Organizational Communication 1st edition Kramer Test Bank

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Instructor's Manual/Test Bank
to accompany

Organizational Communication
A Lifespan Approach

First Edition

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

1. Distinguish between information transfer, shared meaning, and transactional definitions of communication.
2. Distinguish between the legal, communicative, and social definitions of organizations.
3. Explain the five uses of strategic ambiguity and provide examples.
4. Explain the three characteristics of nonverbal communication that are particularly prominent in organizational settings and provide examples.
5. Explain the difference between a researcher taking a post-positivist, interpretive, or critical perspective of an organizational and be able to apply the different perspectives to an example.
6. Explain the differences between different feminist perspectives.
7. Describe the basic assimilation model for studying organizational communication.

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Distinguish between information transfer, shared meaning, and transactional definitions of communication.

A. After discussing the three different definitions of communication, provide some examples of controversial communication events. Discuss how each of these would be evaluated differently depending the definition of communication used. Some examples might include:
   1. The Super Bowl commercial sponsored by Coke of children singing "America" in different languages (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUGDQo2Pb6g).
   2. *Vogue* magazine cover of LaBron James and Gisele Bundchen (http://www.thefashionspot.com/runway-news/439187-controversial-vogue-covers-published/3/).

2. Explain the five uses of strategic ambiguity and provide examples.

A. After discussing the five uses of strategic ambiguity in general, present the organizational mission statements of a variety of organizations such as your own university, a nonprofit organization, and a for-profit business.
B. Identify examples of strategic ambiguity in each statement and discuss the value of strategic ambiguity for each organization.

3. Explain the five uses of strategic ambiguity and provide examples.

A. After discussing the five uses of strategic ambiguity in general, discuss Ethical Issue Box 1.1: Strategic Ambiguity versus Bullshit.
B. Try to focus on examples other than politicians.

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4. Explain the five uses of strategic ambiguity and provide examples.

A. Prior to class, collect a dozen or more mission statements from organizations.
B. During class, ask students to read the mission statements without access to the organization's name. Ask students to guess what services or goods each organization offers.
C. After they have made several guesses, explain the organizational origin of each. The difference between students' guesses and the reality of the organizations listed will illustrate how mission statements are strategically ambiguous.

5. Explain the three characteristics of nonverbal communication that are particularly prominent in organizational settings and provide examples.

A. After defining the three characteristics of nonverbal communication prominent in organizations (security, symbolic identification, and social contact), show a variety of pictures of offices. These could include images available online or pictures of offices on your campus including your own. Discussion the meaning communicated by the nonverbal messages of the various offices.
B. Finally, have students design a very social, egalitarian office and a very antisocial, status office.

6. Explain the difference between a researcher taking a post-positivist, interpretive, or critical perspective of an organizational and be able to apply the different perspectives to an example.

A. Complete the following chart during a discussion of the three different perspectives (add space as necessary for topics; expand to a full page):

Topic/Approach	Post-Positivist	Interpretive	Critical
Organizational Image or Metaphor			
Purpose of Studying Communication			
Understanding of Communication			
Problematic Communication			
View of Reality			
Type of Research Questions			
Type of Data Collected or Analyzed			

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Choose an organization of interest to you. It may be a large or small business, a government agency, or a nonprofit organization. Try to find as much of its public relations information as

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possible. Include obvious items like its webpage but try to locate other items like annual reports or publications. Carefully read all of this public relations information looking for examples of strategic ambiguity. Pay particular attention to instances where it discusses it goals or its responses to some event but also look at what it says about employment opportunities and so forth.

2. Choose an organization in which you participate either as an employee, volunteer, or member. Analyze the organization from each of the post-positivist, interpretive, and critical perspectives. As you do so, you should answer questions like does the organization use communication to run efficiently, what kinds of shared meanings does the organization have across the entire organization or within subgroups, and who is disadvantaged or oppressed by the organization?

3. Consider a local nonprofit organization, perhaps the local YMCA or an environmental group. Briefly explain how you would study the organization differently if you were using a post-positivist, interpretive, or critical perspective. Consider the goal of your study: What kind of data or information you would collect, and how you would use the results?

