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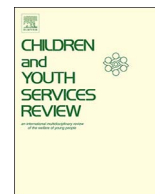
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Youth workers' use of Facebook for mediated pastoralism with juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk



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ABSTRACT

Youth work seeks to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents for re-entry into mainstream society and to prevent youths-at-risk from falling into delinquency, thus necessitating that youth workers assiduously monitor their clients. With the avid use of social media by youths, youth workers must also adopt these communication platforms to reach out to their young clients. Drawing from interviews with youth workers, this study analyses how they use Facebook to communicate with their clients and monitor their activities. Surveillance forms a key thrust of youth workers' professional use of Facebook, enhancing their ability to oversee these youths' personal development for the purposes of mentoring and rehabilitation. Contrary to dystopian, power-centric conceptions of surveillance, the study finds that the youth workers' surveillance of their clients is undergirded by care and beneficence, better understood using Foucault's concept of pastoralism. Through mediated pastoralism via Facebook, these youth workers can derive a more extensive picture of their clients, including their emotional state and peer interactions. With this knowledge, the youth workers can then calibrate their interventions more strategically and only step in when their clients engage in behaviour that poses significant risks or danger. In so doing, the youth workers foster sustainable social capital with their clients that they can still leverage over time. Facebook communications also help the youth workers to bridge communication gaps with these youths. The study also examines how the youths resist the youth workers' oversight in various ways.

1. Introduction

Social workers who counsel juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk, widely referred to as youth workers, are at the forefront of society's engagement with this marginalised population. As Walker (2003) opined, "Youth workers are essential players in community efforts to promote positive youth development" (p. 373). They bear the responsibility of rehabilitating juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk to prevent them from becoming further disenfranchised, in a broader effort for society to be more inclusive and to engender greater social stability. This is a significant issue because global trends suggest that the swelling numbers of marginalised and disaffected youths can contribute to social instability (Renn, Jovanovic, & Schröter, 2011; Urdal & Hoelscher, 2009).

As youths are ardent technology adopters, youth workers too must increasingly utilise new communication technologies to engage with their young charges through "digital youth work" (Székely & Nagy, 2011). In particular, with young people's growing use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, youth workers also have to adapt to this evolving communication landscape by interacting with their clients on these new platforms. Yet research on how digital media are used in

youth mentoring programmes and their impact on youth-mentor relationships has been scant (Schwartz et al., 2014). Ethical standards and codes of conduct governing how social workers should utilise online communication channels are already in existence, but these pertain to formal online counselling programmes (Mallen, Vogel, & Rochlen, 2005). Indeed, policies regarding how other social service organisations and government entities should utilise social media platforms in their professional communication have yet to adequately take into account their unique, interactive nature (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012). The present study examines how youth workers are incorporating Facebook into their communication outreach with juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk, the opportunities and challenges they encounter in the process and the strategies that they have developed to manage this novel communication platform. It finds that the approach they adopt is primarily grounded in mediated pastoralism, where Facebook serves as an anchor in their surveillant assemblage for keeping watch over their clients. The resistance that they encounter from their clients is also interrogated. This article is based on interviews with youth workers who rehabilitate youths-at-risk and aid in the reintegration of juvenile offenders into society after they have completed residential rehabilitation. The interviews are part of a larger 20-month long study,

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conducted between December 2011 and June 2012, on the media use of juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk in Singapore, a city-state where Internet, mobile phone and social media adoption is widespread. In 2011, 65.4% of Singapore's population used Facebook, 11.6% of which were in the age range of 14–17 (Incitez, 2011). With regard to Singapore's youth crime statistics, 4174 youths aged 7–19 were arrested for offences such as shop theft, rioting, and gang activities, constituting less than 1% of the total population of 642,340 youths aged 7–19 in 2010 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010; The National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation, 2015).

The next section outlines the nature of the relationship between social workers and their clients, and the principles underpinning social work in general, and youth work in particular. Thereafter, the article explains why surveillance forms a key thrust of youth work and how surveillance of youths is typically practised, as well as the types of surveillance that have emerged with the intensified use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). A description of the research methodology follows. The findings are then discussed, centring on how the youth workers use Facebook to bridge communication gaps, to exercise mediated pastoralism and the resistance that they encounter from the youths.

2. The social worker-client relationship

The management of juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk primarily involves rehabilitation (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999) and prevention (Yoshikawa, 1994). These youths are assigned to the care of youth workers whose task is to offer counsel by providing advice and intervention that strives to complement and supplement the adult influences already present in the youths' lives, such as those of relatives or teachers. Banks (2010) highlights the particular nature of youth work, noting that it “involves working with participants who have fewer rights than adults, are often vulnerable, lack power and may be suggestible – hence giving scope for their exploitation, harm or manipulation” (p.3). While youth work focuses on a distinct group with unique developmental issues, its practice is governed by the tenets underpinning social work in general.

