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Young Women's Sexual Health

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Presentation of explicit material with regard to sex and sexual technique via the media aimed at young women, along with recent publications such as *Female chauvinist pigs: the rise of raunch culture* by Ariel Levy (2006) which present a picture of a generation of young women increasingly engaging in risky and potentially damaging behaviour, both physically and emotionally, were the impetus for the study reported in this presentation. The first part of the study involved a review of articles published over a 12 month period in a popular magazine targeting young women, and the second part of the study was a survey questionnaire of 50 Australian first year university students followed by selective interviewing. Contrary to a view of this generation as increasingly engaging in risky and potentially damaging behaviour, respondents appeared for the most part to take considered decisions utilising the sources at hand, including popular magazines, while also grappling with expectations imposed by a culture that sexualises girls at younger and younger ages and depicts promiscuity as the norm. Pressure to engage in sex at younger and younger ages and continuing pressure to engage in unprotected and risky sex was a concern for the majority and the respondents were forceful in identifying a need for a much better approach to sex education in schools directed at both sexes.

Associate Professor Carmel Seibold is a nurse, a midwife and a sociologist employed at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia, in the Faculty of Health Sciences, currently in the role of Associate Dean (Research). She has taught a number of subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level, including research methods and social theory and feminism. Her research interests are in the areas of women's health, and chemical dependency.