



"Looking Out for One Another"

How Digital Neighborhood Groups Shape Community

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How does surveillance on digital neighborhood groups impact users' senses of community and belonging in their neighborhoods?

Key Theories

Sense of Community

- Group Membership:** Feeling like you belong in the community. (Sense of belonging).
 - Influence:** Feeling that you matter to the group, and the group matters to its members.
 - Needs Fulfillment:** Sense that your needs can be met by the community.
 - Emotional Connection:** Belief that members have shared histories, experiences, and common places.
- McMillan & Chavis 1986

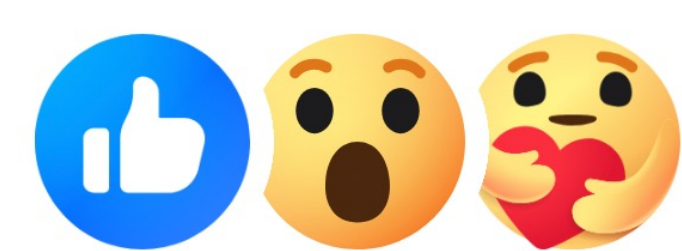
The Panopticon

- Always the potential of being watched.
 - Ensures the "automatic functioning of power" where the inmate internalizes norms and disciplines their actions.
 - A **carceral culture** emerges when surveillance is spread beyond penal institutions.
- Foucault 1975

Collective Efficacy

- The process of using social ties among neighbors to achieve collective goals. Uses two mechanisms:
 - Social Cohesion:** A sense of trust, shared values, dependency, and closeness among neighbors.
 - Informal Control Strategies:** Enacted by residents to promote shared expectations and social norms.
- Sampson 2012

References:



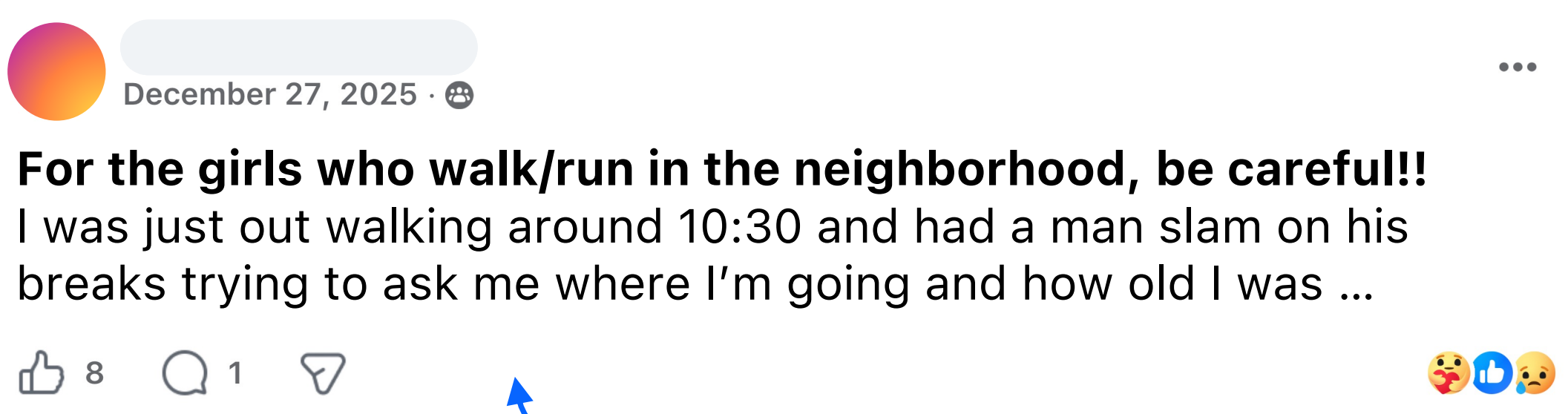
Methods & Results

Case study of 3 Facebook neighborhood groups in a small midwestern city:

- Content analysis of 168 posts
- Distributed a survey to group members (78 responses)

