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# Profiles and behavioural consequences of violence victimisation among male and female adolescents from the Caribbean

**Dr Agata Debowska, Prof Daniel Boduszek, Dr Nicole Sherretts, Dominic Willmott, & Prof Adele D. Jones**

The Stockholm Criminology Symposium, 19-21 June 2017

# The prevalence of child abuse & neglect (CAN)

## Key statistics - worldwide (WHO, 2014):

- 25% of all adults report having been **physically** abused as children.
- 36% were **emotionally** abused.
- 20% of women and 5-10% of men reported experiences of **sexual** abuse.



## Key statistics – high income countries (Gilbert *et al.*, 2009):

- Every year, 4-16% of children are **physically** abused.
- 10% are **emotionally** abused.
- A higher risk of penetrative **sexual** abuse was noted for girls (5-10%) than for boys (5%).



# CONSEQUENCES of CAN



- Perpetrating or being a victim of violence
- Depression and anxiety
- Self-harming behaviour and suicide
- Aggressive/antisocial behaviour
- Smoking
- Obesity
- High-risk sexual behaviours
- Unintended pregnancy
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Educational underachievement

**Not all abused children will suffer these consequences at a similar level of intensity.**

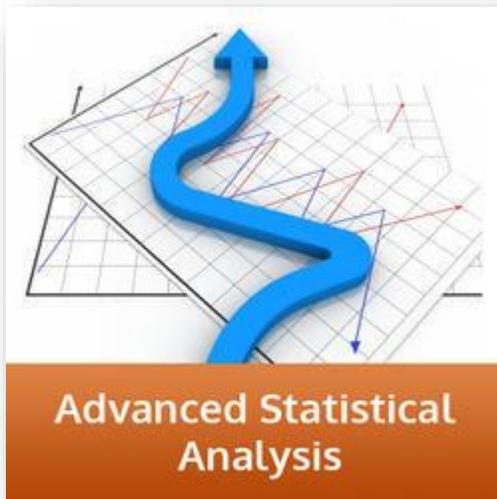
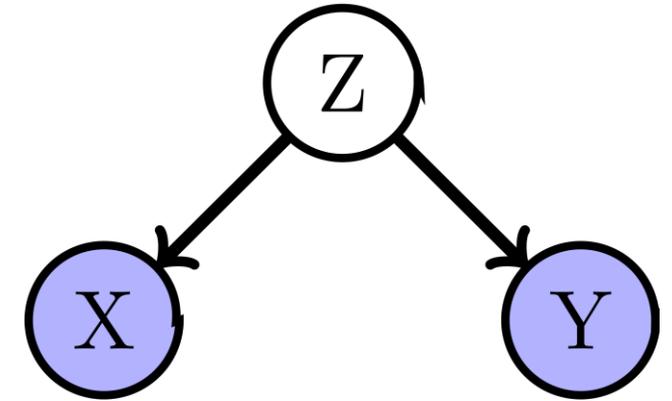
# Consequences of CAN

- **The specificity assumption** – certain exposures may be linked to particular mental health consequences
  - Child sexual abuse (CSA) thought to be associated with most harmful outcomes
- More recent evidence – various forms of CAN may have **non-specific**, widespread effects on mental health
  - Vachon *et al.* (2015): CAN can result in anxiety, depression, rule-breaking, and aggression; unique effect of CSA not identified



# Methodological limitations

- Previous studies tended to employ **variable-centred approaches**, which focus on associations between study variables.
- Since different forms of child abuse commonly co-occur, such approach appears limited.



- Innovation is needed in the methods used to assess CAN consequences.
- **Latent class analysis** is becoming increasingly important in CAN research
  - *Child Abuse & Neglect* (official journal of the International Society for Prevention of CAN) is currently preparing a special issue on measurement of child maltreatment, in an effort to summarise the ways advanced statistical approaches can be applied in child maltreatment research.



# NONE in 3

**Preventing Domestic Violence**

- The project commenced in March 2016.
- To study child abuse and family violence in the **Eastern Caribbean (Barbados and Grenada)** (behaviours and attitudes).
- To develop a **pro-social video game** for adolescents which would challenge gender-based violence-supportive attitudes and evaluate its effectiveness.
- We collect both quantitative and qualitative data.
- First, we conducted a systematic review of CAN profiling studies:
  - To develop a better understanding of patterns of maltreatment and related consequences across different samples
  - To recognise limitations of prior research
  - To better position our empirical study within the wider context of CAN profiling

# Systematic review of CAN profiling studies

- **Selection process:** articles published in peer-reviewed journals using LCA/LPA to profile CAN (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence)
- **16 relevant empirical** studies published between 2008 and 2017.
- Results presented as a narrative review, grouped into subsections: children and adolescents ( $n = 9$ ), mixed-gender adult populations ( $n = 4$ ), and exclusively male samples ( $n = 3$ ).