4. Visit a local business. Analyze how the business communicates different levels of security, status, and social contact through nonverbal communication in the arrangement of the office space.

CHAPTER 1 TEST BANK QUESTIONS

True/False Questions

1. Organizations exist, in part, in communication processes. (True)

   Page number: 8

2. Organizational members tend to experience metamorphosis before they experience the encounter stage of assimilation. (False)

   Page number: 27

3. A main goal of the study of organizational communication is to reduce strategic ambiguity in workplace settings. (False)

   Page number: 10-12

4. Post-positivistic researchers assume that reality is stable and patterned enough to measure reliably. (True)

   Page number: 16-18

5. According to the transactional model of communication, communicators seek to reduce noise

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to improve their understanding of one another. (False)

Page number: 5

6. Status can be communicated nonverbally. (True)

Page number: 13

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which of the following is a focus of a transactional definition of communication?

   A. the process by which receivers come to share meaning about communication
   B. the process by which a sender transfers information to a receiver
   C. the process by which communicators use nonverbal communication
   D. the process by which meaning is created via the interaction of people

   Feedback: D. Information transfer focuses on whether information is accurately passed from one person to another. A focus on shared meaning explores whether people agree on the meaning of a communication action. A transactional meaning approach explores how both people are involved in creating meaning.

   Page number: 5

2. A shared meaning definition of communication focuses on which of the following?

   A. how people interpret nonverbal communication during a communication event
   B. how people interact to influence the meaning of a communication event
   C. whether people who experience a communication event understand it as intended by the sender
   D. whether people who experience a communication event agree on its meaning

   Feedback: D. Information transfer focuses on whether information is accurately passed from one person to another. A focus on shared meaning explores whether people agree on the meaning of a communication action. A transactional meaning approach explores how both people are involved in creating meaning.

   Page number: 4

3. An information transfer definition of communication focuses attention on which of the following?

   A. examining whether information successfully moves from one person to others as a result of communication
   B. whether people agree on the meaning of communication that has occurred

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C. how people interact to create meaning through their communication
D. the ways that nonverbal communication effect meaning

Feedback: A. Information transfer focuses on whether information is accurately passed from one person to another. A focus on shared meaning explores whether people agree on the meaning of a communication action. A transactional meaning approach explores how both people are involved in creating meaning.

Page number: 3-4

4. A social definition of an organization focuses on which of the following?

A. organizations as entities that have legal rights and clear membership boundaries
B. organizations as entities that are responsible to their communities and not just themselves
C. organizations as entities that have physical features such as buildings, materials, and personnel
D. organizations as entities that exist only through communication and have flexible membership boundaries

Feedback: B. The legal definition focuses on the rights of organizations. The communication definition focuses on how organizations only exist through communication. The social definition focuses on the responsibilities of organizations to the public.

Page number: 9

5. A communicative definition of an organization focuses on which of the following?

A. organizations as entities that exist only through communication and have flexible membership boundaries
B. organizations as entities that are responsible to their communities and not just themselves
C. organizations as entities that have legal rights and clear membership boundaries
D. organizations as entities that have physical features such as buildings, materials, and personnel

Feedback: A. The legal definition focuses on the rights of organizations. The communication definition focuses on how organizations only exist through communication. The social definition focuses on the responsibilities of organizations to the public.

Page number: 8

6. A legal definition of an organization focuses on which of the following?

A. organizations as entities that have legal rights and clear membership boundaries
B. organizations as entities that are responsible to their communities and not just themselves
C. organizations as entities that exist only through communication and have flexible membership boundaries

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D. organizations as entities that have physical features such as buildings, materials, and personnel

Feedback: A. The legal definition focuses on the rights of organizations. The communication definition focuses on how organizations only exist through communication. The social definition focuses on the responsibilities of organizations to the public.

Page number: 7-8

7. A company policy limits lunches to 60 minutes unless they are business related. This strategically ambiguous statement is *least likely* to accomplish which of these goals?