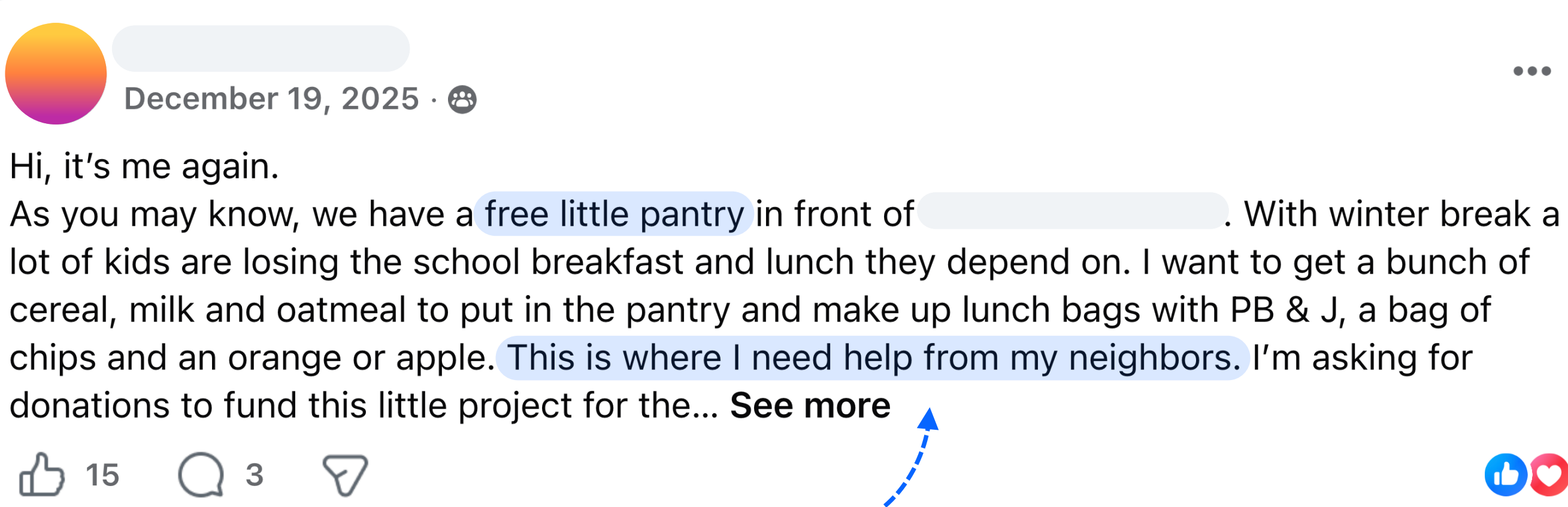
On average, survey respondents report:

- Strong senses of belonging (group membership)
- Moderate feelings social cohesion, needs fulfillment, and emotional connection
- Neutral perceptions of influence