## SOME FINDINGS

- Inconsistent findings as to the number of CAN classes.
- Most research uncovered a poly-victimized and a low abuse group.
- Poly-victimization associated with most adverse internalizing and externalizing outcomes, especially when sexual abuse was present.
- Exposure to physical and emotional abuse leads to behavioural problems.
- Child sexual abuse only – predominantly female participants

## SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need for studies profiling CAN types by victimisation setting.
- Research should compare maltreatment patterns between the two sexes (no studies among exclusively female samples to date).
- Most studies conducted in the West - more research within non-Western societies is needed to build a better understanding of CAN co-occurrence worldwide.

# Violence in the Caribbean

- **Ecological model of violence** – the extent, causes, and correlates of child maltreatment appear to be population specific.
  - Cultural values and practices can have the effect of condoning certain expressions of violence (Wood, 2007)
- Violence is widespread in the Caribbean, to the extent that its reduction has been presented as an **urgent challenge** (UNICEF, 2006).
- Despite its low visibility, domestic violence, including CAN, seems to be the most prevalent type of violence in the region (Imbusch, 2011).
  - A strongly patriarchal culture, gender inequality (Jeremiah *et al.*, 2017; Jones *et al.*, 2014).



Culture is the way  
you think, act, and  
interact.

# CAN in Barbados and Grenada: Official statistics

## CHILD CARE BOARD in Barbados

**3519** cases of child abuse were reported in Barbados in 2008-2013

The most common form of maltreatment was **neglect** (41.8%), followed by **physical** (24.5%), **sexual** (23.8%), and **emotional** (10%) abuse.

The majority (86.5%) of perpetrators were known to the victim.

88.6% of victims of sexual abuse were female.

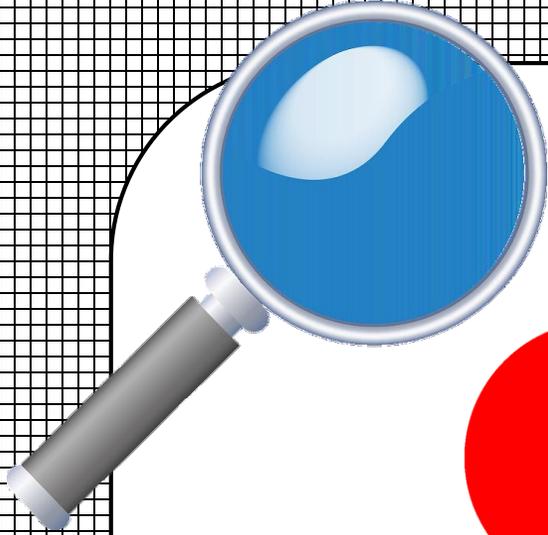
## CHILD WELFARE AUTHORITY in Grenada

During the period 2009-2013, there were **1503** reported cases of child victimisation.

**Physical** abuse was the most prevalent type of maltreatment (34.9%), followed by **neglect** (33.1%) and **sexual** abuse (29.1%).

There were no reported cases of **emotional** abuse.





# The present study aims

1

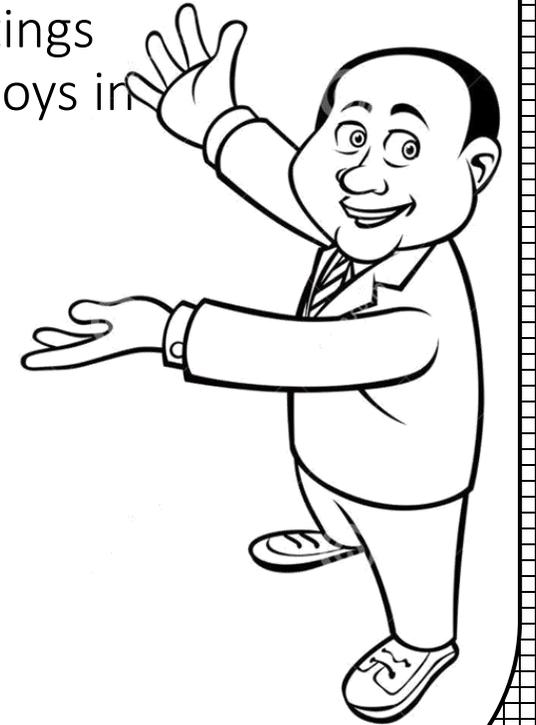
To examine the prevalence of different types of childhood victimisation (**physical, emotional, and sexual**) experiences across two different settings (**in and outside the family**) among girls and boys in Barbados and Grenada.

