Analysis

Students’ t tests and chi-square analyses were used to compare the characteristics of teenagers who did and did not have goals and of teenagers who did and did not consider pregnancy to be an impediment to achieving their goals. Bivariate characteristics that were statistically significant at p<.05 were included in hierarchical, forward, stepwise logistic regression analyses to assess the relationship between having goals or feeling that pregnancy would be an impediment to achieving goals and the pregnancy avoidance measures. The primary predictor variable (having goals or feeling that pregnancy would be an impediment) was always entered as the first step, potential confounders as the second step and the other predictor variable as the third step. Variables entered the models one at a time, on the basis of the strength of their association with the outcome under study. To approximate relative risks, adjusted odds ratios and their 95% confidence intervals were calculated from the regression coefficients and standard errors for each dichotomous variable, and t values were calculated for the pregnancy avoidance index. Collinearity diagnostics were also conducted. Final models were tested with chi-square likelihood ratio, and the predictive power of the models was assessed with Nagelkerke’s R². Odds ratios (from two-by-two table analyses) and t values were also used to compare teenagers’ responses for the pregnancy avoidance measures between those who did and those who did not consider pregnancy an impediment, depending on whether they had goals. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 14.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Respondents ranged from 10.8 to 19.6 years old; their mean age was 16.4 (Table 1). Fifty-five percent were Hispanic, 25% black and 19% white; 1% or fewer were Native American or Asian. Participants were representative of the teenage clientele who seek services at these urban clinics. Three-fourths of them lived with a parent, nine in 10 had been sexually experienced for at least six months and eight in 10 had engaged in a socially proscribed behavior. Although six in 10 of the young women were failing or had dropped out of school prior to high school graduation, three-fourths had educated or vocational goals: Sixty-four percent aspired to go to school graduation, three-fourths had educational or vocational goals; Sixty-four percent aspired to go to college, and 58% wanted to pursue a job in addition to their college. Prior to high school graduation, 46% of those who had goals were less likely to be Hispanic, black or Native American (79% vs. 88%; p=.03) or to be living with their boyfriends (9% vs. 40%; p=.02). Females who considered pregnancy to be an impediment to achieving goals resembled those who did not think this, except that the former were more likely to be in school with passing grades or high school graduates (46% vs. 33%, p<.01).

After adjustment for background differences, 46% of teenagers with educational or vocational goals considered pregnancy an impediment to achieving such goals, while 32% of those who had no goals believed this (p<.05; odds ratio, 1.7). Following adjustment for educational status, females who regarded pregnancy to be an impediment were more likely to have conventional goals than were those who did not share this perception (81% vs. 69%, p<.05; odds ratio, 1.8).

Pregnancy Avoidance Attitudes and Behavior

Bivariate analysis found that female teenagers with goals were more likely than those without goals to have used a contraceptive at last intercourse, but not to state that they wanted to avoid pregnancy, would have an abortion if pregnant or planned to use a prescription contraceptive. The first step of the logistic regression analysis confirmed that teenagers with goals had an elevated likelihood of having used a contraceptive at last intercourse (odds ratio, 1.9). Race or ethnicity and living arrangement were not significant and so did not enter the model in the next step. However, the third step showed that considering pregnancy to be an impediment to achieving goals was significant, and inclusion of this variable eliminated the positive association between having goals and using a contraceptive at last intercourse.

In bivariate analyses, female teenagers who considered pregnancy an impediment differed from those who did not regarding all of the pregnancy avoidance measures studied (Table 2). Neither educational status nor having

| TABLE 2. Selected pregnancy avoidance measures, by whether teenagers considered pregnancy an impediment to achieving goals; and odds ratios or t value from regression analyses assessing the association between considering pregnancy an impediment and reporting protective measures |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Pregnancy avoidance measure     | Considers pregnancy an impediment | Odds ratio or t value | R²    |
|                                  | Yes (N=149) | No (N=202) |       |
| Used contraceptive at last sexual intercourse (%)† | 46.4 | 27.7*** | 2.3 (1.4–3.6)*** | 0.05 |
| Intends to avoid pregnancy (%) | 77.9 | 26.7*** | 9.6 (5.8–15.8)*** | 0.3  |
| Would have an abortion if pregnant (%) | 27.0 | 4.1*** | 8.7 (3.9–19.3)*** | 0.2  |
| Plans to use a prescription contraceptive (%)† | 82.6 | 68.8** | 2.1 (1.3–3.6)** | 0.04 |
| Mean pregnancy avoidance index (range, 0–4) | 2.3 (1.1) | 1.3 (1.0)*** | 9.2*** | 0.2 |

**p<.01. ***p<.0001. †Condom, foam, diaphragm, pill, patch, injectable, implant or IUD. ‡Pill, patch, injectable, implant or IUD. Note: Figures in parentheses alongside odds ratios are 95% confidence intervals; those in parentheses alongside means are standard deviations.