

Date: _____

Name: _____

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CONCEPT EXERCISE #4: ON MESSAGE ANALYSIS*

Demand, Threat, and Offer are the three major elements of a clear message. Often, however, it is unclear what an actor is actually asking the other side to do, or what the consequences will be for the other side if they do it or don't do it. This lack of clarity is usually because one or more of the elements of a complete message is missing or ambiguous. In the first four cases below, identify the missing or insufficient element or elements. Explain your answer in a sentence or two.

1. "Sue, clean up your room. I'm sick and tired of picking up after you."

2. "Soldiers, those of you who live up to the spirit of the great heroes of the past will be promoted. The rest of you will be relegated to latrine duty."

3. "I told all my friends what a crooked car dealer you are. None of them will ever buy anything from you again. You had better fix my car properly from now on."

Questions 4-6 deal with all aspects of a message. In each case, answer the indicated question:

4. A foreman addresses his forty workers: "I need three people to come back here after supper to finish this job. The pay will be double-time. The first to arrive will get the jobs."

No one comes back after supper. What mistake did the supervisor make in formulating this message?

5. Manuel, if you promise to make your bed every day next week, you can go to the carnival tonight."

What is the greatest flaw in this offer? _____

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6. Alex Average-Citizen discovers that an assassination attempt will be made this evening against Senator Silvertongue. Alex calls the Senator, but she is out to lunch. Alex leaves a message with Silvertongue's secretary that the Senator should "call Alex Average-Citizen as soon as possible to receive an important message."

The Senator is never warned. What was wrong with Alex's message? _____

Applying the concept to the case:

7. What was wrong with the message the message the U.S. was sending the North Vietnamese government in late 1969, and early 1970?

8. What might be some limitations of this concept?