Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
IDENTITY FORMATION, ONLINE RESOURCES, AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH TYPE ONE DIABETES MELLITUS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
In
PSYCHOLOGY

at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

Anna Eileen Eady
2011
ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental processes of transitioning from being a teenager to a young emerging adult is the construction of a gendered identity. For a young emerging adult who has been diagnosed with type one diabetes mellitus, an extra layer of complexity has been added to this task. Previous research has found there to be a paucity of information about the interactions between type one diabetes mellitus and gendered identity formation, especially in the young emerging adult population in New Zealand. This study considered how living with type one diabetes mellitus influenced a young adult’s gendered identity construction, and how this identity is portrayed and shaped through the use of social networking internet sites. It also investigates what information is readily available online about type one diabetes mellitus for this population, and whether it mirrors their experiences. Interviews with six young New Zealand adults who had a diagnosis of type one diabetes mellitus were carried out, and four media articles about type one diabetes mellitus were accessed online. A grounded theory analysis was performed using a constant comparison approach. This resulted in a framework which explained how control over the chronic condition is the most important factor for the participants’ identity formation, and how gender issues, support from others and being supportive of others, perceptions of others, and the restrictions type one diabetes creates feeds into this sense of control. It also explained how social networking sites, a now popular mode of internet socialising, are an important mode of socialising and accessing non-type one diabetic support for the individuals studied. If a young adult has control over their condition, they are able to confidently incorporate it into their identity and be happier and healthier as a result. Insight into how this population manages their identity construction whilst incorporating their diagnosis, and also how social networking sites are utilised by this population, has implications for the provision of care by health professionals.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank people whose support, encouragement and help enabled me to complete this research project.

Firstly, a big thank you to my supervisor Dr. Antonia Lyons of Massey University, Wellington, for her encouragement, advice, and guidance throughout this research.

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the six people who consented to participate in this study, and whose contribution to this project enabled me to carry out this research, and complete my degree.

Finally, a big thank you to my wonderful husband Paul for his patience, love and support; and to my friends and family, whose best wishes and prayers helped me when I needed them most.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables and Figures</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Type One Diabetes Mellitus and Young Emerging Adults</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type One Diabetes Mellitus Defined</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion Between Type One Diabetes Mellitus and Type Two Diabetes Mellitus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Recommendations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence and Government Approach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Emerging Adults and Management in Daily Life</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Impact</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Young Emerging Adults Living with Type One Diabetes Mellitus</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Illness and Identity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Identity</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objectives and Aims</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Methodology</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructionism</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Approach</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Current Study</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Process and Changes in Design</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Consent</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Participant Demographics 31

Figure 1: A framework of Gendered Identity Construction in Young Emerging Adults With Type One Diabetes Mellitus 38