

# Mass Communication Theory

Ati Harmoni

Universitas Gunadarma

# THE FIELD OF MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

- The term communication has two different meanings, historically:
  - It is rooted in the Latin word communis:
    - "communion or the idea of a shared understanding of, or participation in, a n idea or event" (Office of Technology Assessment, 1990, p. 31).
    - "the notion of imparting, conveying, or exchanging information and materials was incorporated into the concept" (Office of Technology Assessment, 1990, p. 31).
  - The two meanings do not exclude one another.

- **Mass communication**

- refers to communication activities that involve large numbers of people.
- conceptualized as a process involving messages that are sent to fairly general groups of people.
- Mass communication is commonly contrasted with interpersonal communication, which typically involves face-to-face interactions and much smaller audiences.

Blumer (1946) identified a mass as consisting of a very loosely organized group of people who come from all walks of life, who remain anonymous with each other, and who interact very little among themselves.

- Research concerning mass communication
  - focused on the scientific and humanistic study of the communication media (magazines, motion pictures, newspapers, radio, television, and a variety of new communication technologies) and their audiences.
  - By the year 2020, more than 90% of the words, images, sounds, videos, and three dimension (3D) worlds produced will be located somewhere on the Internet” (Biocca, 2000, p. 23).

- The model (Lasswell, 1948):
  - Who
  - Says What
  - In Which Channel
  - To Whom
  - With What Effect?

- The "who" – the communicator, describing the people who actually make decisions about what appears in the mass media.
- "says what" – the content of communication, the demographic characteristics of characters appearing in primetime television drama and compare these with the general population.
- The "channels" – the actual technologies that deliver the message, describe innovations in delivery systems

- "to whom" – the characteristics of audiences and their motivations for attending to media
- "with what effect" – how audiences react to, or change as a result of the message, exp, effectiveness of an advertising campaign or the impact that watching television violence has on young.

# Processes of Theory Construction and Research

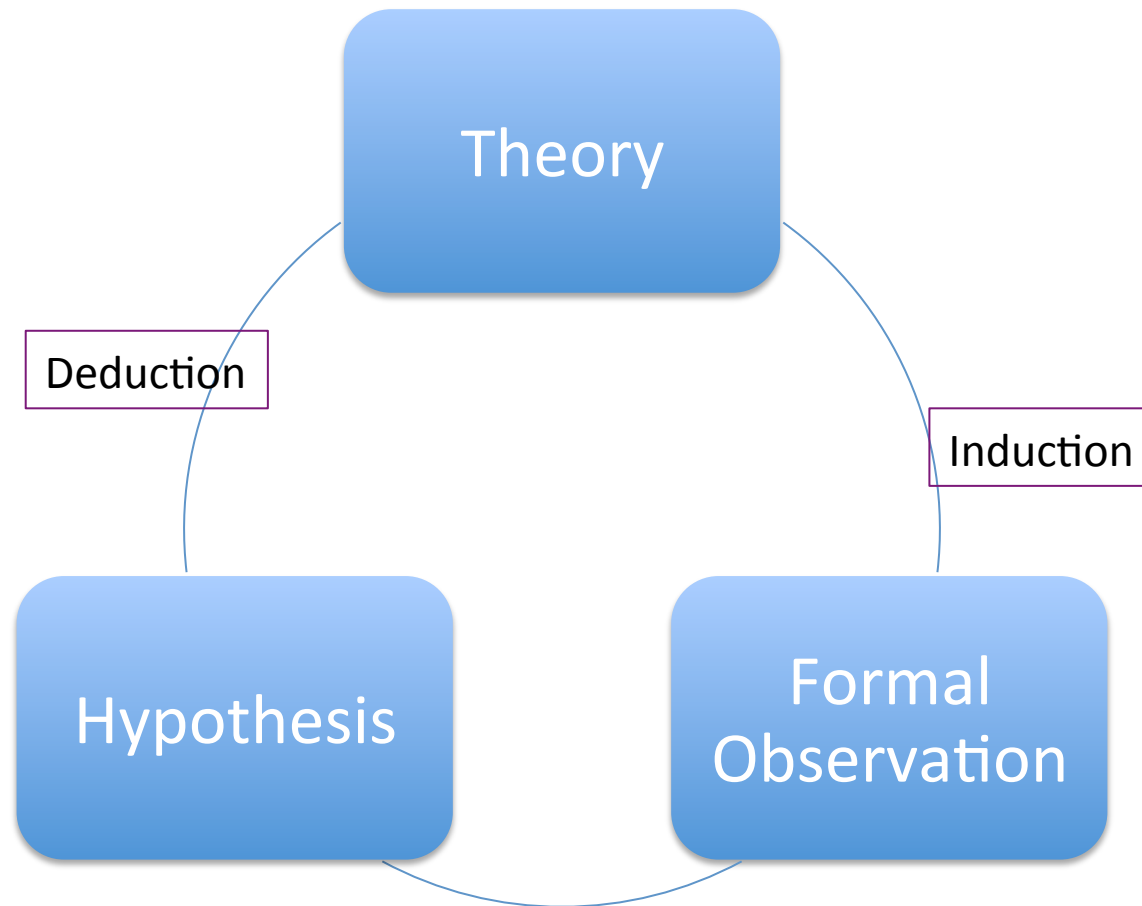
- Research sometimes is defined, somewhat controversially, as the **systematic** generation of new knowledge with **replicable** (i.e., repeatable) methods.



