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## How Opinion Leaders Shape Social Media Movements

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## How Opinion Leaders Shape Social Media Movements

### Facebook and its role in the Black Lives Matter Movement

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Social injustice unfortunately remains pervasive throughout the world. The dissemination of information related to socially unjust events increasingly relies upon not only opinion leaders and social media platforms. Opinions leaders are actors that are held in high esteem by those who accept their opinions (Katz and Lazarsfeld 2017) — can disproportionately affect the dissemination of information (Bakshy et al. 2011), while social media platforms that can exert control by highlighting certain actors and content. As a result, many individuals end up relying upon them to form their own opinion (Valenzuela 2013), disseminate important information to others (Miranda et al. 2016; Westerman et al. 2014), and act (Selander and Jarvenpaa 2016; Vu et al. 2021). Understanding the factors affecting the dissemination process of socially unjust events is important because such factors can create information symmetries across individuals (Sun 2013), leading to a point where information has sufficiently propagated for its dissemination to persist regardless of its quality (Gladwell 2006; Hu et al. 1997), or even cause mimetic behaviour (Messerschmidt and Hinz 2013). In addition, these factors can accentuate the spread of ill-intended information through the generation of informational cascades, meaning situations where individuals — instead of relying on their own information — follow the opinions of their predecessors (Carrillo-Hermosilla 2006; Walden and Browne 2009). We propose to analyze this phenomenon by focusing on the tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25th, 2020, after one of four police officers who arrived on the scene, knelt on Floyd's neck and back for more than 9 minutes, using a dataset from Facebook. We contribute to the information dissemination literature by furthering our understanding of how the dissemination of information pertinent to socially unjust events differs and is affected by the actions of social media platforms and opinion leaders within them.

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