Informal control strategies

18% promote mutual aid

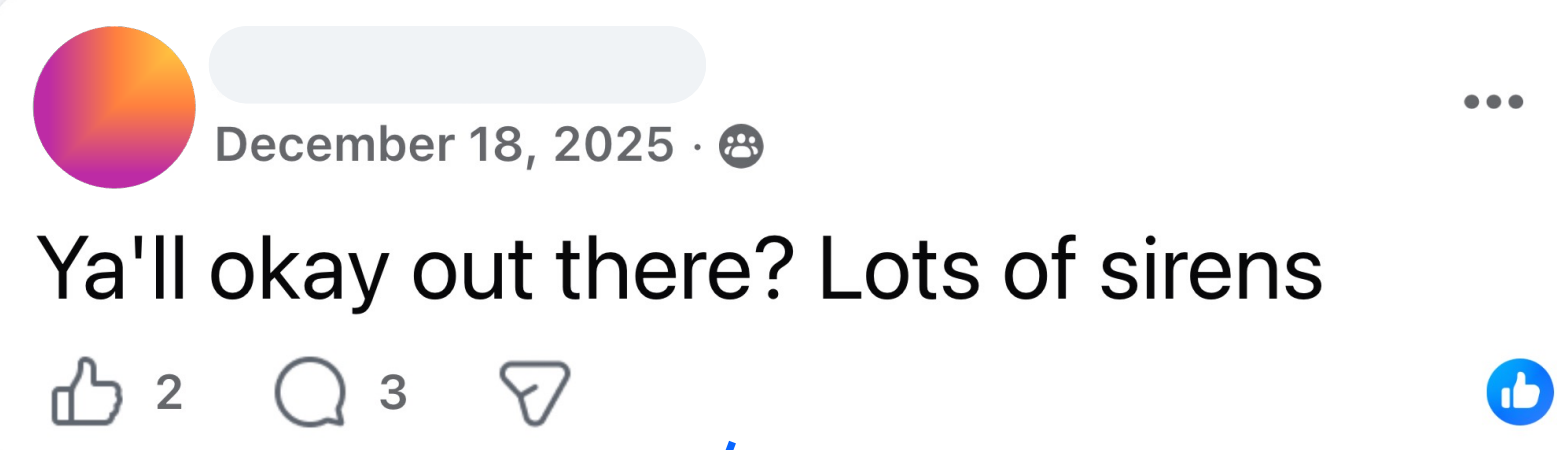


Both posts include a call to action

Collective efficacy

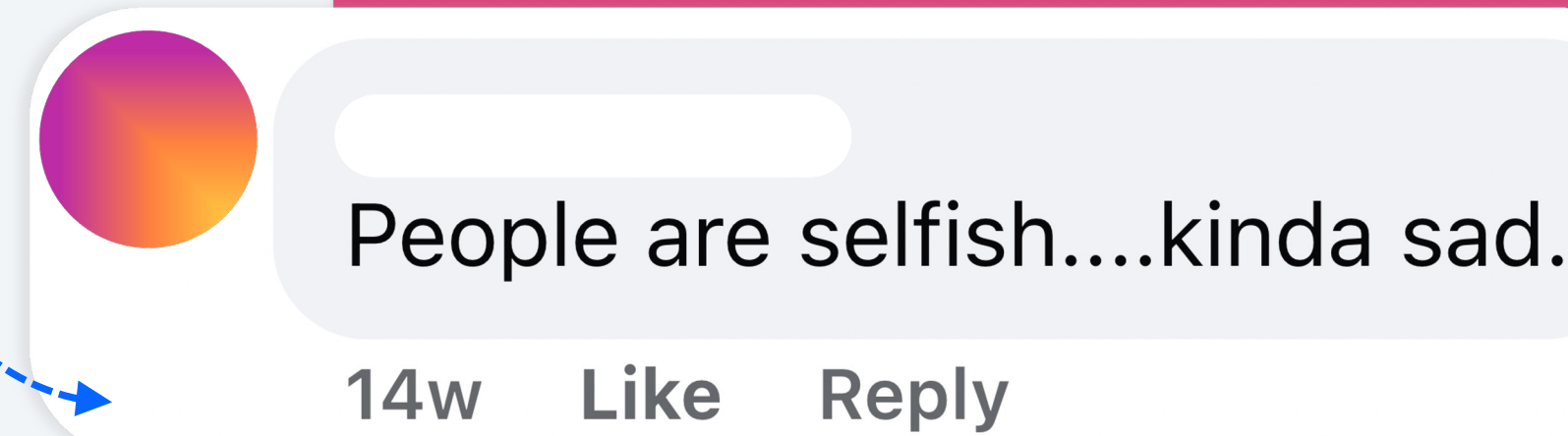
