

# 2021 | RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES



**THE COLLABORATIVE TRUST**  
For Research & Training in Youth Health & Development



## Making the Most of Now: Young Women's Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Presented by : Dr Louise Tapper and Adjunct Assoc Prof Rosemary Du Plessis

# Outline

- **Life in lockdown**
- **What do young women do to promote personal wellbeing in difficult times?**
- **What do young women in Ōtautahi need?**

# Summary of Progress to Date

- **12 young women interviewed September - November 2020**
- **Oral history methodology**
- **Interviews between 45 minutes to one hour 15 minutes**
- **Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed**
- **Consent for publication of edited interview content**
- **Consent for research material to be stored in UC QuakeStudies Digital Archive – use of pseudonyms for 10 participants**
- **Two focus groups with participants to access their ideas about sharing the stories**
- **Analysis of interview data**

# Life in Lockdown – what was hard?

- Isolation
- Impact on wellbeing
- Monotony
- Disruptions



Photos of YWCA Y25 young  
New Zealand wahine

# Isolation

- **Not being able to see friends or family was most difficult**
- **Missed face-to-face connections**
- **On-line connections not the same**
- **Especially hard for young women who lived alone**
- **No opportunity to make new connections**

# Isolation – losing connections

*Yeah, so actually the toughest part was I'm a very social person. I really love going out, being with my friends but it was really hard not being able to do that and being at home. Asayal*

*It felt like four years. It was like prison. Cheryl*

# Impacts on wellbeing

- Lockdown exacerbated existing mental health issues
- Anxiety
- Feelings of sadness, aloneness
- Fear of the unknown – feeling scared
- Uncertainty

# Impacts on wellbeing

*I had like a massive relapse with my mental health because that whole feeling of being locked in brought back a lot of really nasty memories of my childhood... .*

*It was almost just like this sense of numbness that just washed over you because you were so consumed by panic in the media and stuff, but also, I don't know, just scary and lonely that you had to shut yourself off to keep yourself safe, because it went on for so long. El*



# Monotony

- Repetitiveness of each day was difficult
- Sense of not achieving anything
- For some - frustration of not being able to do their jobs
- For some - lockdown led to a lack of motivation

# Disruptions

- **The pandemic has meant disruptions in several aspects of young women's lives**
  - **Disruptions to paid work and study**
  - **Disrupted relationships**
  - **Disruptions to family life – e.g. being teachers and parents**
- **Uncertainty → increased anxiety for some women**

# Disruptions

**Yeah, I lost that job because of COVID-19. Yeah, it was a big loss. It was one of my prouder achievements and to have it taken away was pretty upsetting. It was something I was very passionate about and it's very disappointing to not be able to do it anymore. Sara**



# Life in Lockdown – what did you like?

- 'Thinking time'
- Time with those in your 'bubble'
- Being online



# Thinking/reflection time

- Lockdown allowed time for some to re-imagine their focus in life
- Think about what is really important
- Step back and set goals – ‘take a break’
- Time to focus on health issues

# 'Thinking time'

Honestly, it gave me a lot of time to just think and process stuff. I really went through a big bout of change and acceptance because I just sat down, and I just thought about stuff all day. I did a lot of work on myself, so there were a lot of positive things as well. El

As much as I hated the whole lockdown, it's helped. It was like a step back and really look at your life and what needs to change...You only live once so I just want to make the most of it now. Cheryl

# Time in your bubble and Online life

- Improved some relationships
- Being able to go online was helpful and enjoyable for some young women
  - Helped enable further study
  - Helped with some work situations

# **Strategies to promote well-being – *Being your own audience – turning the camera on yourself***

*I'll record myself and I would just talk about my feelings and stuff... Because in your head, its everything you can think about. It piles up, piles up, piles up and it feels like it's too much, but when you speak it out loud that's not bad, at least I have acknowledged it, and then it's not bad. Asayal*



# Strategies to promote well-being – *Shifting goals and time frames*

*I've definitely had to change some of my goals, but that's life. You change and adapt as life goes on. It doesn't mean you are not going to achieve your goals; it might mean you achieve them later than you wanted or thought. You do other things in the meantime. Daisy*