That youths' rights are comparatively limited implies that youth workers need to protect and respect their clients' autonomy, while also exercising a reasonable degree of adult supervision. After all, social work is fundamentally based on the principles of care and control (Garland, 1985). In reaching out to marginalised individuals, social work has long been grounded in the “creation of the subject, [referring] to the central philosophical approach which presented a picture of the subject's essential humanity and potential for sociability where everyone else was seeing cold, hard, objective fact” (Parton, 2008, p. 256). In this way, social workers are also tasked with interpreting the objective characteristics of the subject, so as to incorporate them into the subject's personal situation, while also integrating the subject into the larger societal context (Philip, 1979). These activities prepare social workers for their ultimate task of speaking for the subject, where they advocate for “the potential, the possibilities and the essential nature of the client” (Parton, 2008, p. 257). Social work thus seeks to:

“produce a picture of the individual which was at once both subjective and social and operated to integrate subjects into the wider society, it also acted as a form of surveillance for those in the community who were not sufficiently dangerous to require more rigorous attention from other agencies, including closed institutions such as prisons or hospitals. (Parton, 2008, p. 257)”

Social workers therefore constitute the human face of the state, simultaneously reaching out to marginalised individuals and drawing them in by looking out for them, and seeking to understand their personal situation within their familial and social context. The knowledge that social workers produce from these efforts is then captured in the form of written reports, forms and surveys that are used to better inform

the state's provision of welfare services. In this regard, information and communication technologies (ICTs) that facilitate and expedite such knowledge creation have assumed a growing role as social workers fulfil their professional responsibilities. Although Parton (2008, 2009) acknowledges that there are benefits to such knowledge being accumulated, shared and quantified, he asserts that social work has become more concerned with the informational rather than social and relational aspects of their clients, thus privileging data over narrative, and rapid action over considered reflection. Related to this development is a diminished interest in understanding *why* clients behave as they do, and a growing preoccupation with knowing merely *what* they do (Howe, 1996). Parton (2009) therefore decries the intensified deployment of management information systems (for case assessment and client monitoring) that increases the accountability and surveillance of social workers and their clients, and devalues the role of sustained engagement and discourse. Despite these reservations about the heightened use of ICTs in social work, the strategic use of computer-mediated communication in counselling has been welcomed, particularly if used to facilitate interactive and anonymous discussions of sensitive issues (Caspar & Berger, 2005). Computer-mediated communication also offers potential value for child welfare social work because of young people's enthusiasm for the Internet (Parton, 2009). Indeed, previous research on social workers has uncovered a growing use among such professionals to communicate with their young charges via social media and instant communication platforms. Humphry (2014) found that smartphones and Internet-based communication platforms such as Skype, Facebook Messenger and Live Chat were widely used by homeless young people, adults and families in Australia including to contact homelessness support. Another study found that homeless youths in the US used social media pervasively, including to communicate with social workers (Barman-Adhikari et al., 2016). Hence, in light of the goals of social work and the avid use of Facebook by Singaporean youths, the present study seeks to address the following questions:

RQ1. How do youth workers communicate with their clients via Facebook?

RQ2. What kinds of knowledge can youth workers obtain about their clients through their use of Facebook?

3. Surveillance and youths

As mentioned earlier, because social workers are entrusted with developing their knowledge and understanding of clients for more efficacious customisation of care, the surveillance of clients thus forms a cornerstone of social work. Youth work in particular, by virtue of its proactive thrust to prevent youths-at-risk from falling into delinquency, and its rehabilitative mission to reform juvenile offenders for re-entry into mainstream society, necessitates that youth workers assiduously monitor their clients. In other words, youth workers' surveillance of their clients can be interpreted as the literal meaning of surveillance, that is to ‘watch over’ (Lyon, 2007, p. 449).

The nature and practice of the surveillance of youths is dependent on the underlying motivations of the authority in question. Consider the surveillance of high school students in the United States. Davis (2003) observes that African American and Latino boys in American inner-city schools are subjected to surveillance that is modelled after the prison labour system, thereby socialising them into expectations of future incarceration. In such a context, surveillance serves to discriminate on the basis of race, gender and class (Hirschfield, 2009; Lewis, 2006) and “students are not regulated but policed to be expelled” (Lewis, 2006, p. 274). The “surveillant assemblage” that is then deployed, typically comprises on-campus police, metal detectors and cameras to record suspected violations that may be used to justify police raids (Hirschfield, 2009). In contrast, surveillance in White, middle-class

schools is undergirded by a philosophy of care and appreciation for the students' dignity and future potential as individuals (Brown, 2003; Hirschfield, 2009). Metal detectors are thus abhorred and cameras are installed to enhance the students' feelings of safety, rather than to cast a panoptic eye that discourages transgressive behaviour. Besides the surveillance of students' physical movements and activities, schools also increasingly surveil their students' online activities, monitoring their use of computers within the school setting and the students' off-campus usage of the school's online services. Such surveillance is primarily driven by the goals of instilling discipline and enhancing students' health and safety (Hope, 2005, 2007). Some schools routinely conduct both physical and virtual surveillance of their students' online activities to deter students from accessing content deemed undesirable by teachers, such as pornography, online games and chat forums (Hope, 2005). Such blanket surveillance practices that are applied *en masse* to groups of youths are geared towards producing controllable and compliant populations (Barrow, 1999) where the students' behaviour is tracked, quantified and managed. In contrast, the surveillance of marginalised youths who require targeted attention and customised support must necessarily go beyond such blunt approaches and prioritise care and control equally.

Yet, academic discourse on surveillance has predominantly focused on issues of power and control, with the dimension of care being overlooked (Lyon, 2001, 2007; Wood, 2005). This bias is exemplified in the kinds of surveillance previously emphasised by extant literature: panopticon, voluntary panopticon and lateral surveillance. The panopticon is the most extreme form, where an unseen, overarching authority can control its subjects by exercising complete surveillance over them in an unfettered manner. Not only are the subjects unable to resist this imposition of power, the mere knowledge that they are being monitored induces them to bend to the will of the authority (Foucault, 1995). The voluntary panopticon refers to individuals volitionally consenting to have their own behaviour surveilled by corporate entities because they consider it personally beneficial (Humphreys, 2011; Whitaker, 1999). Lateral surveillance refers to the situation of people watching people, albeit in a surreptitious and inegalitarian fashion, where some are surveilled more actively and some less (Andrejevic, 2002, 2006; Humphreys, 2011). In these forms of surveillance, the nature of the relationship between the observer and the observed hinges on the power asymmetries between them.

