higher risk of being victimised by violence. Thus, while men across the globe run a similar level of risk of being assaulted, the risks for women in Latin America, Africa and Asia are fifty percent higher [4]. Furthermore, assaults on women tend to be familial or domestic in

[2] Van Dijk. "Criminal...", *ibid*, table 2 note.

[3] U. Zvekic, *Criminal Victimisation in Countries in Transition*. UNICRI Publ. No. 61, 1998.

TABLE 3

Crimes Reported to the Police in Three Global Regions: ICVS (1992-96)

	Industrialised Countries	Countries in Transition	developing countries
Theft of car	92.6	87.5	89.5
Burglary	84.5	64.9	47.4
Theft from car	56.9	44.3	41.8
Assault with force	48.1	34.1	36.2
Robbery	46.9	32.7	34.2
Theft of Personal Property	43.8	21.9	19.2
Sexual assault	26.8	21.3	22.4

the sense that in a third of the cases of violence against women, the offender was known (even by name) to the victim. Domestic violence is most often reported by women in the New World and Western Europe.[5]

Crime rates based on officials statistics are universally lower than survey-based victimisation rates. Therefore, differences in officials crime rates among countries have much to do, in addition to the crime type, with the propensity to report crimes to the police, and further down the criminal justice road, police capacity to record them, and then the prosecution and courts capacity to process the cases and charge/ sentence offenders. The attrition rates (capacity) of the criminal justice system is widespread, and filtering out is a universal process present in both mandatory as well as discretionary criminal justice systems. The first filtering out is to be looked for in the relationship between citizens and the police. In no part of the world are all crimes reported to or detected by the police, nor are all those that are known to the police passed on further down the road to result in a criminal charge and court sentence. In the majority of countries, around half of the suspects or those criminally indicted are found guilty and subsequently sentenced.[6]

In all the parts of the world, the most frequently reported crime is that of theft of car, with the reporting rates around 90%. With the exception of burglary in the industrialised world and countries in transition, as well as of theft from cars in the industrialised world, all other crimes in all three developmental categories are reported by less than half of the victims. Particularly low are the reporting rates for sexual assault. In other words, less than one in three female victims of violence report their victimisation to the police.

It is evident that national and global crime levels, as reported by the UNCJS (official statistics), are much lower than the "true" levels of crime, mainly due to reporting patterns. On average, crime reported to the police continued to rise in 1980s and 1990s. "*The most commonly*

[4] Van Dijk. "Criminal...", *supra*.

[5] A. Alvazzi del Frate, *Victims of Crime in the Developing World*, UNICRI Publ. No.57, 1998, pp. 69-71.

[6] G. Newman, "Advance in Comparative Criminology: The United Nations Global Report on Crime and Justice" paper presented at the International Conference on *Surveying Crime: A Global Perspective*, Rome, 1998.

TABLE 4

Percentage of Victims Satisfied with the Police upon Reporting an Incident ICVS (1992-96)

	Western Europe	New World	Countries in transition	Asia	Africa	Latin America
Burglary	67.8	74.4	37.8	42.2	29.4	24.6
Contact crimes	64.0	69.7	39.8	61.7	46.8	34.2

reported crime was theft, followed by burglary. Violent crime made up some 10-15% of all reported crime" [7]. The established reporting pattern is that irrespective of crime type, there are much higher police reporting levels in the industrialised world as compared with other parts of the world. This propensity to report is related to a number of factors, including as regards property crimes, insurance coverage. The ICVS has clearly demonstrated that the ratio between average insurance coverage for the industrialised world, on the one hand, and the rest of the world, on the other, is that of 70%: 10-15% (although the situation has improved recently in countries in transition).

The propensity to report also has to do with citizens' evaluation of police performance. This type of information is not provided by the official criminal justice statistics. The ICVS explored this issue to find that there is proportionately more victims of crime from the industrialised world satisfied with the police upon reprting a crime than it is the case with the victims from other world regions who reported an incident to the police.

