

Priming Theory

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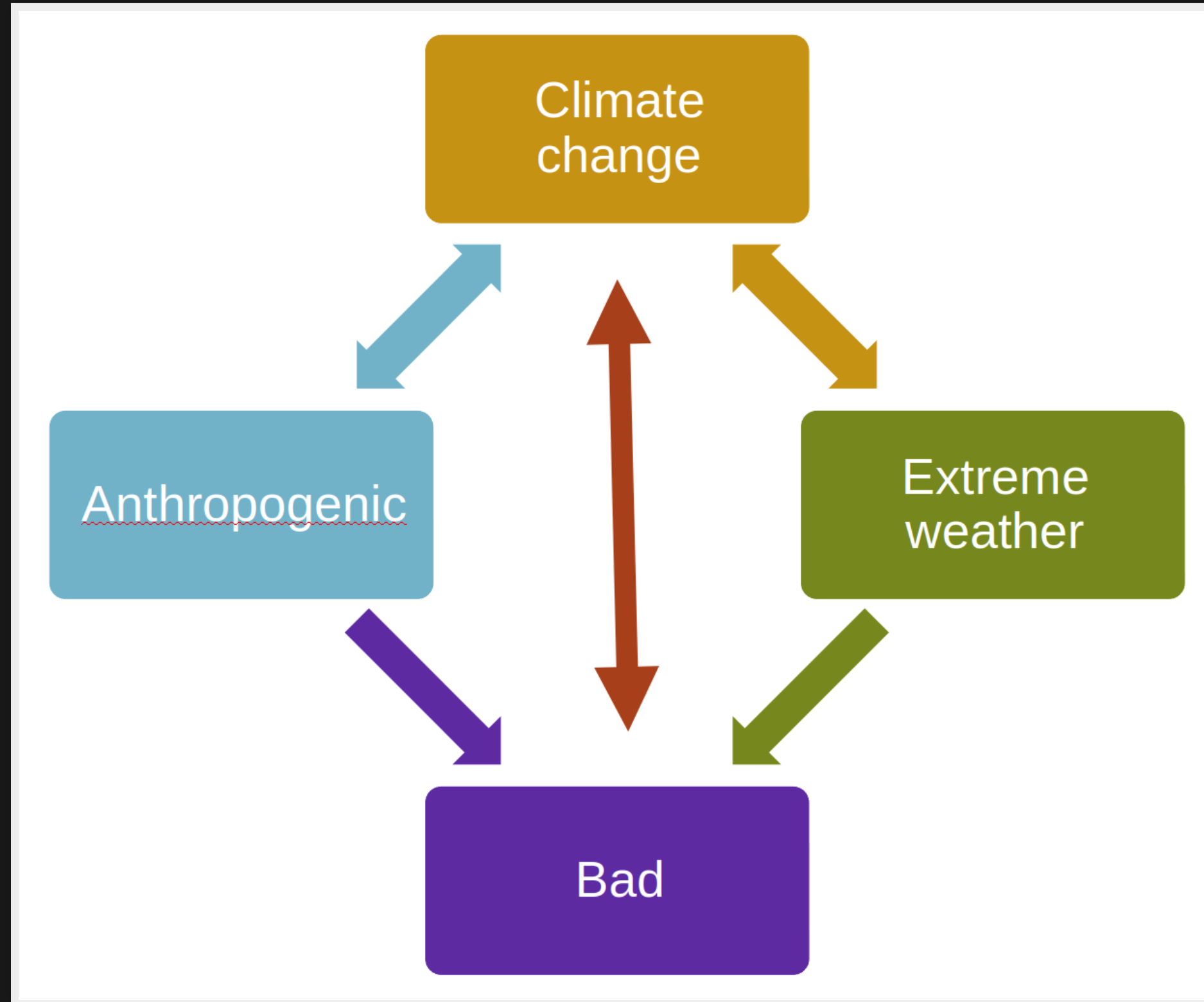
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Models of Human Memory

