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Centering Critical Race Theory in Policy Design: A Reframing of Multiple Streams Framework

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Policy outcomes and concerns about social and racial equity have long been discussed in policy scholarship. A question that often arises is why disparities persist even though scholars and practitioners have increasingly paid attention to equity in policy design.

In this article, I argue that policy design is not only a standalone process. The way policy agendas are set plays a role in shaping policy design. Agenda-setting influences how problems are defined, which issues are elevated, and which solutions are treated as legitimate or workable. Because of that, how we understand and explain agenda-setting matters. If agenda-setting is treated as neutral, it can miss how race, power, and exclusion shape what gets attention in the first place.