This article seeks to move away from this power-centric frame by viewing surveillance through the lens of care, which may be especially productive for marginalised and vulnerable populations. Notably, Moore (2011) found that drug addicts who are in rehabilitation can benefit from “therapeutic surveillance”, where caregivers and the addicts' support community can monitor these addicts with a view towards helping them reform and that “care and control are blended and at times synonymous” (Moore, p. 256). Moore's care-oriented perspective of surveillance is rooted in Foucault's concept of pastoralism (Foucault, 2007). Foucault likened leaders to shepherds who exercise power over their flock and keep watch over them in the interest of their salvation. Quite unlike the foreboding panopticon, “[p]astoral power is a power of care” and “its only *raison d'être* is doing good, and in order to do good” (Foucault, 2007, pp. 126–127). Even as the shepherd minds his flock in its entirety, his task is also to develop individualising knowledge by acquainting with and understanding every single member so as to render “the necessary care that is peculiar to each one” (p.175). While Foucault's concept of pastoralism brings care to the forefront of surveillance, the dimension of power is still palpable because the shepherd-flock/surveiller-surveilled relationship is fundamentally based on “the submission of one individual to another” (Foucault, 2007, p. 175). Hence, however well-intentioned or benign the surveillance, it can nevertheless be resisted as previous research has shown.

To better accommodate the dynamic of care and control that underscores both social work and the surveillance of marginalised youths,

this study therefore seeks to address the following question:

RQ3. How do youth workers utilise Facebook to exercise pastoralism over their clients and how did the youths resist such surveillance, if at all?

4. Methodology

The data presented here is drawn from a larger 20 month study on the media use of juvenile delinquents and youths-at-risk in Singapore. The first phase of research comprised interviews with youths at various stages of the “delinquency lifecycle”: (i) at-risk: youths identified as at-risk and receiving preventative counselling, (ii) in rehab: juvenile offenders incarcerated in low- or high-security residential rehabilitation homes; and (iii) post-rehab: youths who have undergone rehabilitation and are seeking to reintegrate into society (Lim, Chan, Vadrevu, & Basnyat, 2013). The second phase of research was then initiated to obtain the perspective of youth workers who guide youths in the “at-risk” or “post-rehab” stages,¹ and undergoing state-mandated counselling.

The data presented here is drawn from the second phase of the study where we interviewed a total of 24 youth workers, 13 of whom were female and 11 male. Their experience in youth work ranged from one to 20 years and their clients were aged 12 to 25. Half the interviewees counselled exclusively male clients, a quarter exclusively females and another quarter counselled both males and females. The youth workers were based in various institutions including schools, youth drop-in centres, guidance agencies and youth outreach organisations, with their clients having been referred to them by the police, rehabilitation homes or schools. Their clients comprised those who had committed relatively minor infractions such as underage sex, smoking and drinking, to those with more serious offences such as drug abuse, theft, gang fights, rioting and assault. The frequency with which the youth workers met their clients varied according to the severity of the youths' record of delinquency and offence.

The youth workers were recruited with the assistance of a national level agency that oversees the country's youth work sector. This agency helped to disseminate an invitation to participate in the study via its email distribution list. The invitation sought youth workers who communicated with their clients via social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Snowball sampling was also employed, with earlier waves of interviewees recommending later waves. The interviews were conducted between December 2011 and June 2012 at the interviewees' workplace by the author and two trained research assistants. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 min and was audio-recorded and transcribed. All interviews were conducted in English, the working language in Singapore. As a token of appreciation at the close of each interview, interviewees were presented with a bookstore voucher to the value of four paperback novels.

We interviewed the youth workers using a series of semi-structured questions about their work experience and the challenges and gratifications they derived from youth work. We also probed them on their experiences and perceptions of using social media such as Facebook and mobile phone text messaging to communicate with their clients. The decision was made to focus on Facebook because it was the most popular social media among Singapore youths at the time, as we had also noted from participants in the first phase of our study. We also sought their perceptions of their clients' use of online and mobile communications. Additionally, we asked them to log into their Facebook accounts and guide us through various aspects including their friend networks, typical usage patterns as well as to show us the

¹ Youths who are in rehabilitation homes have limited access to mobile phone and Internet communications and the youth workers who guide them would interact with them face-to-face rather than through mediated communications.

Facebook posts of their clients, and any Facebook communications they had engaged in with clients. Written notes on the general nature of these posts and communications were made but no personal details of their clients were captured. Analysis of the interview transcripts by author herself (using Microsoft Word) involved identifying dominant themes and issues arising from the interviews, using the “meaning condensation” approach (Kvale, 1996). Through an open coding of the transcripts, large amounts of interview text were compressed into brief statements representing the various themes raised by the respondents. These themes were then classified under the following headings that related to the research questions driving the study: youth workers' professional obligations, youth worker-client relationship (communication issues/communication practices/relationship management), youth workers' use of Facebook (ethical ambiguities/monitoring/intervention/information management/account management), client response (acceptance/resistance/uncertainties). To protect the identities of our respondents, unique code numbers have been used in place of names when their direct quotes are reported.

5. Discussion

5.1. RQ1: Bridging communication gaps

RQ1 asked “How do youth workers communicate with their clients via Facebook?”. Facebook and mobile phone communication clearly constituted a key part of our interviewees' communication repertoire for reaching out to their clients and indeed, they felt that these served to bridge communication gaps. Without exception, all the youth workers interviewed agreed that they had made the transition from purely face-to-face meetings with their clients to incorporating mediated communication because of youths' comfort levels with these platforms:

“Students are online now, and we want to go where the students are and engage them in their natural habitat. And we know that they are very very comfortable online, on the Internet, but we also know that there are specific areas online where they interact most, such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on.”

