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DIFFERING MEASURES OF PARENTAL ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY AS PREDICTORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is a personality disorder characterized by maladaptive externalizing behaviors such as repeated arrest, deception, impulsivity, and aggressiveness. These unpredictable and often harmful characteristics can create substantial concern for the wellbeing of individuals in close relation to those with ASPD, such as family members, friends, and romantic partners. Though the relationship between ASPD and child abuse has been examined, most previous research has focused on childhood abuse as a predictor of antisocial behavior. In contrast, very little research has investigated parental antisocial personality as a predictor of child abuse and neglect. The present study compared several measures of antisocial personality (self-report, structured interview, and informant-report) as predictors of five types of child abuse and neglect (emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect).

Intergenerational data collected from the St. Louis Personality and Aging Network (SPAN) study (N=265) was used to conduct hierarchical regression analyses. The SPAN study is a longitudinal study of personality and health in older adults (G1) and has expanded to investigate the children of these G1 participants (G2). We hypothesized that higher scores on all measures of ASPD would predict higher scores of emotional, physical, and sexual abuses in G2s. Results partially supported hypotheses, showing antisocial personality to be a significant predictor of all types of child abuse and neglect. However, with the exception of structured interview predicting physical neglect, only informant-report was a significant predictor of child abuse and neglect outcomes. Informant-report significantly predicted scores on all types of child abuse and neglect. In combination with literature supporting child abuse as a predictor of APSD, these results establish an understanding of ASPD as an important factor in a cycle of abuse. Moreover, these results highlight the importance of informant-report in ASPD research.