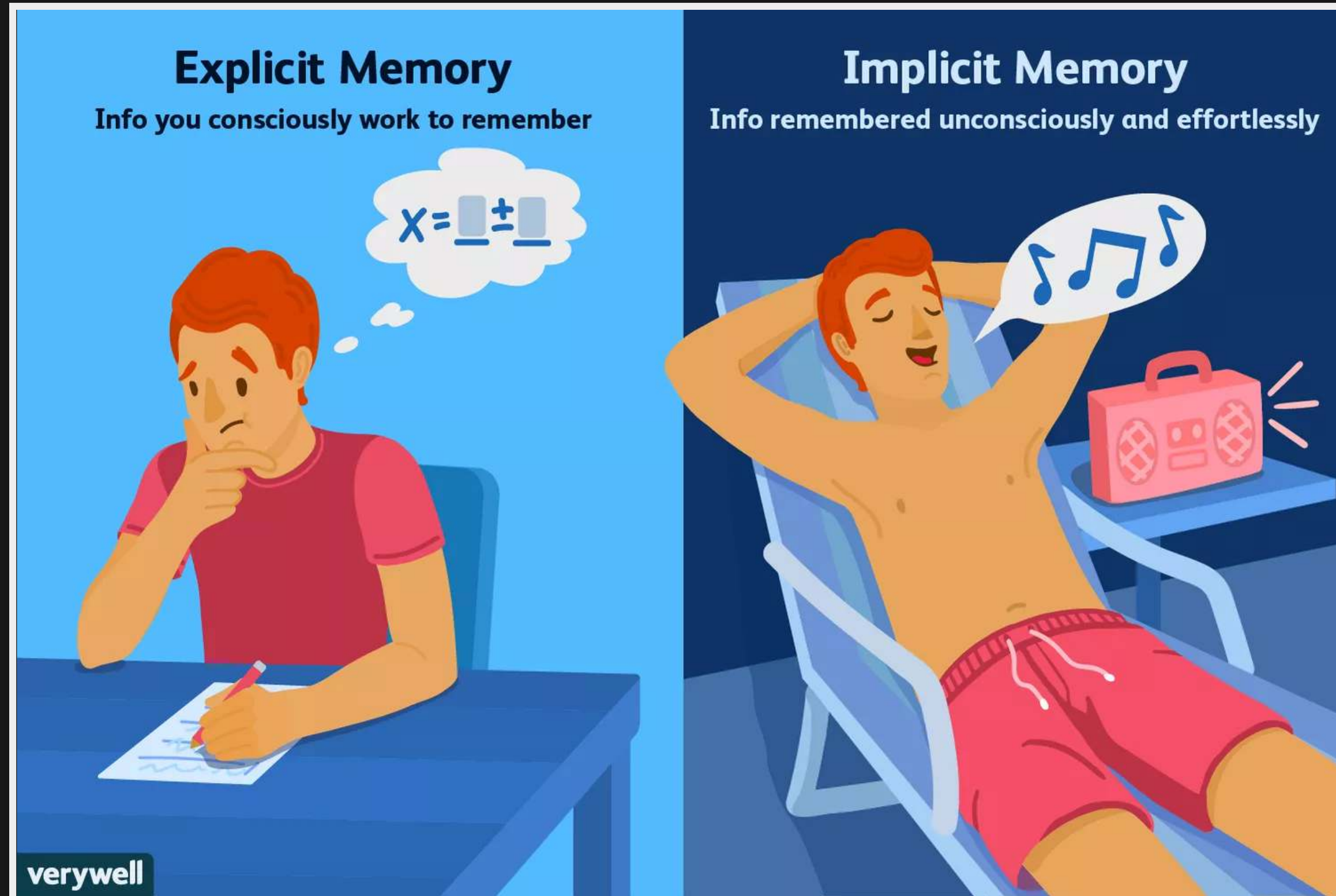


Priming theory contends
that media depictions
stimulate related thoughts in
the minds of audience
members

Associative Network Model



Explicit and Implicit Memory



Agenda Setting, Framing, & Priming

- Agenda-setting theory connects to these understandings in two related ways:
 - Repeated coverage of an issue → development of associations with more concepts → more likely to be triggered later
 - Repeated coverage of an issue → increased availability of issue in mind → more likely to be triggered later
- Framing takes an extra step: It argues that media can also influence **attitudes toward those issues**
 - It does so by rewiring the associations between that issue and different concepts