A1

Besides considering which communication platform to use, youth workers also have to take into account the specific needs and concerns of this marginalised population that they seek to engage. These youths' general mistrust of authority figures and feelings of personal inadequacy present obstacles to communication that youth workers need to surmount:

“You have a huge barrier before you even start [to counsel them]. Because I think they have this notion that authority, teachers, adults “don't understand me” and they have been put down a lot in their lives. So they have low confidence, low self-esteem and low self-image. So for you to get over that barrier, you have to do a lot.”

G7

The youths, not entirely appreciating the rehabilitative thrust of youth work, also hold negative conceptions about the institution of counselling that translate into apprehensions about meeting youth workers:

“These youths won't see you [voluntarily]. I mean the one reason why they don't see counsellors is because seeing a counsellor is a “death” in their position. It gives them the notion that “I did something wrong, that's why I [have to] go and see the counsellor.” So the challenge for me every time I work with my cases [clients] is how do I position myself in such a way that I do not appear as a youth worker?”

M13

Given these impediments to winning the youths' trust, most of the

youth workers feel that Facebook in particular offers viable communication opportunities for building a stronger relationship, presenting distinct advantages over other communication channels. The mediated nature of Facebook communication helps to minimise feelings of awkwardness, and its culture of immediacy also elicits more prompt responses from the youths:

“They're more open to talk on Facebook generally. They will express whatever they feel... They are more responsive on Facebook and Twitter as compared to SMS and calls. I think the worst would be calls. I think they wouldn't feel comfortable if you call them. If you posted on someone's [Facebook] wall, something like “How are you doing?”, it wouldn't be as weird as calling someone and asking them the same question.”

K11

“If I can see them online [via Facebook], it makes it easier than messaging or calling them. Secondly, they are more open in sharing what they're going through, so it's easier to connect. If they post something, then you just go and [comment] “It's okay.” They will connect back more quickly than [if I say] “Let's talk. What do you want to share today?”

C3

The “durability” of Facebook accounts is another valuable advantage because some clients can be extremely elusive. As one youth worker put it, one of their biggest challenges with clients is “*getting hold of them*”. Experiencing emotional transition during their adolescence, youths may express a desire for independence and rebel against parental controls in their quest for self-identity (Khong, 2009). Many would drop out of school, run away from home, exhaust the value on their mobile phone prepaid accounts and switch to new phone numbers, rendering them uncontactable. As youths-at-risk are typically from dysfunctional families, contacting them through their next-of-kin is unproductive because many parents are themselves uncontactable or uncommunicative. House visits are another option but do not necessarily guarantee access because seldom is anyone at home. Over time however, many youth workers have discovered that regardless of the upheavals in their lives, their clients continue to access their own Facebook accounts which serve as permanent online homes for their identities. They noted that while these youths commoditize their mobile phone accounts, they actively manage and sustain their Facebook accounts and networks. Hence, many youth workers expressed that Facebook is a helpful, viable link to these youths:

“The very resistant ones would just disappear even after you call them. They just don't pick up, or they change their numbers. You really don't know where they are, and their parents don't know either. It's challenging to engage them, because once they come out from prison, they just want their freedom ... And when they're released on probation, Facebook's the ‘in’ thing, so they all have their own accounts. So they started adding me, and I got quite a few friend requests. I would Facebook-message or chat with them online.”

A2

This situation was very typical of the friending process between youth workers and their clients. The youth workers we interviewed tended to allow themselves to be ‘friended’ by their clients rather than to volitionally friend them because their clients might suspect them of having ‘ulterior motives’ of wanting to check on them. Once a Facebook connection was made between a youth worker and a client in a particular neighbourhood or client group, others in the group would also start to ‘friend’ the youth worker. Once the online connections with their clients have been made, youth workers then use Facebook features such as ‘liking’ their clients' posts and sharing status updates to lubricate the relationship. The youth workers shared that by using Facebook in this manner, they can maintain a presence in their clients'

lives in an unobtrusive and non-threatening way, and develop Facebook into a neutral territory where they can engage their clients.

5.2. RQ2: Mediated pastoralism

RQ2 asked “What kinds of knowledge can youth workers obtain about their clients through their use of Facebook?”. While none of the youth workers actually used the word ‘surveillance’ to describe what they do on Facebook vis-à-vis their clients, surveillance was evidently a key objective of all of our interviewees’ Facebook activity. They used terms such as ‘watch over’, ‘check on’ and ‘see what they are up to’ to describe their day-to-day monitoring of their clients. Their actions are a clear manifestation of pastoralism as posited by Foucault, where they exercise their authority and power over these youths in what is ultimately an exercise of beneficence. Regardless of whether the youth workers are avid Facebook users in their personal lives, all of them share an appreciation for how Facebook has enhanced their ability to monitor these youths’ personal development and to counsel them appropriately. The mediated pastoralism that Facebook affords these youth workers resonates with their pro-active approach to counselling these youths. Since their charges are either youths-at-risk or those in the post-rehabilitation phase, their task is to avert a slide into delinquency for the former, and recidivism for the latter. In particular, they look out for signs of depression such as self-mutilation, evidence of family dysfunction such as running away from home and boasts of risk-taking behaviour such as substance abuse. Through surveilling their clients over Facebook, the youth workers exercise vigilance by noting potential issues that their clients are facing and counsel them before the situation worsens:

“Facebook is where I know what is going on, where they go to, at what time, why they are outside, with whom. Some of them will put down where they are, so I will look at the time and I know that by right, they should be at home and should not be outside...This is a 22-year-old girl [referring to her client’s Facebook post] who has a two-month-old baby, but we realize that she has been out clubbing almost every night. So that is when we are alerted and we try to find out who is looking after the baby and why she is going clubbing so often and who she is going out with. We will know from Facebook. They will tag or post.”