Satisfaction with reporting to the police shows a similar pattern of general satisfaction with the police in controlling crime. The highest levels of satisfaction with the police in controlling crime are expressed by the citizens from the New World, Western Europe and Asia (74%, 50% and 60% respectively). Much lower levels of satisfaction are expressed by citizens from Africa (41%) and particularly dissatisfied are citizens from Latin America and countries in transition (just around 20% are satisfied).

The analysis of the results of the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and the Operation of Criminal Justice Systems [8] shows that most countries tend to imprison those offenders who were sentenced for serious crimes. Prison is the universal sanction applied for serious offences, more the any other sanction. This is regardless of the type of legal system or level of development of a country. There are also wide variations in the prison rates of various countries. However, these variations do not appear to be dependent on the amount of crime in the society. Nor does the use of non-custodial sanctions, the availability and use of which are policy choices. As a general pattern, greater use of non-custodial sanctions does not lead to less use of prison, or vice-versa. In the developing world and countries in transition, the public displays a marked preference for prison as a punishment. There appears to be, however, a certain similarity in comparative perspective between the amount of prison actually used and the preferences for types of

[7] Van Dijk, "Criminal...", supra.

[8] H. Shinkai and U. Zvekic. "Punishment" in G. Newman (Ed.) *Global Report on Crime and Justice*. New York-Oxford, UN & Oxford University Press, 1999.

punishment. Punishment practice and policy do not appear to be grossly determined by the developmental level of the country.

V. CRIME AND DEVELOPMENT IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Without entering into by now a criminological common knowledge regarding the main theories of crime and development, and in particular crime and modernisation, the afore considerations regarding crime levels and punishment issue have clearly demonstrated that much of the discussion on the relationship between crime and development needs to be revisited.

Much of the previous debate on crime and development, originating with Durkheim, was tested with official criminal justice data on crime levels. In short (and with a certain degree of simplification) they appeared to confirm that the levels of property crime are higher in more developed societies than those of violent crimes in less developed societies. Indeed, earlier UN reports based on UNCS also supported this interpretation. However, integration of the UNCS and the ICVS data casts serious doubt as to the above relationship.

The first analysis of the ICVS results in 1993 [9] and 1995 [10], when data from the developing world and countries in transition were made available for the first time ever, indicated that the traditional interpretation of the relationship between crime and development needs revisiting. Subsequent analyses and in particular the most recent one by Van Dijk [11] of motivation and opportunity factors based on ICVS showed that the levels of contact (violent) crimes and thefts are higher in the countries where a high proportion of people feel economically deprived and that the lower affluence was associated with higher risk of victimisation by more serious crimes.

The ICVS data on victimisation rates for theft of personal property, burglary and assault all reveal a negative correlation with the UNDP Human Development Index. The more developed the country, the less frequent victimisation for theft (-0.560 N=53), burglary (-0.422 N=53) and, to a much lesser extent, assault (-0.113 N=53). The Fifth UNICJS provides compatible data for 1994 on intentional homicide and theft[12] from 28 countries ranging from the most to the least developed according to the Human Development Index (HDI).[13] By correlating data for homicide and theft with the HDI for the respective countries, a positive correlation with theft rates is found (0.596 N=28), while a negative correlation between homicide rates and HDI is also found, although weaker (-0.204 N=28). [14]

[9] U. Zvekic, A. Alvazzi del Frate. "Victimisation in the Developing World: An Overview" in A. Alvazzi del Frate, U. Zvekic, J.J.M. van Dijk (eds.) *Understanding Crime: Experiences of Crime and Crime Control*, UNICRI Publ. No. 49, 1993.

[10] U. Zvekic and A. Alvazzi del Frate. "Comparative Perspective" in U. Zvekic and A. Alvazzi del Frate (eds.) *Criminal Victimisation in the Developing World*. UNICRI Publ. No. 55, Part One, 1995.

[11] van Dijk, "Criminal...", *supra*.

[12] The UN Crime Survey categories used here are "total intentional homicide" and "total theft".

