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Week 4 Activity: Identifying the Meaning of Signs in Media Content

Part One: The Meaning of a Sign

1. The logo I am choosing is the golden arches of McDonald's.
2. The denotative meaning of the sign is that it is an M, which is the first initial of the company McDonald's.
3. The sign has multiple connotative meanings. First McDonald's themselves uses the gold color to attract customers, as gold is usually associated with wealth, and success and overall good things or positivity. The company wants you to think of good things when you see their golden arches. At the same time, many people associate obesity and unhealthiness to McDonald's when they see the golden arches. McDonald's is a fast-food chain, and their food isn't very nutritious or good for you. Some argue that the rise of obesity in America is linked to McDonald's fast-growing market. Another connotation that comes with the golden arches is a sign of western influence and globalization, as McDonald's has franchises worldwide, in 120 countries, and has changed the cuisine of many countries around the world. McDonald's and the golden arches can also be a signifier of being American. One of the staple foods of American culture is the hamburger, which is what McDonald's is best known for. McDonald's is also found in many places around the United States, making it familiar to practically all Americans. When people see the golden arches, many things come to mind, such as cheap food, wealthy corporations, obesity, globalization and more.

Part Two: I will be using the "Eat My Shorts" scene from The Breakfast Club.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2WZrxuwDhs&list=PLZbXA4lyCtqr2ddBOJ1T13-5IP-4wBB8G&index=1>)

1. Mise- En-Scene
 1. The scene is set in the library of a high school. You see five teenage students and one adult, who is the assistant principal. Their costuming helps categorize and give meaning to the characters. Assistant Principal Richard Vernon is wearing a suit and dress shoes, giving him a sense of matureness and authority over the students. Allison is wearing a large black winter coat with the hood over her head, showing she's a bit of an oddball and outcast (as it's strange to have on a big coat inside with the hood on). Brian is wearing a green sweater and a brown coat over it, showing that he's a bit soft and plain, which fits the nerd stereotype. Claire is wearing a brown leather jacket and a sweater and a pink scarf, showing off her wealth and pretty girl status. Andrew is wearing a varsity letter jacket and sneakers, fitting into the athlete role. Bender is wearing a flannel and a jean

jacket, with leather fingerless gloves, giving him a “rebel” attitude. All of the characters have “80s” hairstyles.

2. Sound

1. At the beginning of the scene there is no music, just dialogue between the characters. As Vernon talks to all the kids, some low music starts. Then, as Bender says “eat my shorts” to Vernon the music gets louder and it sounds like a synthesizer, which was popular in 80s music. As Vernon and Bender go back and forth, the music gets more intense. I feel like the director chose to use no music and then low music to make the audience focus more on the dialogue that’s happening. The style of talking is very direct and authoritative, from both Vernon and Bender. Vernon is trying to put John in his place, but John isn’t backing down to him. The audience is supposed to believe that Bender isn’t scared of Vernon, like the true rebel he is.

3. Camerawork

1. The most notable camerawork would probably be right when Bender says “eat my shorts”. The camera is over Vernon’s shoulder and is aiming down at Bender. This is important because it’s supposed to show the power dynamic between Vernon. With Vernon standing over Bender, it implies that he has a higher status and authority over him, which technically he does as he is the adult in the situation, but Bender doesn’t care too much about Vernon being the Assistant Principal, as he mocks and curses at him.

4. Editing

1. As Vernon goes back and forth with Bender, the clips move fast and on each of their faces as they are retaliating with each other. I think the fast scenes are to show how intense and angry that they are with each other.

Part Three: Implications of Signs

1. I think the different high school cliques represented in *The Breakfast Club* are consistently used in culture and they’re pretty much widely accepted. In many high schools, and high school movies, you can tell what kind of person they are by how they dress, and people use these stereotypes to create their identities. For example, kids who feel like they don’t “fit in” with the others may wear all black and keep to themselves like Alison. The “popular” students, particularly girls, are typically seen wearing more feminine clothes and colors. Students who are athletes like to wear their athletic gear, like Andrew’s letterman jacket, to show off their varsity status. The representations of the high school students in the movie are sometimes seen in real life situations.

Parts Four:

1. I think that semiotics is legit, and not “bullshit”. I believe that we should try to understand these associations as cultures are built upon signs, icons, symbols and more as they all play a role in how we understand the world around us. It’s how we make quick

inferences about people and our surroundings that could honestly save or make a difference in our lives. When we see a dark alley, we associate it with danger and make a (probably) good decision to avoid going that way. When we look at people's facial expressions, we are able to understand how they're feeling and talk to them accordingly. Semiotics is important because it helps us navigate life easier.