P16

“We don’t want to wait until something [problematic] happens and then we try to work [with them] there and then, which can sometimes make it harder. And sometimes things are just irreversible. So it is important to be able to help the youths to prevent [problems].”

B2

The task of building up a relationship with clients and understanding their personal situation for the “creation of the subject,” (Parton, 2008, p. 256) can be a labour- and time-intensive undertaking for social workers. As prior literature demonstrates, their efforts may not translate into more in-depth insights about clients even after considerable effort has been expended (Walker, 2003). This study’s findings indicate that Facebook provides youth workers with knowledge gathering opportunities that are not present in conventional social work practices. Previously, youth workers would have had to rely on interviews and communications with the youths themselves, as well as with parents, teachers and enforcement agencies such as the police and rehabilitation home staff. Through mediated pastoralism via Facebook, the youth workers have a direct line of sight into their clients’ personal lives and can derive a more extensive picture of their clients, including their emotional state, activities and peer interactions. Youth workers can also reach out more strategically, during times of the day when the youths may be more prepared to open up as compared to during scheduled face-to-face counselling sessions:

“For example, this guy posted that he is going to play soccer. He

even posted about where he is going. So we know that he won’t go out of this area. We know they are quite safe in that sense. We also know who they play with. If we want to know who his good friends are, we go to Facebook and check because they practically put their whole life’s or their whole day’s activities onto Facebook.”

P16

“I used to go online very late at night, just like them. They start prompting me online at around 12 midnight, and we just make small talk. If I want to find out what they’ve been doing, I just go to their page and check them out.”

A2

As Lyon observes, ICTs are deployed to scale up surveillance systems in terms of their potency, coverage and capacity (Lyon, 2001). For social workers in particular, “other devices, such as the car and the telephone...made it increasingly possible to negotiate time and place more efficiently and quickly” (Parton, 2008, p. 258), thereby enhancing their monitoring and guidance capabilities. Similarly, for the youth workers in this study, Facebook augments their surveillant assemblage (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000), enabling them to impose surveillance that is spatially and temporally more extensive, thereby garnering more “individualising knowledge” about their clients and with greater efficacy.

Facebook also affords youth workers particular insights into their clients’ lives that even prolonged face-to-face interaction cannot approximate, especially with regard to the peer dynamics surrounding their clients. This is a critical issue in youth delinquency and rehabilitation because negative peer influence has been consistently found to be predictive of delinquency (Agnew, 1991; Carson, 2013; Case & Katz, 1991; Haynie, 2001). Yet, youth workers are unlikely to have the time or be granted the access to ‘hang out’ with their clients and their friends so as to be privy to the peer influences that their clients are susceptible to. Instead, youth workers are limited to their clients’ self-reports or third party perspectives from parents or teachers. By scrutinising their clients’ Facebook interactions with peers, the youth workers have a more in-depth understanding of their clients and are better able to position them in the larger context of their social networks. Specifically, the youth workers explained that they monitor whom their clients ‘friend’ and interact with on Facebook, paying attention to danger signs such as gang activity and fraternisation with far older acquaintances because that typically signals adverse influence.

Besides a greater awareness of such deleterious forms of peer interaction, Facebook also helps to flesh out more positive instances. One youth worker said, with reference to the supportive comments that her client’s Facebook post had elicited:

“It’s nice to see this kind of [positive] comments coming out, the ones that are encouraging you to finish school or not to give up. If you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend, these are the ones who go, “You must be patient” or “This person might not be the one”, those kinds of words of wisdom. I guess as a youth worker you will feel that “Okay this client seems to have a nice support group.” Sometimes you don’t have to butt in.”

E5

The fact that youths-at-risk are so labelled may predispose youth workers to viewing their clients and their peers through the lens of dysfunction. As prior research has demonstrated, there is an unfortunate tendency for social workers to assess clients using a deficit model, training their eyes on what is wrong, problematic or pathological (Blundo, 2001). Taking into account such a propensity, our data suggests that Facebook offers a glimpse into facets of the youths’ lives that may previously have been less apparent to youth workers, through which the workers may recognise strengths in their clients and their peer ecosystems, and to then leverage these strengths in their guidance of these youths:

“So sometimes there will be others [clients' friends] who will scold the person for such [transgressive] acts. Then we will, more or less, know that that person [client's friend] is quite good, very sensible, so that is when we will work through that person, like “Hey can you please go and tell your friend this?” Because the influence between peers is much stronger than us [youth workers] coming in, so we will just say, “Hey, go and tell your friend not to smoke so much”... Because if we tell, he is not going to listen.”