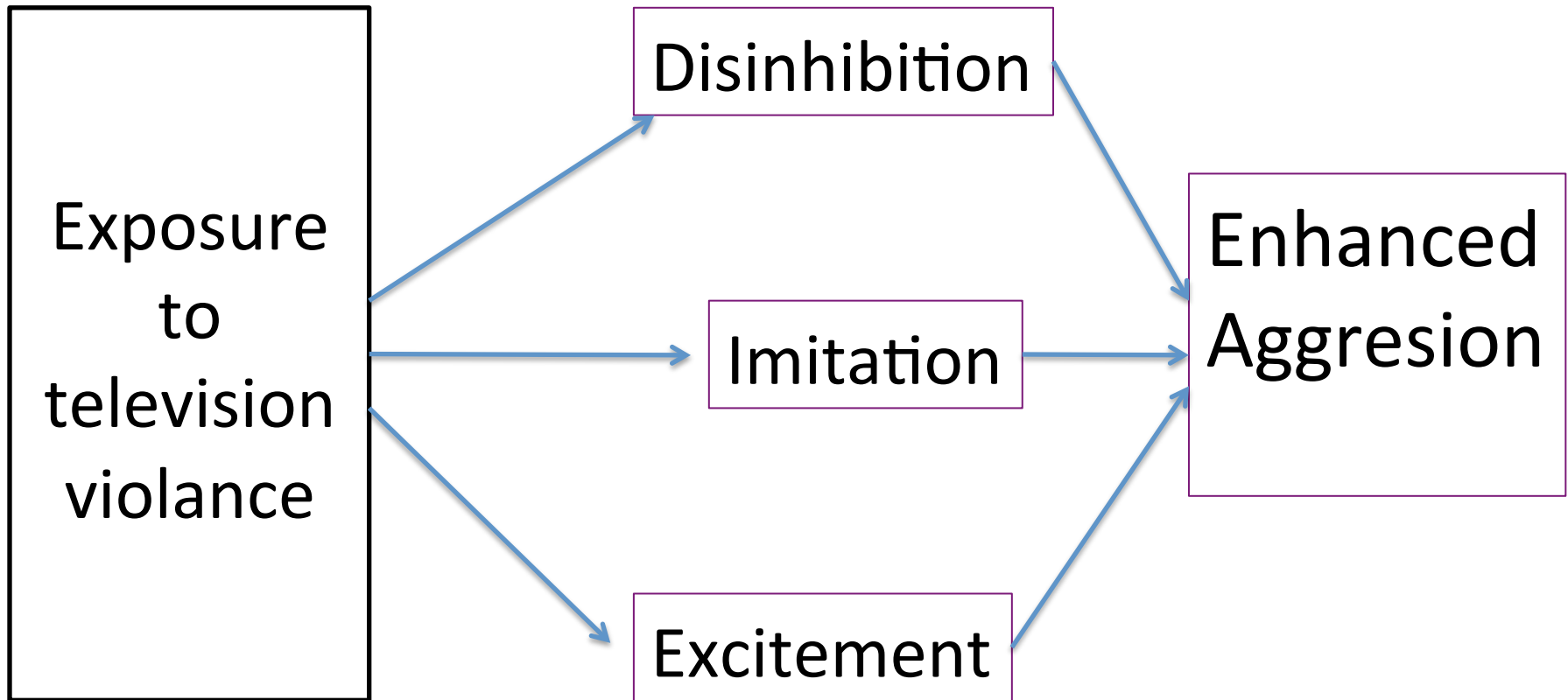
# SCIENCE AND THEORY

- Science is a form of semantic empiricism - the view that a meaningful idea must be testable with experience (Kaplan, 1964).
- Much of science involves a search for laws, empirical generalizations in which scientists place a great deal of confidence.
  - Often such laws involve causal statements form: If X, then Y. For example, it may be a scientific law that if a children are exposed to televised violence under certain conditions, they will become more aggressive in their behavior
  - Science seeks theories that explain why the laws occur.

# The circular relation of theory and research



A causal-process presentation of theory  
Concerning TV violence  
and aggression.



# RESEARCH APPROACHES

- Experimental Studies
  - experimentation involves staging one or more events and observing the consequences. Researchers conduct experiments for a variety of reasons, ranging from pretesting a research design to attempting to refine a measuring instrument (Kaplan, 1964).
  - To conduct: First, manipulate at least one independent variable. Second, chance processes must determine whether, or to what degree an individual participant is exposed to the independent variable. This is known as random assignment.

# RESEARCH APPROACHES

- Correlational Studies
  - These examine the covariation between variables, such as exposure to TV violence and aggression in children, without researcher manipulation or random assignment. Instead, a researcher usually measures the variables they occur naturally.

# RESEARCH APPROACHES

- Descriptive Studies
  - These simply describe the degree to which something is present. No attempt is made to link independent variables with dependent variables.
  - A study concerning the amount of violence during a typical week of primetime television

# MEASUREMENT

- Measurement as “the assignment of numbers to objects (or events or situations) in accord with some rule”
- Communication researchers use a variety of measurement techniques in their work: from attitudinal questionnaires to unobtrusive observation of human behavior to physiological indicators.
- Two concerns - reliability and validity – commonly arise about the quality of measurement.

# STATISTIC

- Quantitative methods, usually of statistical form, are ubiquitous in modern social-scientific research.
- Two type of statistics normally are used: descriptive and inferential statistic