A. create unified diversity
B. allow management to maintain their power
C. maintain personal relationships
D. allow for plausible deniability

Feedback: C. It allows management to maintain power (decide what counts as business related), creates unified diversity (everyone can agree with it), and can deny someone's interpretation of "business lunch." It is unlikely to help maintain relationships.

Page number: 11

8. An organization announces that it is going "green," or becoming more environmentally sensitive. Which of the following uses of strategic ambiguity is this *least likely* to accomplish?

A. create unified diversity
B. allow for plausible deniability
C. maintain personal relationships
D. allow for adaptability and change

Feedback: C. This statement allows many people to agree (unified diversity), allows for change (new ways of being green), and allows for plausible deniability (we didn't mean that way of being green). The ambiguity is unlikely to influence personal relations.

Page number: 11

9. Which of the following statements about strategic ambiguity is *false*?

A. Strategic ambiguity can allow for a sense of agreement or unity among organizational members.
B. Strategic ambiguity can help individuals to maintain relationships.
C. Strategic ambiguity can allow for organizational change and adaptability.
D. Strategic ambiguity is necessarily bad.

Feedback: D. Strategic ambiguity is not necessarily bad; it can help maintain relationships,

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create a sense of unity, and allow for organizational change and adaptability.

Page number: 10-12

10. Which of the following statements about strategic ambiguity is *true*?

    A. Strategic ambiguity usually restricts organizational change by reducing organizational adaptability.
    B. Strategic ambiguity is necessarily bad.
    C. Strategic ambiguity is often an important means for supporting status distinctions and maintaining interpersonal relationships.
    D. Strategic ambiguity will generally make explicit any disagreements organization members have.

    Feedback: C. One of the uses of strategic ambiguity is that it can support status distinctions and can be used to maintain relationships. Strategic ambiguity is not necessarily bad; it can allow for adaptability and change and does not make issues explicit.

    Page number: 10-12

11. A manager sends contradictory messages by closing the office door but posting a sign: "please knock." These contradictory messages concern which general characteristics of nonverbal communication?

    A. eye contact
    B. security
    C. status
    D. social contact

    Feedback: D. The manager both invites and discourages social contact with these contradictory messages. His or her office likely establishes his or her status and also provides symbolic identification.

    Page number: 13

12. A manager begins each day by walking around and personally greeting each employee. This most clearly demonstrates which of the general characteristics of nonverbal communication?

    A. security
    B. social contact
    C. vocalics
    D. status

    Feedback: B. The manager invites social contact by personally greeting everyone. This does not provide security or status to the manager. Those are provided nonverbally in other ways such as office space and titles.

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Page number: 13

13. Defining organizations in terms of the communication process suggests all the following *except*:

    A. Organizations cannot exist without communication.
    B. Organizations need physical facilities.
    C. Organizational members' talk helps to make organizations what they are.
    D. The study of communication is critical to understanding organizations.

    Feedback: B. The communication definition focuses on how organizations only exist through communication. Physical structures, such as buildings, are not necessarily needed for organizations to be called into being through members' communication.

    Page number: 8

14. Which of the following mission statements is most likely to create unified diversity through effective use of strategic ambiguity? "Our mission is to

    A. make the owner increasingly wealthy."
    B. increase our shareholders' stock price dramatically."
    C. serve customers with world-class excellence."
    D. make a paycheck."

    Feedback: C. Strategic ambiguity is not necessarily bad, can allow for adaptability and change, and does not make issues explicit. Strategic ambiguity in mission statements allows many organizational members with diverse interests to work toward (what appears to be) a similar goal. While A, B, and D might be quite accurate of some members' interests, they can alienate other members and therefore do not create *unified* diversity.

    Page number: 10-11

15. In an organization, managers always wear dress shoes and dress shirts, but frontline workers are allowed to wear athletic shoes and business-casual company shirts. This most clearly demonstrates which of the general characteristics of nonverbal communication?

    A. security
    B. social contact
    C. vocalics
    D. status

    Feedback: D. The company's attire policy functions to differentiate the status of managers and frontline employees. This policy does not necessarily provide security or social contact among employees.