P16

Notwithstanding that mediated pastoralism via Facebook is rich with possibility, the youth workers are also highly cognizant of its limitations, and cautious about drawing insights about their clients from Facebook. Instead, any significant information that they derive from the social network is noted for future reference and occasionally used as a springboard for conversation in face-to-face meetings with the client. On this note, the youth workers varied in terms of how they deal with the information that they garner via Facebook because they were not subjected to specific guidelines on using Facebook in their work, and were largely steered by general professional guidelines and best practices. Only one youth worker explained that she had printed a screenshot of her client's Facebook post and kept it in his casefile because she wanted to educate him about online safety. All others mentioned not keeping a documentary record and simply making mental notes so that they can use the information in their interactions with their clients. Those who counsel youths on a group basis would also share the information with their colleagues, either verbally or through case notes. These findings are consistent with Parton's observation that while social work has largely operated on the basis of “stored information in the form of case records and other forms of recording... a large amount of knowledge was undocumented and existed primarily in people's heads” (Parton, 2008, p. 262). It should be noted however that Parton's comment was made *before* interpersonal interactions via digitally transmitted and recordable media such as Facebook became so rampant. As social media emerge as a mainstay in day-to-day interactions and social workers increasingly employ such media to interact with and monitor their clients, it may be prudent for social workers to be given clearer guidance on this matter.

5.3. RQ3: Calibrated interventions

RQ3 asked “How do youth workers utilise Facebook to exercise pastoralism over their clients and how did the youths resist such surveillance, if at all?”. In view of their clients' potential to resist their surveillance, the youth workers realised that they needed to be cautious in using this new communication channel to reach out and to carefully calibrate their interventions. In the absence of specific guidelines on how to use Facebook to engage with clients and develop knowledge about them, the youth workers exercise autonomy and rely on professional judgment, a mode of practice that is highly characteristic of social work given its variable nature (Taylor & White, 2001). Indeed, one issue that many interviewees raised was deciding when and how to intervene in their clients' lives based on the intelligence they had gathered through mediated pastoralism. Compounding their uncertainty is the duty to maintain client confidentiality, a requirement that posed ethical dilemmas for several interviewees in particular instances.

When youths confide in their counsellors, there is a broad expectation that confidentiality is assured. Youth workers are expected to maintain “professional confidentiality” but in practice, even with the provision of professional guidelines, it is often difficult for social workers to assess how far confidentiality should extend, when it should or should not be promised and the circumstances in which it can be compromised (Morgan & Banks, 2010). As will be elaborated upon later, all the youth workers explained that preserving client confidentiality is in the long-term interest of fostering a strong relationship

with the youths. However, there were occasions when they had to breach this confidentiality because the situation warranted it, as in this case:

“There are some parents who know that I am on their children's Facebook and they will try to find out from me what their children post. But I will just be very vague because it is still the kids' privacy. So as much as possible, I try not to break that confidentiality duty or agreement with the youth... I just try to reassure them that I won't bring those discussions, what I see online, back to their parents. The only exception was my client was self-harming [self-mutilation] and she posted a picture of her self-harming online, so I had to call her parent. That one is beyond our confidential clause, it's about safety. So that girl was a bit upset with me, she was like “You good ah [sarcastic tone], you tell my parents. Next time I don't want to tell you anything already.” But she didn't delete me [from her Facebook] yet, she was just telling me. Then I just explained to her that I had to tell her parents because of safety and she was okay with it afterwards.”

Y25

Indeed, all the youth workers stressed that they refrain from even commenting negatively on Facebook posts relating to any clients' activity that they disapprove of because they believe that their greater goal is to keep these youths engaged and to build up a relationship of trust with them. Several youth workers shared that even when they learn that their clients are engaging in minor offences, they stay their hand against reporting them to the authorities because doing so would alienate the youths, thereby undermining the quality of their relationship and impeding their ability to counsel the youths for the long haul:

“One thing about Facebook is that it is visible, but you try not to let them know you see everything. Because if they know you're watching them, they try to cut off all contact with you... I basically just keep it [client's risky behaviour] on my radar, that this could be an issue. Whether or not it surfaces in my relationship with the person depends on the opportunity.”

J10

“I make sure that whatever interventions or comments I make [on Facebook] don't piss them off, because then they might strike me off [their friends list] totally and I lose this form of information.”

G7

Prior research has in fact found that youth workers inevitably navigate the tensions between care and control, specifically, their primary responsibility of youth rehabilitation and secondary obligation towards law enforcement (Jeffs & Banks, 2010). The youth workers in our study prefer not to “break the connection” with their clients but to maintain the relationship on an even keel and keep these youths within their fold. Hence, they calibrate their interventions carefully and only step in when their clients engage in behaviour that poses significant risks or danger to themselves or to others. In so doing, the youth workers aim to foster sustainable social capital with their clients, that is, social capital that they can still leverage over time. Portes (1998) noted that social networks are not a given and must be maintained to create the social capital through which individuals can access resources of their acquaintances, and further heighten the amount and quality of those resources that are ultimately fungible. Facebook use has been found to be associated with bonding, bridging and maintained social capital that respectively link weak ties, strong ties and individuals who stay in touch even after physically disconnecting from their networks (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007), especially thanks to Facebook's affordances that enable signalling attention and availability for reciprocal interactions within networks (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). Notably, several youth workers revealed that through their Facebook interactions, they continue to scaffold their clients' personal development even after they have matured into early adulthood and left the counselling

programme. Via Facebook, they check on their former clients and also share useful information such as job vacancies and networking events, cultivating a sustained, beneficent presence in the lives of these young people. These youth workers also noted that these former clients appreciate the youth workers' presence on their Facebook network, and would still occasionally turn to them for advice on an informal, personal basis.

Just as some youth workers encountered clients who appreciated being watched over by them, several also reported resistance and even resentment from their clients. Even though young people seem to have internalised Foucault's panopticon in that they strategically manage their presence on Facebook to reveal enough about themselves to satisfy their audience, but not so much that they compromise their own privacy, they do not necessarily appreciate being the object of surveillance (Westlake, 2008), regardless of the benign intentions underlying it:

“One guy was very angry, so he posted on his page: ‘Bitch I’ll find you! You think I don’t know you came in [to my Facebook account] to find me?’. He said he knew for sure. I can’t do anything, but only try to manage him and his emotions. He became quite paranoid for a period of time, so he blocked all the adults [from his Facebook]. I called him after, so he friend-ed me back on Facebook. They have their mood swings.”