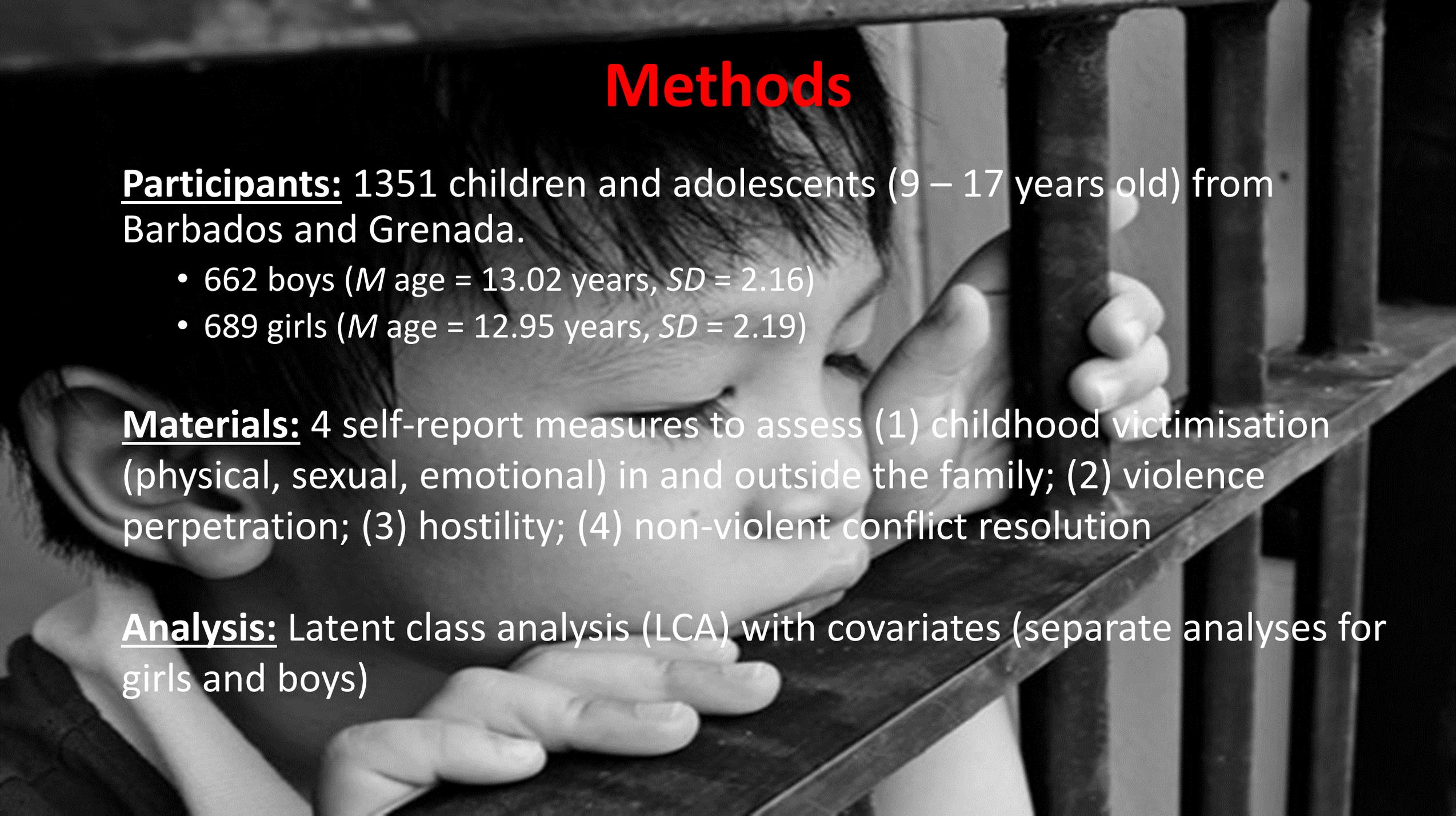
2

To uncover **patterns of co-occurrence** between childhood victimisation types among males and females.



To explore the **associations** between childhood victimisation profiles and age as well as behavioural outcomes (violence perpetration, hostility, and non-violent conflict resolution).