[13] The 1994 Human Development Index for the responding countries is taken from *Human Development Report 1997*,United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford / New York, 1997.

[14] The analysis of the correlation between data from the ICVS, the Fifth UN Crimes Survey and Human Development Index is presented in A. Alvazzi del Frate, *Victims of Crime in the Developing World*, UNICRI Publ. No. 57, 1998, pp. 133-138.

TABLE 5

United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, Homicide and Theft Rates (1994) and UNDP Human Development Index (1994)

Country Name	Homicide Rates×100,000 pop.	Theft Rates×100,000 pop.	HDI 1994
Japan	1.4	1,049.8	0.940
England&Wales	1.4	4,863.6	0.931*
Singpore	1.7	919.6	0.900
Canada	2.0	3,430.4	0.960
Scotland	2.2	4,641.8	0.931*
Malta	3.0	1,125.0	0.887
Belguin	3.4	2,733.0	0.932
Austlia	3.5	1,582.3	0.932
Slovakia	3.8	1,099.8	0.873
Hungary	4.7	1,321.7	0.857
Denmark	5.1	3,963.1	0.927
Italy	5.3	2,330.9	0.921
Slovenia	5.7	811.7	0.886
Israel	7.2	182.3	0.913
Romania	7.6	457.6	0.748
India	7.9	33.1	0.446
Azerbaijan	8.9	65.0	0.636
Rep of Moldova	9.5	334.1	0.612
Costa Rica	9.7	520.8	0.889
Kyrgyzstan	12.3	238.4	0.635
Georgia	14.4	109.7	0.637
Kazakstan	15.7	591.6	0.709
Ecuador	18.5	239.6	0.775
Bolivia	23.3	392.4	0.589
Nicaragua	25.6	173.9	0.530
Jamaica	29.8	520.5	0.736
Kuawit	58.0	10.6	0.844
Colonbia	78.6	233.3	0.848

Sources: Fifth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice System, UNICJIN (rates elaborated by UNICRI); Human Development Report 1997, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York, 1997.

TABLE 6

Correlation with the Human Development Index (HDI)

Homicide	-0.204	Assault	-0.113
Theft	0.596	Theft	0.560
		Burglary	-0.422

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above referred to results and considerations seriously challenge the modernisation theory, which as stated earlier, was empirically tested with police reported figures, which are normally much lower in less developed societies. The empirical base for testing the modernisation theory was exclusively composed of official criminal justice statistics. The ICVS empirical base, which is composed of victimisation data on experiences with crime and reporting to the police, undermines the very foundations of the prevalent crime and development explanatory perspective.

Crime and justice appear to have a degree of independence from levels of development more than previously thought[15]. This is particularly evident with respect to the following:

- there is no strong evidence that developing countries have higher violent crime rates than developed countries; either they never had them but data was restricted or in recent years the levels have become quite similar;
- the assumption that the developed world exhibits higher property crime rates than developing countries seems not to hold true, at least as regards the urban areas;
- all countries use imprisonment for serious offenders and the prison rates are not generally related to crime rates, the levels of socio-economic development or to the use of non-custodial sanctions; yet, punishment preference still reflects to a great extent the affluence levels, the actual use of imprisonment or shared belief in "just deserts".

Much of the previous discussion and revisited modernisation theory is based on interpretative integration of UNCS (official criminal justice statistics) and ICVS (victimisation survey-based data). However, this is not sufficient to reveal with any degree of reliability the "true" empirically based historical relationship between crime and development, since there are no comparative international historical victimisation survey data that would match those available through the official criminal justice statistics and the UNCS. Thus, one is tempted to credit the globalisation process with effects reflected in a certain degree of levelling off crime and justice across the globe. While this might prove to be true, in view of the fact that the ICVS data used for comparative analysis relate to urban areas only, and thus embedding *urbanisation*, (which certainly is the trade-mark of modernisation all over the world). There still is much to be desired in exploring the globalisation-related conventional crime effects.

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[15] Newman, "Advances...", supra.

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