A2

Such reactions reflect resentment towards the inherent asymmetry between the observer and the observed in surveillant relationships: “Asymmetry lies at the heart of panoptic power in terms of both the monitoring process and the structured power relations that characterize panoptic institutions” (Andrejevic, 2006, p. 396). Undeniably, because youth workers are ultimately representatives of the state and recognised by the clients as such, these youths are likely to perceive themselves as being in a subordinate position in the surveillant relationship. This us-versus-them perception is however ameliorated (to some extent) by the discourse of care and pastoralism that the youth workers adopt in communicating with their clients. Furthermore, unlike the panoptic surveillance imposed in rehabilitation centres where youths must submit completely and involuntarily to surveillance, on Facebook, the youths have agency - they could withdraw themselves from the surveillant relationship by defriending the youth workers, manage their privacy settings or by being less active online, as several youth workers had encountered. As well, the egalitarian nature of mutual ‘friending’ in mediated pastoralism provides opportunities for the youths to exercise “sousveillance” (Mann, Nolan, & Wellman, 2002, p. 332), where the observed surveil their observers:

“So if I use this platform [Facebook], sometimes I encourage them or post some inspirational quotes or whatever, I do have kids liking my posts. I think it helps them connect with me also. Some of my clients did say, “Your Facebook is very boring. Not many pictures. You never put more pictures of yourself.” So I guess while we are curious about them, they are also curious about us, so it’s two-way.”

Y25

The relatively open nature of this surveillant relationship implies that the youths are less vulnerable to a “nonreciprocal loss of privacy” (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 322), where those being monitored are hampered in their ability to monitor those who monitor them.

The youth workers were in fact not averse to sousveillance and some even welcomed it. Those who had experienced being ‘stalked’ by their clients acknowledged that it is a *quid pro quo* they accept because they have come to realize that when they share their personal lives via Facebook, their clients warm up to them:

“I let them see [my photos], because they like to see photos. A lot of people [clients], they don’t talk to me on Facebook. Then after seeing the photos [they] come and say, “I see that you have many

activities on Facebook, how do you find the time? How do you do that? How do you do this?”

19

As Smith observes, the interaction between social workers and their clients “encourages emotional openness, invites trust, identifies need and provides help and reassurance” (Smith, 2004, p. 6). Just as Facebook enables the youth workers to see various facets of their clients that are otherwise inaccessible to them, similarly, Facebook enables the youths to see the youth workers as individuals and more than just service providers, and as people with whom they can possibly forge an emotional connection:

“You have to be very open. And it’s interesting because you think that being a role model means you have to be tip-top 100 per cent. But they actually look for the vulnerability in you. So once you can show that you are vulnerable and you are open and sincere, and you are just as human as them, that’s when they will come on board.”

G7

In this regard, practices tended to differ among the youth workers with half using their personal Facebook accounts to communicate with their clients and another half setting up an alternative account for that purpose. Of those who used their personal accounts, half did so because managing multiple accounts was too cumbersome, while another half felt that using an alternative account was “not very genuine”. In particular, one youth worker felt strongly that youth workers should either embrace Facebook wholeheartedly for reaching out to clients or not use it at all, rather than engage in half measures:

“Some people are more comfortable with having a separate account from their personal account, both for mobile phones and Facebook. For Facebook, you can see the difference when someone sets up an account solely for work purposes, versus when someone is really themselves. If you don’t want to use it, then don’t. If not, use it all the way. Facebook is a platform where I can engage fully all aspects of my clients’ lives. It can be a tool to influence. But some people are just not that open... As things progress, we can’t run away from this form of engagement.”

J10

Yet others also have specific reasons for wanting to maintain separate accounts for their personal and professional lives.

“I’m quite open as a person, but in terms of professional and ethical issues, I thought I’d better be clearer about the boundaries... For example, religion is a sensitive issue. Because I’ve got religious stuff in my personal account, so I felt maybe clients’ parents might see these and feel uncomfortable, especially if they aren’t of the same faith.”

A3

The experience of this youth worker suggests that in some situations, maintaining a separate account for interacting with clients may be more desirable and appropriate to the circumstances, even if it comes across as less sincere. Overall, the findings suggest that consistent with social work in general, the use of Facebook in youth work demands a great deal of professional judgment and autonomy on the part of the youth worker, and trust in the youth worker to act in the interest of “morally good outcomes” (Smith, 2004, p. 5).

6. Conclusion and implications for practice

Youth workers constantly balance the roles of “carer, protector, advocate and liberator” (Banks, 2010, p. 4) vis-à-vis their young charges. To fulfil these roles, youth workers need to understand each and every member of their flock by developing individualising knowledge. Yet, as Parton (2008) argued, the increasingly managerial approach to social work has emphasised the informational aspects of

clients at the expense of their social and relational aspects, thereby engendering a limited, one-dimensional understanding of clients that constrains how they can be helped and guided. To some extent, the incorporation of Facebook into the surveillant assemblage of youth workers helps to stem this trend. As our findings have shown, when youth workers employ Facebook to interact with their clients and to exercise mediated pastoralism, their capacity to understand their clients is enhanced in several notable ways. To begin with, given the youths' affinity for Facebook, youth workers can profitably use it to engage their clients, especially if there is an atmosphere of openness and mutual sharing between youth worker and client. Through their Facebook interactions, trust and goodwill can be fostered, paving the way for efficacious provision of care and guidance by the youth worker. Beyond the affordances for interaction, Facebook's culture of performativity encourages its users to openly share their thoughts and experiences, giving people ringside seats to each other's lives. The youth workers leverage this access to monitor their clients' online and offline activity unobtrusively, note issues of concern and pro-actively reach out to these youths. In combination therefore, mediated pastoralism and Facebook interactions potentially offer youth workers both diagnostic and therapeutic value. Importantly, the peer interactions that are played out via Facebook, both positive and negative, enable youth workers to look beyond the frame of dysfunction to recognise and exploit the merits of their clients' social networks in their care and guidance.