# Methods

**Participants:** 1351 children and adolescents (9 – 17 years old) from Barbados and Grenada.

- 662 boys ( $M$  age = 13.02 years,  $SD$  = 2.16)
- 689 girls ( $M$  age = 12.95 years,  $SD$  = 2.19)

**Materials:** 4 self-report measures to assess (1) childhood victimisation (physical, sexual, emotional) in and outside the family; (2) violence perpetration; (3) hostility; (4) non-violent conflict resolution

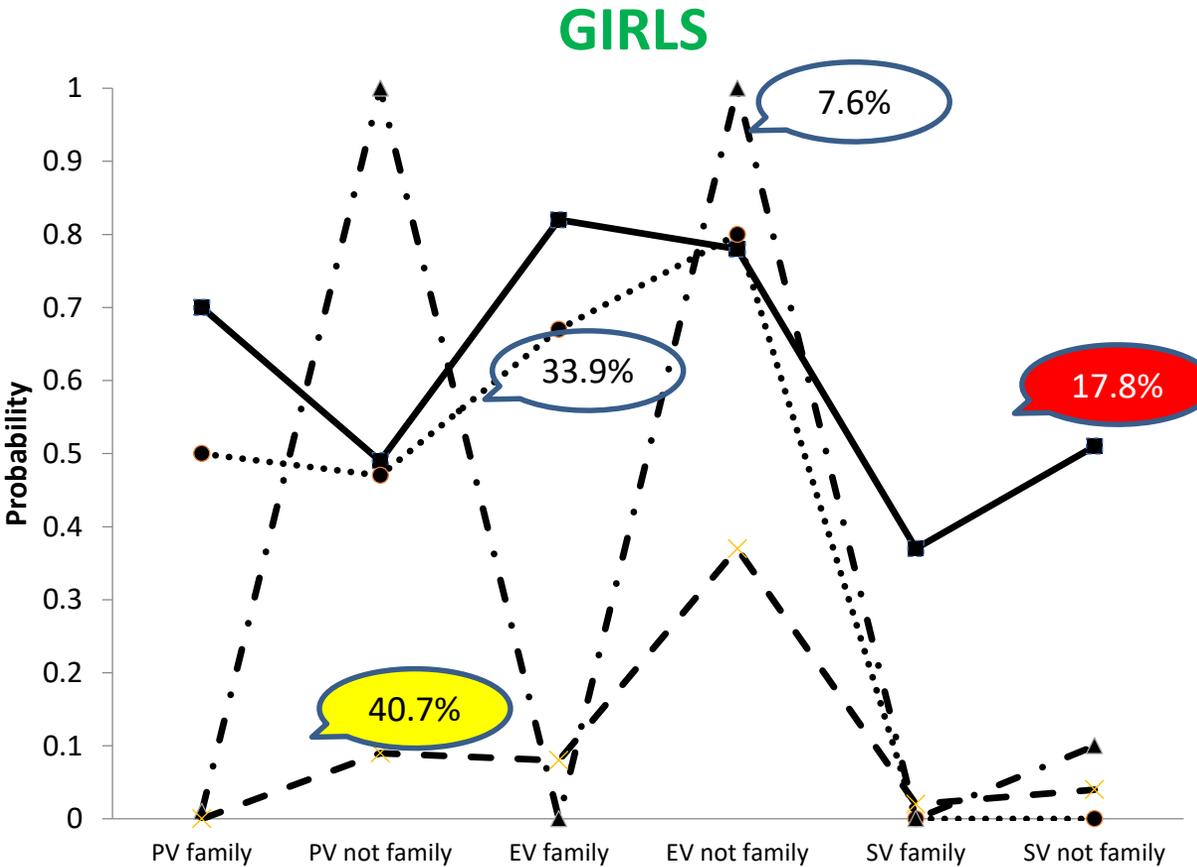
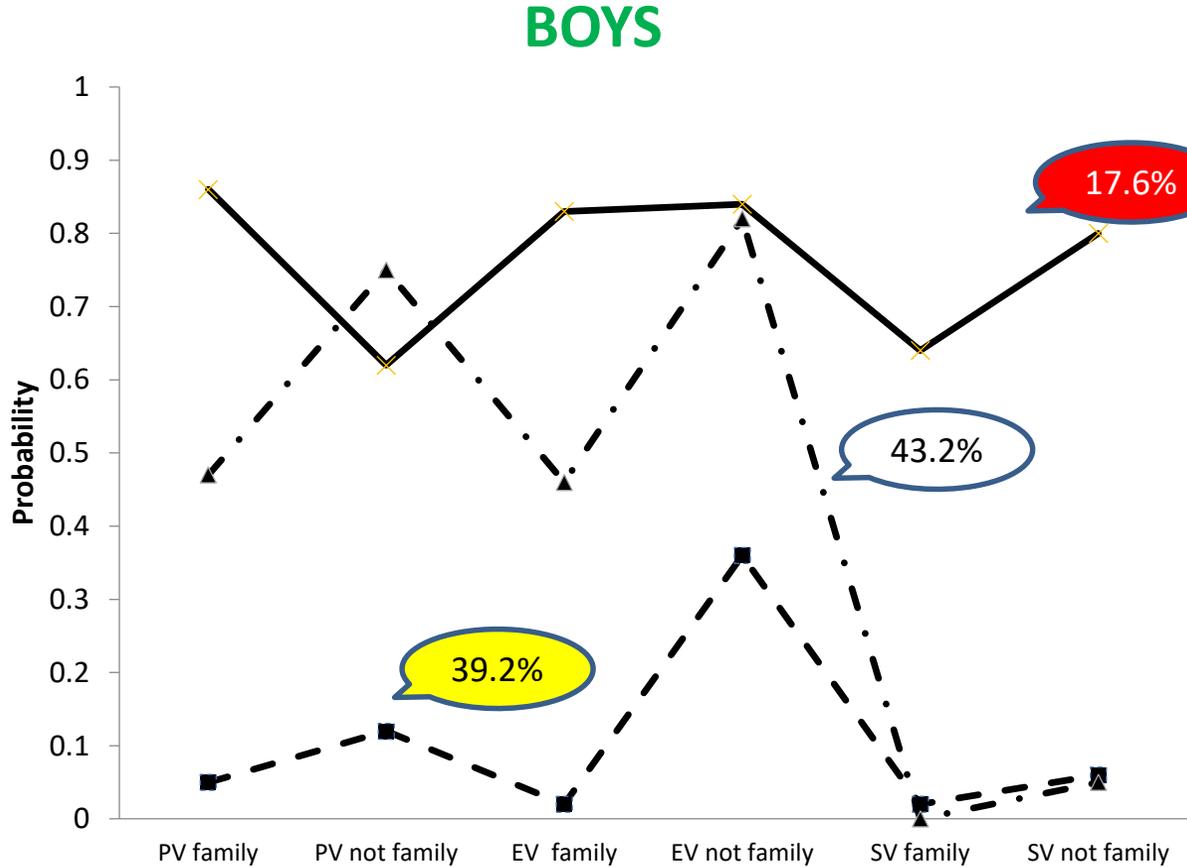
**Analysis:** Latent class analysis (LCA) with covariates (separate analyses for girls and boys)

