<u>Topic Description</u>

In this study we examine the effect of early sex on adolescent on the likelihood that females will obtain a BA and the influence of the completion of educational milestones on this relationship. As has other literature addressing age at first sex and educational attainment, we include race, socio-economic status and exam scores in analysis.

<u>Theoretical Focus</u>

Scholars have long examined the relationship between family formation and educational attainment (e.g. Card and Wise 1978; Marini 1978; Mott and Marsiglio 1985; Upchurch and McCarthy, 1990). We hope to expand the work of these authors by addressing the mechanism of educational milestones in influencing the effect of early sex on the likelihood of obtaining a BA.

<u>Data and Research Methods</u>

For this study we are looking at adolescent females using data derived from the first four waves of the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS 1988-2000). Race and eighth grade composite math and English score were determined by responses in the first wave. Socio-economic status was a constructed variable using the father's education level, both parents' occupation, and family income reported on a parent questionnaire in the first wave. Young sex was determined by taking birth year and age at first sex reported in the third wave and constructing a variable for adolescents that initiated sexual intercourse at or before age 14. Both on-time graduation and enrollment were determined using wave four responses of type of degree completed, type of college enrollment, and the date in which these activities were completed.

We ran logistic regression models to determine the relationship between early sex, educational milestones, and the likelihood of obtaining a BA within a reasonable amount of time.

<u>Expected Findings</u>

As expected, early sex decreases the likelihood of obtaining a BA in the first model. What we find surprising, however, is that when adding high school graduation and enrolling in a four year college to the equation it increases but does not completely erase the negative effects of early sex on the likelihood of obtaining a BA. In addition, higher composite exam scores, higher parent socio-economic status, and being Asian (as compared to white) increases the likelihood that adolescents will obtain at least a BA.

TABLE 1

Percentages of Categorical Variables and Means of Continuous Variables

Describing Female Respondents of the National Education Longitudinal Survey (N=5,732)

Dependent Variable	*Percent of Sample*			
Obtained BA	37.1%			

Categorical Variables	*Percent of Sample*			
Early Sex (≤14)	5.2%			
African American	9.6			
Asian	5.7			
Hispanic	14.2			
On-time High School Grad	86.3			
Enrolled in 4-Year College	44.2			

Continuous Variables	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
NELS Math, Reading Score	32.40	99.99	53.69	13.14
SES	-2.88	2.30	-.11	.079

Source: National Education Longitudinal Study 1988-2000

TABLE 2

Coefficients for the Logistic Regression Models for the Relationship Between Educational Milestones,

Early Sex and the Likelihood of Obtaining at Least a BA within Twelve Years of Grade 8

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variables						
Young Sex ($\leq$14)	-1.093	***	-.851	***	-.716	***
NELS English, Math Test	.044	***	.044	***	.029	***
African American	.179		.254	*	-.032	
Asian	1.014	***	.972	***	.953	***
Hispanic	-.205		-.097		-.068	
SES	1.319	***	1.219	***	.870	***
Variables						
On-Time High School Grad			3.275	***	2.378	***
Enrolled in 4-Year College					2.429	***
N	5862		5682		5682	
Degrees of Freedom	6		7		8	
Chi-square	1790.246		2090.397		3150.696	
Constant	-2.907	***	-6.045	***	-5.678	***
(-) 2 Log	5741.164		5441.013		4380.441	

Source: National Education Longitudinal Survey 1988-2000   * p <.05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001