Arguably, the youth workers' use of Facebook to surveil their clients seems to confirm Foucault's (1995) warning about the deinstitutionalisation of panoptic surveillance, where the processes of surveillance percolate through the boundaries of organised settings such as schools or prisons. In the extra-institutional context, the monitoring capacities of different members of these youths' social networks are co-opted via Facebook to oversee the youths' personal and private interactions, and Facebook can be construed as a 'disciplinary technology' in the Foucauldian sense. However, bearing in mind the remit of care that underlies the youth workers' surveillant activities, and the avenues for youths to realign power asymmetries through sousveillance, characterising the youth workers' acts of monitoring as panoptic is both misleading and unhelpful. Furthermore, the rich and contextualised knowledge that youth workers gather about their clients via Facebook approximates what Lyon (2001) refers to as "embodied surveillance that watches visible bodies" (p. 15) - a practice that he considers more advantageous than the dehumanised, data-driven surveillance that typifies many current, technology-dependent surveillance practices. Instead, responding to Moore's (2011) lead to focus on the beneficent dimensions of surveillance, this article asserts that it is more appropriate to view youth workers' surveillance of clients via Facebook as mediated pastoralism, where they are "doing good, and in order to do good" (Foucault, 2007, p. 127). As ICTs pervade all levels of society in all aspects of daily interaction, Facebook and other social media can constitute the surveillant assemblage as a 'technology of care' that complements existing technologies current employed in social work.

However, even though the youth workers in this study have demonstrated restraint and sensitivity in using Facebook to augment their guidance of these youths, the growing use of such informal surveillant techniques needs to be formally recognised by the youth work sector so as to clarify the guidelines surrounding their use. According to Boyas, Wind, and Ruiz (2015), child welfare workers have been found to constantly face high levels of work-related stress due to many factors that include burnout, few resources, unclear job expectations and communication issues with the organisation. Even if the youth workers' use of Facebook to 'create the subject' in this study can be construed as mediated pastoralism, and granting that the youth workers and youths may have gained positively from such surveillance, it still does not negate the inherent asymmetry in the surveillant relationship. Exacerbating the asymmetry is the fact that the youths do not quite appreciate how the information gathered about them via Facebook is used to 'construct' them as individuals in the eyes of their youth workers and

therefore the state, particularly given the informal, unstructured and ad hoc nature of their Facebook interactions. Concerns therefore remain about whether these workers may overstep their boundaries in using Facebook for surveillance, whether consciously or unwittingly, which could strain the workers' already heavy workloads, give them unclear job expectations and result in a lack of worker-organisation communication regarding this issue. The absence of clear guidelines governing how youth workers should manage the information obtained via Facebook information, in terms of its dissemination, storage and utilisation, may also result in the uneven treatment of clients. Youth workers should therefore be transparent with their clients about their use of Facebook for mediated pastoralism as an open stance can also contribute to an atmosphere of trust. Given the rapid evolution of social media, specific guidelines on its usage may be of limited value to youth workers. In fact, Facebook has waned in popularity among US teens as they veer towards more visual social networks such as Instagram, Snapchat and Tumblr (Business Insider, 2015). The same trend is occurring among teens in Singapore with the use of Instagram and Snapchat rapidly rising (Kantar TNS, 2016). However, the growing use of social media platforms and the peer dynamics they engender should be recognised by the profession, and greater effort at sharing experiences and best practices in using social media for pastoralism and client outreach should be encouraged, if not facilitated.

The current study has been driven by an exploratory approach to uncover an emerging phenomenon and does not claim to generalise. Having obtained layered and contextualised findings on youth workers' use of Facebook in their professional duties, the next step would be to determine the extent of its usage or that of other social media through a quantitative survey. Although the invitation to participate in this study was sent to the mailing list of at least 500 members, only 24 responded despite a prolonged time frame and repeat email invitations. Informal feedback from the interviewees suggests that the number that is already using social media in their work is much larger, but that the unpredictability of their work schedules prevented many youth workers from participating in the study. Be that as it may, we believe the in-depth insights from this study provide a useful foundation on which future research can be developed and can help to inform the practice of youth work in an evolving technological landscape.

As new social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat are emerging to seize youths' attention, there is also a growing realisation that youth workers need to engage with their clients on their preferred communication platforms. Our findings on youth workers' experiences of connecting with their clients via Facebook can be distilled into some simple guidelines for mediated pastoralism via new forms of social media:

- Understand the interpersonal dynamics that different social media permit before using them as communication channels to reach out to clients.
- Wait to be 'invited' into your clients' social media space, and focus on first developing a relationship of trust between you and your client before developing online connections.
- Keep interactions with clients on social media light and casual, and refrain from using the social media space for interventions.
- Social media communication with clients can supplement but never substitute for face-to-face communication. The information you glean about clients in their social media space represents only one facet of their lives.
- The information the client presents about him/herself on social media, even if alarming, should not be acted upon without verification or corroboration through direct face-to-face communication.

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