# Strategies to promote well-being – *Ticking off the 'to do' stuff*

*I had a quarantine 'to do' list of things I don't normally have time to do ... all the stuff you really want to do, but you never have the time to do. I did that a lot during lockdown. Nina*

# Strategies to promote well-being – *Volunteering for unpaid work experience*

*I've got myself a job. I am not getting paid, but it's given me something I've been looking for for years... I want to have interactions with people who aren't my family and friends, at home people. Those things wouldn't have happened if we hadn't had lockdown. Raewyn*

# **Strategies to promote well-being – *Having people around – face-to-face and virtually***

*... having people around that you can talk to...  
had I gone through that [stressful experience]  
on my own, it would have been horrendous. I  
think having family and friends, you just all  
step up and we organised Zoom chats, live  
dinners. Kelsey*

# **Strategies to promote well-being – *Using our quake experiences***

*I am sure the earthquakes had enabled a level of resilience that in COVID I would not have experienced otherwise... there's people in Christchurch that did quite well during it because we've been through this. It was still hard, but maybe it wasn't as hard as it would have been. Marianne*

# What do young women in Ōtautahi/Christchurch need?

- Connection
- Support
- Positive messages
- To have their voices heard



# Connection

- **Link to community coming together after the earthquakes and mosque shootings**
- **Community support for young women getting together in groups**
- **Opportunities to be social**
- **Face-to-face still important**

# Connections

*A great thing to come out of the earthquakes was that you go down the street and someone would say, “How are you?” That wasn’t just, “How are you” and I don’t really wanna know, it was a, “How are you doing?” I remember that and that was great. I think we, as a community, we need to be doing that more. Clare*



# Support

- **Support groups for young women**
- **To help combat isolation**
- **Could be online – face-to-face not for all and needs to be accessible**
- **Support for mental health seen as a priority**

# Support Groups

*You don't necessarily want advice all the time. Sometimes you just want someone to say, "Yeah, that sucks." Support groups is that, it's not advice. It's just listening and just hearing someone, whether it be in a message or in a call or in a meeting. Being heard can be very, very therapeutic. It can just make you feel so much less upset about something. Daisy*

# Support

- How do you find support groups?
- Who will set these up?
- Who runs the support groups?



# Positive Messages

- **'We'll be ok'** – messages around wellbeing and resilience
- **Focus on the positive things that have come from facing challenges**
- **Change negative thinking into ideas of empowerment – 'you are strong because of this'.**
- **Hear about impact other young women have made – celebrate successes**

# Positive Messages

*You always focus on the bad but I think there's real value to be gained, especially for young women who come into turbulent times in their life to say it's okay, you've been through some crappy stuff before...you got through this, you can get through that. I think that enables us...to turn something that is negative into something that can be tangibly taken with you. Marianne*

# Have our voices heard



- Take time to ask us what we want and need, then give us the capability to make it happen
- See ourselves in the message
- An environment where we can share and are not judged
- Use our imagery, art and storytelling



# Making the most of the research

- **Podcast Series:**

PlainsFM

Broadcast end of July?

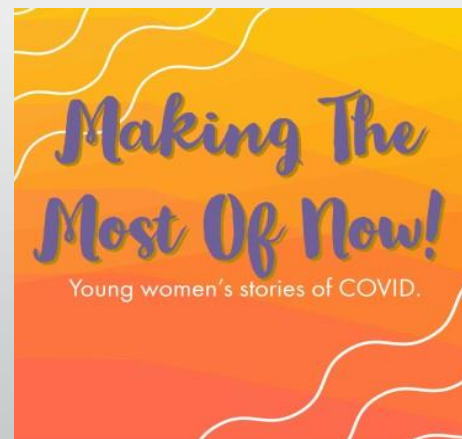
- **Funding proposals**

Rata Foundation – digital sharing of the stories – podcasts and videos

Challenges in finding funding for more interviews

# 'Making the most of now' website UC QuakeStudies Archive

- <https://quakestudies.canterbury.ac.nz/store/collection/22234>







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2021 | RESEARCH  
SEMINAR SERIES

Friday 9 July

New Zealand Red Cross National Youth Engagement Strategy  
the voices of young people

Presented by Fi Sawers, Youth Activator - Kaikōkiri Rangatahi, New Zealand Red Cross