HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

DISSERTATION DEFENSE FOR

FUMIYUKI CHIN

TITLE: COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCE IN PREMATURE INFANTS AT 12 AND 24 MONTHS: PREDICTORS AND DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUELAE

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Place: 101 East HH Dev Bldg.

Areas of Specialization: Parent-Infant Relationships and related intervention/prevention

ABSTRACT

Premature infants’ development is influenced not just by being born too soon, but also by the quality of care they receive from their parents and the socio-demographic environment. Although these contextual variables have been studied as predictors of infant development, we have less understanding of the processes by which contextual and biological variables influence cognitive and socio-emotional development among premature infants. The present study examined the linkages between the predictors including parenting (i.e., maternal sensitivity), maternal state of mind regarding attachment, socio-demographics and infant medical risk, and preterm infant cognitive and socio-emotional developments at 12- and 24-month using a sample of 173 low-income African American families that participated in a home visiting intervention program aimed at promoting infant development. Additionally, the study examined the
association between socio-emotional and cognitive development across time, between 12- and 24-months. Path analyses revealed that maternal sensitivity serves as an intervening variable between the predictors and 12-month infant attachment security, cognitive outcome and behavior problems, and between the predictors and 24-month infant attachment security. At 12 and 24 months, the linkage between maternal sensitivity and infant attachment security was stronger than any other outcomes. Maternal state of mind regarding attachment became a significant direct predictor of infant attachment security at 24 months. For all outcomes except infant attachment security, the 12-month outcome predicted the corresponding 24-month outcome. The present study also found “crossover” linkages between cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. Twelve-month socio-emotional competency predicted 24-month cognitive outcome, and 12-month cognitive outcome predicted 24-month infant attachment security. Twelve-month socio-emotional competency significantly predicted all 24-month outcomes except behavior problems. The findings suggest the importance of quality of parenting especially for the earlier development of premature infants. Moreover, the results call attention to the need for further work addressing the complex linkages and their mechanisms between 12- and 24-month outcomes, in particular cross-over longitudinal linkages between different developmental domains.