

# AGENDA SETTING

## HSC: Social Conformity and Nonconformity

Katherine Padovan, Westfields Sports High School

### Syllabus Content

- the impact of agenda setting, including the role of the media, on attitude formation in individuals and groups

### Related concepts

- stereotype • world view • values

### Syllabus Outcomes

- H3 analyses relationships and interactions within and between social and cultural groups
- H5 analyses continuity and change and their influence on personal and social futures
- H7 selects, organises, synthesises and analyses information from a variety of sources for usefulness, validity and bias

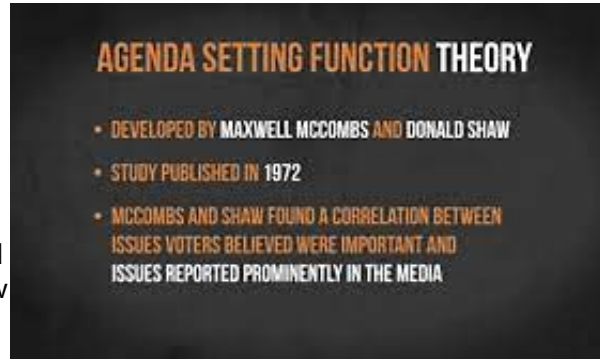
### Rationale

The following resource aims to provide an in-depth insight into the Agenda Setting Function Theory. A theoretical understanding is explored through the deconstruction of the Agenda Setting Function Theory. Furthermore, the resource prompts students to actively apply the Agenda Setting Function Theory to a range of contemporary news media representations.

# AGENDA SETTING

## What is the Agenda Setting Function Theory?

The influence of the media affects the presentation of the reports and issues made in the news that affects the public mind. The news reports make it so that when a particular news report is given more importance and attention than other news, <sup>1</sup>the audience will automatically perceive it as the most important news and information given to them. The media set the priorities of which news comes first and then the next according to how people think and how much influence will it have on the audience.<sup>2</sup>



### Overview

Task 1: Watch the video on Agenda Setting Function Theory and complete the questions  
<https://youtu.be/C7qf9gQpoF4>

1. What did Mccombs and Shaw theorise?

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2. What did theory reveal about the functions of the media?

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# AGENDA SETTING

3. What examples does the video provide about Agenda Setting Function Theory?

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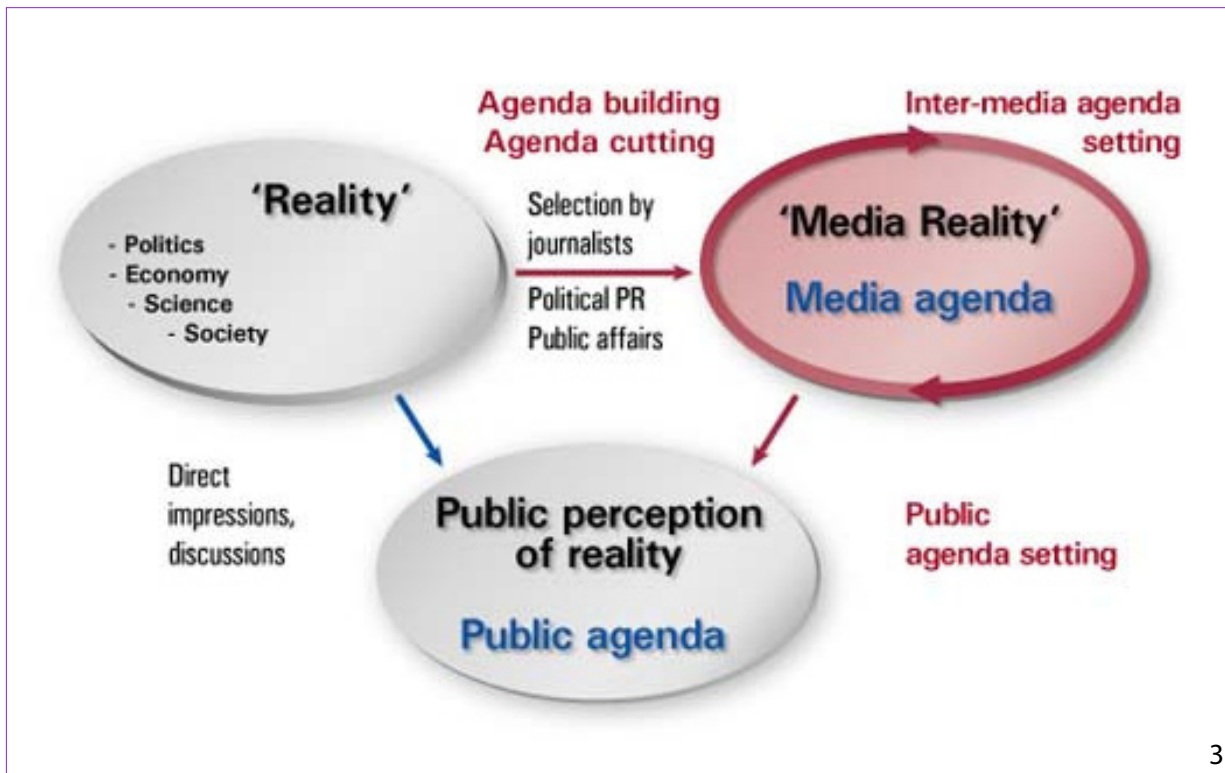
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# AGENDA SETTING