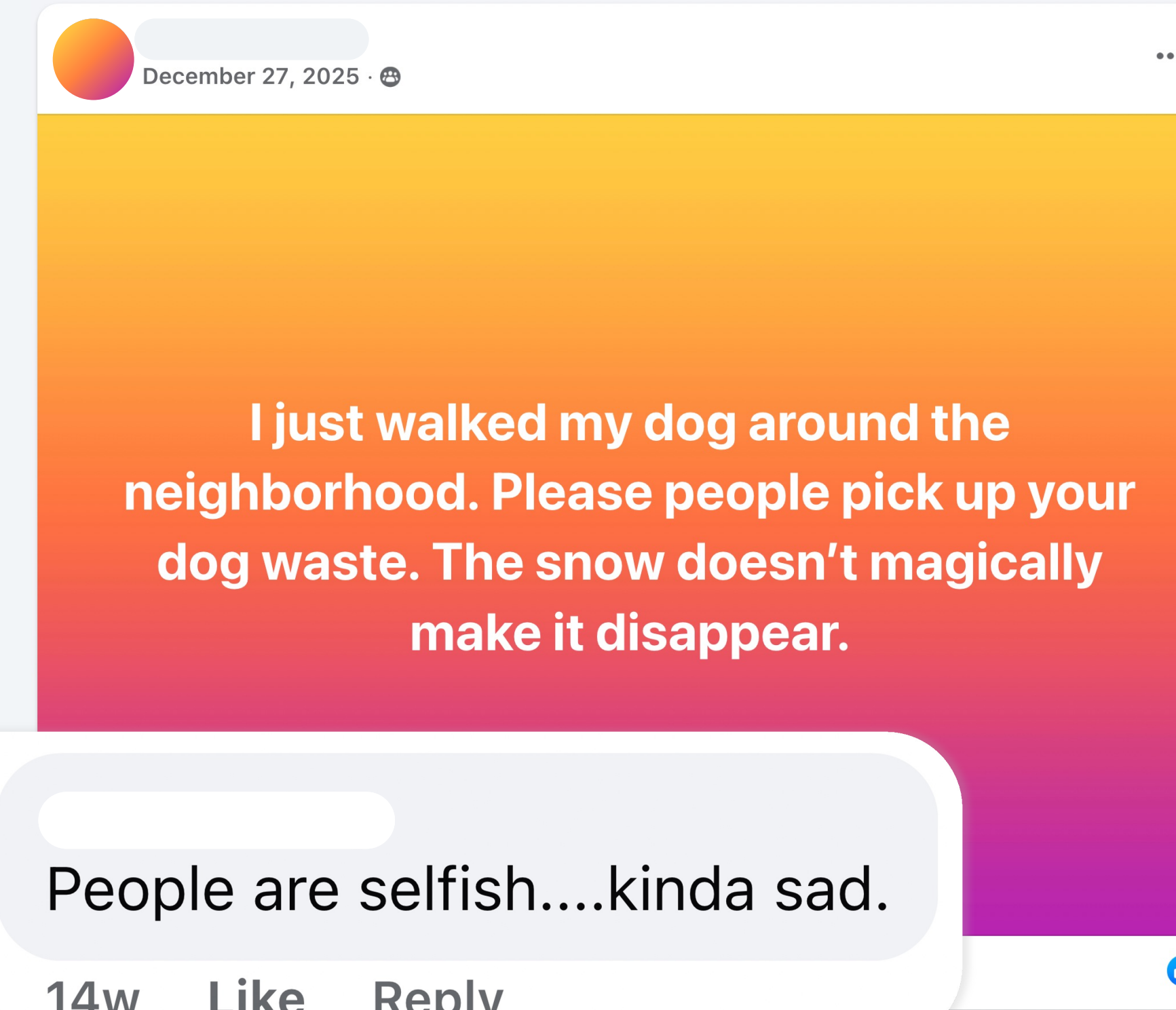
The remaining themes that arose from the content analysis are **advertisements, logistics, requests, and local news**