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Page number: 13

16. Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of a post-positivist perspective on organizational communication?

    A. Reality can be objectively measured and analyzed.
    B. Communication is studies primarily from an information transfer perspective.
    C. Communication creates shared meaning for members of an organization.
    D. Communication can affect the satisfaction and morale of employees.

    Feedback: C. Post-positivists are generally not concerned with shared meaning. Instead they focus on an objective analysis of reality and the ways the information is transferred throughout the organization and the way communication affects the bottom line and issue like employee morale.

    Page number: 16-18

17. Which of the following is a characteristic of a post-positivist perspective on organizational communication?

    A. Reality is subjective and created through communication.
    B. Research should focus on how communication affects organizational outcomes.
    C. Communication creates shared meaning for members of an organization.
    D. Communication contributes to the oppression of certain groups in organizations.

    Feedback: B. A post-positivist is generally concerned with how communication affects important outcomes like the bottom line or employee morale. Interpretive scholars consider reality subject and focus on shared meaning. Critical scholars focus on how communication contributes to oppression.

    Page number: 16-18

18. Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of an interpretive perspective of organizational communication?

    A. Reality is subjective and created through communication.
    B. Research should focus on how communication affects organizational outcomes.
    C. Communication creates shared meaning for members of an organization.
    D. Research should focus on how organizational members understand their experiences.

    Feedback: B. An interpretive scholar is concerned with how organizational members make sense of their experience and create shared meaning and organizational reality through communication. They do not focus on organizational outcomes like profit.

    Page number: 18-20

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19. Which of the following is a characteristic of an interpretive perspective of organizational communication?

    A. Research should focus on how organizational members understand their experiences.
    B. Communication contributes to the oppression of certain groups in organizations.
    C. Research should focus on how communication affects organizational outcomes.
    D. Reality can be objectively measured and analyzed.

    Feedback: A. An interpretive scholar is concerned with how organizational members make sense of their experience and create shared meaning and organizational reality through communication. They do not focus on organizational outcomes like profit.

    Page number: 18-20

20. Which of the following *is* a characteristic of a critical perspective of organizational communication?

    A. Critical scholars focus on how information is disseminated throughout organizations.
    B. Critical scholars focus on the shared meaning of organizational members.
    C. Critical scholars focus on organizational outcomes like profits and employee morale.
    D. Critical scholars focus on how organizational systems favor one group over another.

    Feedback: D. Critical scholars focus on how organizational systems and practices favor one group over another. The information dissemination and organizational profits are likely the focus of a post-positivist. Interpretive scholars focus on shared meaning.

    Page number: 20-21

21. Which of the following *is not* a characteristic of a critical perspective of organizational communication?

    A. Critical scholars study organizations through a variety of research methods.
    B. Critical scholars focus on how organizational systems favor one group over another.
    C. Critical scholars focus on organizational outcomes like profits and employee morale.
    D. Critical scholars study organizations as systems of oppression.

    Feedback: C. A post-positivist would focus on profits and employee morale. A critical scholar could use a variety of research methods to show how organizations are systems of oppression that favor one group over another.

    Page number: 20-21

Short Answer Questions

1. Explain the difference between the information transfer and the transactional definitions of communication. Provide examples to illustrate your ideas.

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Page number: 3, 5-6

2. Support the claim: “Organizations cannot exist without communication.”

   Page number: 8-9

3. Refute the claim: “The purpose of all excellent organizational communication is to be absolutely clear.”

   Page number: 10-12

4. Choose three of the five uses of strategic ambiguity. Explain those three and provide an example to illustrate each one.

   Page number: 10-12

5. Contrast the nonverbal characteristics of an office space with a lot of cubicles versus an open office space.

   Page number: 13-14

6. Nonverbal communication in organizational settings often conveys three important characteristics or messages. Define two of these three and provide examples.

   Page number: 12-14

7. Describe the basic four phases of the assimilation model for studying organizational communication.

   Page number: 7-8

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