

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



What does pregnancy look like through the eyes of everyday mums?

A University of Tasmania researcher is studying how photographs impact on real women's body image during and after pregnancy.

Dr Meredith Nash, a Lecturer in Sociology, is seeking pregnant women to join a new study into how women view themselves when pregnant and how the public views pregnant bodies.

She is exploring how the media focus on visibly pregnant women's 'baby-bumps' has opened the door to thinking about the ways in which pregnancy is represented visually in popular culture compared to the experiences of everyday women.

"Only 20 years ago, pregnancy was a taboo subject in public," explains Dr Nash.

"My study looks at how that has changed to become an everyday topic in the media and in public conversation and how it affects women."

"In what feels like an increasingly 'Hollywood-ised' Australian culture, speculation and discussion of the pregnancies and post-partum bodies of celebrities like Victoria Beckham and Jessica Alba is commonplace."

But Dr Nash said most Tasmanian women don't have wide access to the personal trainers, nannies and nutritionists that allow celebrities to have such control over their post-natal bodies.

"Photographs of tight and polished postpartum celebrity bodies are most likely influencing the diet and fitness regimes of the average Tasmanian woman trying to lose her 'baby weight' and are probably influencing women's self-image."

"I would like women to use photographs to tell me how they see themselves when they are pregnant; how their pregnant body image differs from their non-pregnant body image," Dr Nash said.

"In a society focused on representing female bodies as thin, how Tasmanian women respond to internal and external changes in their bodies is important for encouraging change in the community."

Dr Nash would like to hear from women between 12-16 weeks pregnant, who agree to be interviewed three times during their pregnancy and once after the birth of their baby.

Participants would also be asked to take digital photographs of themselves and their lives during and after pregnancy (camera provided). Interviews will consist of questions regarding the photographs they take each month, pregnant bodies, and motherhood.

At the end of the research period, participating women will be involved in selecting their most significant photographs to display in a public exhibition at UTAS (and around the country) to educate the wider Australian community about the experience of contemporary pregnancy.

More information is available on the Baby-Bump Project blog at: babybumpproject.blogspot.com or facebook.com/babybumpproject

Potential participants can find out more or volunteer emailing:
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For more information or interviews, please contact Dr. Meredith Nash, phone (03) 6226 2715.

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