21% of posts report observations



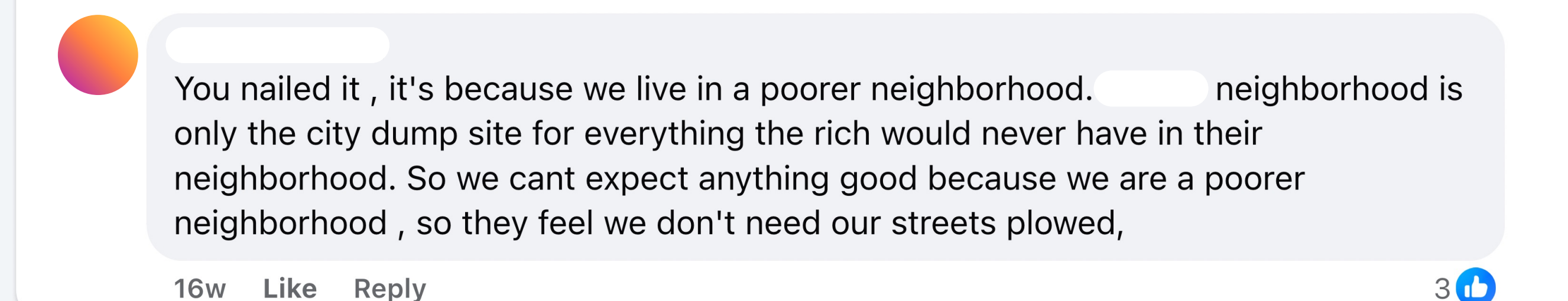
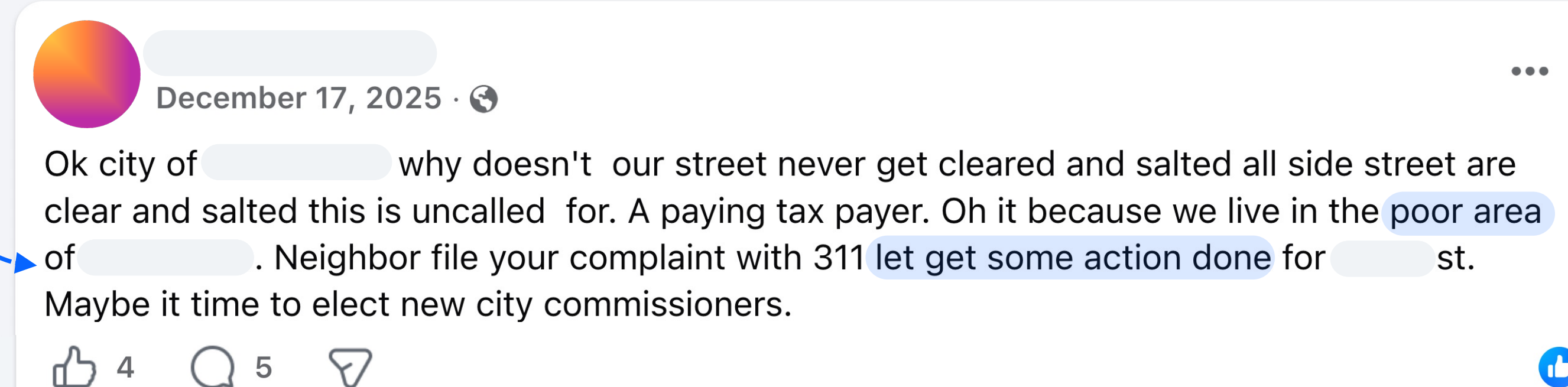
The neighborhood is always being watched and listened to

Conveys care for neighbors



Survey respondents who view group content more frequently report higher levels of needs fulfillment

Users construct shared neighborhood identities



Survey Responses

Why do neighbors join these groups?

- Stay **informed**. Get **connected**. Be involved. Support my **community**.
- To **keep up** with neighborhood events, ... reports of **crime**
- [T]o **see what was going on**, mostly helpful when people's cars are being gone through.

What do users like?

- I feel like it makes the community a **safer** and more **connected** place.
- The quick transmission of **information...** and the **drama**.
- Neighbors **helping** neighbors
- Reminds me the importance of **community**, being a part of our **local collective**.

What do they dislike?

- People asking what that noise is (**mind your business**)
- All the **whining** about random nonsense
- Fearmongering**. Peeps out here pearl clutching over homeless sightings, bored teenagers, and unlocked vehicle "break-ins" like we're in a warzone 😬...
- Political** posts, **racist** posts, any posts or comments by [redacted] because he is just a dick.

Conclusions

- Surveillance appears in the form of informal control strategies, rather than panopticonism.
- These strategies create strong neighborhood identities, drawing boundaries around who belongs in the neighborhood.
- While exclusionary, shared identities enable residents to join forces and achieve common goals.

Limitations

- Survey respondents are disproportionately white and wealthy compared to neighborhood averages.
- Collected data during holiday and snow season.
- Lacks perspectives of neighbors not in the group.