

American adolescents are at higher risk for pregnancy than adolescents in other industrialized nations. Most know how to obtain and use contraceptives and deny they want babies. However, many do not use contraception because they are either ambivalent or indifferent about pregnancy. These states can develop in two different situations: when young women feel that pregnancy would have both good and bad effects on their lives, or when they think that particular consequences of pregnancy would have little effect (good or bad) on their lives. It is therefore extremely important to further understand what distinguishes ambivalence from indifference and how these states contribute to contraceptive use.

This proposal is part of a long-term research agenda with the goal of improving our understanding of pregnancy ambivalence and indifference. In this study, we were able to distinguish ambivalence from indifference towards pregnancy among young women who are sexually active and not currently using contraception. However, the number of participants classified as ambivalent was lower than we anticipated using our Pregnancy Attitudes Scale. We also compared the contraceptive choices in these young women to determine if there were differences between young women who are ambivalent or indifferent and if other sociodemographic factors may contribute to these states. Due to lower than expected rates of participants who were classified as ambivalent, we were unable to distinguish them from indifferent participants with regard to contraceptive choice. Ambivalent participants were however, more unsure if they would continue a pregnancy than indifferent participants or than those who did not desire pregnancy. Further study of these adolescents at high-risk of pregnancy is needed to be able to distinguish indifference from ambivalence towards pregnancy in this population.