## The levels of Agenda Setting Function Theory

The First Level	The Second Level
<p>The first level is usually used by the researchers to study media uses and its objectives or the influences that media creates on people and the most proximal thought that people will have on the exposure to the information given by media houses.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>At the second level, the media focuses on how people should think about the nature of the issues. Thus, sensationalization of news reports may happen to bring in the interest of the audience. In fact, the media wants to grab attention and implant thoughts in people’s minds about some serious issues. That’s why the media turn certain issues viral.<sup>5</sup></p>
Priming	Framing
<p>The responsibility of the media in proposing the values and standards through which the objects gain a certain amount of attention can be judged. The media’s content will provide a sufficient amount of time and space to certain issues, making it more vivid.</p> <p>In simple words, the media gives the utmost importance to a certain event such that it gives people the impression that that particular news is the most important one. This is done on a daily basis. The selected news report is carried on as a heading or covered regularly for months. For example, terms such as headlines, special news features, discussions, expert opinions are used. Media primes news by repeating the news and giving it more importance like, for example, Nuclear Deal.<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Framing is a process of selective control. It has two meanings.</p> <p>The way in which news content is typically shaped and contextualised within the same frame of reference.</p> <p>Audience adopts the frames of reference and to see the world in a similar way. This is how people attach importance to a piece of news and perceive its context within which an issue is viewed.</p> <p>Framing deals with how people attach importance to certain news. For example, in the case of an attack, defeat, win and loss, the media frames the news in such a way that people perceive from a different angle.</p> <p>We can take the Kargil War between India and Pakistan as an example. In both the countries, the news reports were framed in such a way they show their own country in a positive light and the other in the negative. So depending on which media people have access to, their perception will differ.<sup>7</sup></p>

Agenda setting theory is used in political advertisements, campaigns, business news, PR (public relations) etc. The main concept associated with the theory is gatekeeping. **Gatekeeping** refers to being in charge of and/or having control of the selection of content discussed in the media. It is assumed that the public cares mostly about the product of media gatekeeping. Editors are the main *gatekeepers* of the media itself. The news media decides ‘what’ events to broadcast and show through the media ‘gates’ on the basis of ‘newsworthiness’.<sup>8</sup>

## AGENDA SETTING

**Task 2:** Watch the following videos below and complete the tables provided to analyse the role of Agenda Setting:

1. African Gangs: [Media Watch coverage of Sudanese 'gang violence'](#)

First Level: What is the object of the news report here?	Second Level: How does the media expect people to think about the issue presented?
Priming: According to the definition provided, what evidence of priming is there?	Framing: How is the news content framed? Consider the characteristics provided in the definitions above.

# AGENDA SETTING

## 2. Australia's Bushfires: Bushfires and Murdoch misinformation | Media Watch

First Level: What is the object of the news report here?	Second Level: How does the media expect people to think about the issue presented?
Priming: According to the definition provided, what evidence of priming is there?	Framing: How is the news content framed? Consider the characteristics provided in the definitions above.

## AGENDA SETTING

**Task 3: Is there evidence of Gatekeeping? How do you know? Consider the characteristics and write points below for a class discussion.**

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### Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7qf9gQpoF4> Date accessed 4/09/22
- 2 Communication Theory: <https://www.communicationtheory.org/agenda-setting-theory/>  
Date accessed 4/09/22
- 3 University of Saragohda <https://lms.su.edu.pk/lesson/213/agenda-setting-theory>  
Date accessed 4/09/22
- 4 Communication Theory: <https://www.communicationtheory.org/agenda-setting-theory/>  
Date accessed 4/09/22
- 5 Ibid
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Communication Theory: <https://www.communicationtheory.org/agenda-setting-theory/>  
Date accessed 4/09/22