# Results (aim 1): Prevalence of victimisation



- 1% of children in Barbados and Grenada were **officially reported** to suffer from child maltreatment.
- In the current sample, **physical victimisation** in the family was experienced by 40.6% of boys and 31.1% of girls.
  - These rates were roughly 10% higher for physical abuse outside the home.
- **Emotional victimisation** outside the family was the most common form of victimisation among girls (65.5%) and boys (65.4%).
  - Around 40% of children reported emotional abuse in the family
  - WHO (2014) worldwide statistics – 36%
- Boys were more likely to experience **sexual violence** than girls.
  - Boys – 20.5% in the family; 25.1% outside the family
  - Girls – 11.5% in the family; 15.4% outside the family
- Most victimisation occurred *outside* the family.

# LCA results (aim 2): CAN profiles



# Results (aim 3): Associations

- Compared with members of low victimisation groups, youngsters who reported having experienced high/moderate levels of various forms of violence, including those who were poly-victimised, were significantly more likely to engage in **violent and hostile behaviour**.
- Among girls, emotional & physical victimisation in the family, but not outside the family, was related with increased odds of violence perpetration and hostility.
  - Intrafamilial victimisation results in most adverse consequences - the feeling of powerlessness and betrayal of trust
- Contrary to our predictions, a sexual abuse only class was not retrieved for girls.
- Non-violent conflict resolution skills were not affected by victimisation.



# Some limitations & directions for future research



- Self-report
- We did not measure neglect.
- Not controlled for perpetrator type, onset and intensity of abuse.
- Victimization outside the family – need to control for where maltreatment takes place to inform prevention efforts.

Thank you!

Questions?

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