Framing and Stereotypes

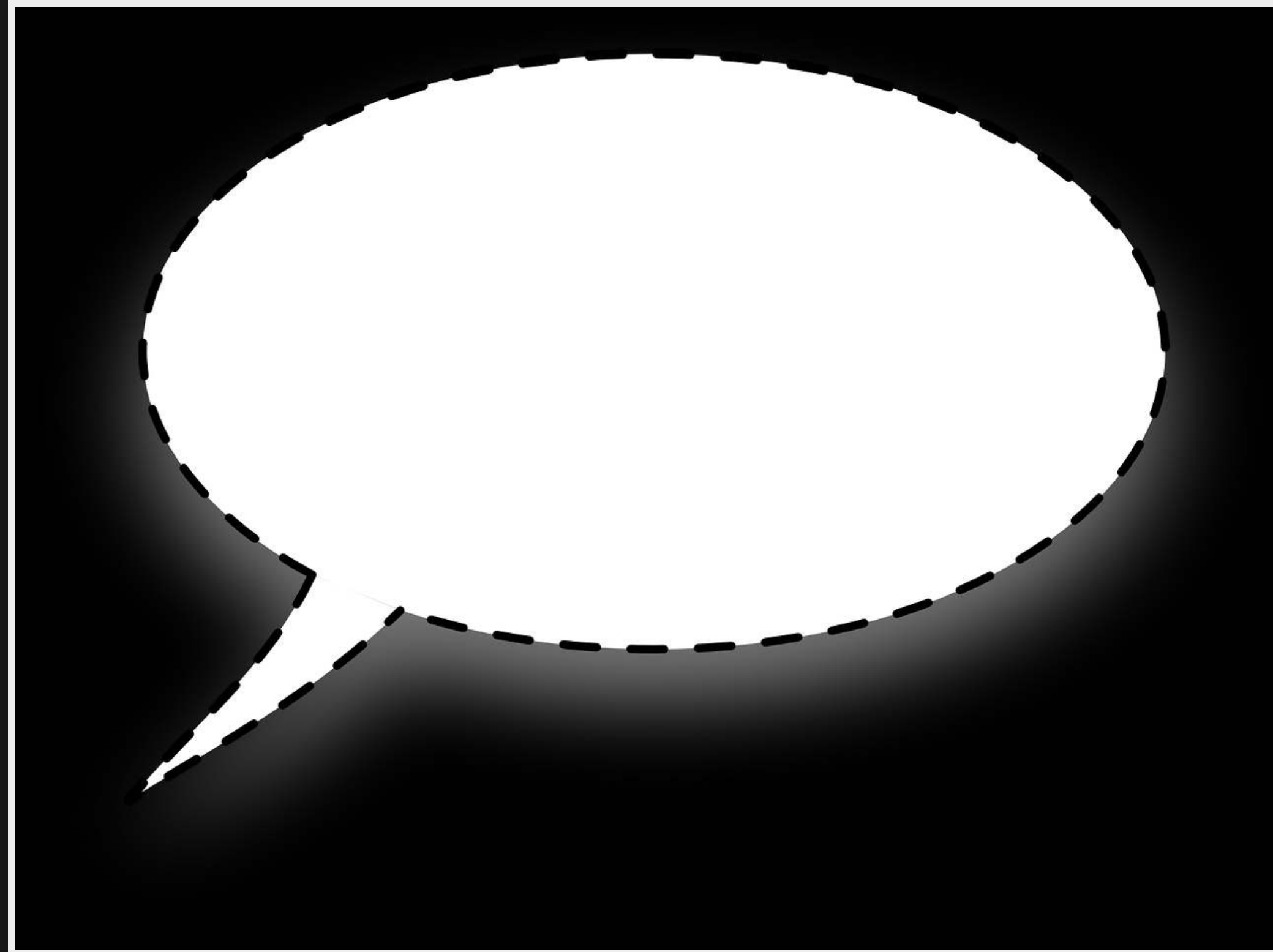


Source

Limitations of Priming Effects

- In isolation, priming effects are often **short-lived**
 - Can last as little as 90 seconds, and weaken over time if not triggered
- However, **repetition strengthens associations** and can lead to lasting effects
 - Higher amounts of TV news viewing → more stories about crime (featuring people of color as perpetrators) → greater concern about people of color

Priming and Quotes



Source

Priming and Context

- Priming is most powerful when individuals know little about the target concept
 - Such as when individuals are dependent on media for their understanding of something (e.g., foreign affairs)
- People don't just develop simple associations through journalistic media
 - News media operate alongside entertainment, popular culture, politics, etc.
- To understand priming effects, **one must understand the environment and context around the prime**

Key Takeaways

- Priming theory posits that media depictions develop relationships between concepts and stimulate related thoughts in the minds of audience members
- Both agenda-setting theory and framing theory are premised on associative network models of human memory, but presume different pathways for the activation of concepts
- Priming effects are often short-lived, but repetition strengthens associations
- Priming effects are not uniform or universal