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The symbol I am interested in analyzing is the noose. When using semiotic analysis, it is clear the denotation of a noose is rope. The connotation, however can vary and that is why it is interesting. Each image that will be discussed offers a unique connotation, one right before a suicide, before a hanging brought by authority figures, and authority figures discovering a sucide after the fact. Along with the symbol, the image contents help to translate a dynamic of power between subjects, offering different connotations depending on the noose and it’s surroundings.

The first image analyzed will be of emphasis on the noose, with minimalistic surroundings. There are no people in the image, with camera perspective being used to draw a narrative for the viewer. Without social association, the image can be seen with more emphasis on the viewers participation. The control of the camera angle, involves the viewer in the image, while the viewer completes this exchange by viewing it. This made me think of an electrical circuit, occurring because all essential parts are in place and participating. The connotation from this image is a first person perspective to sucide or the contemplation of sucide. This is emphasized by the camera angle, and lack of other humans. It’s clear that each viewer will bring their own perspective and thoughts when encountering this image, but without other subjects or symbols to discern a power dynamic or narrative from, the connotation can be interpreted this way.

The second image provides an example of people within an image, and their impact on the connotation. What can be seen is a hanging staged by the authority members of an early western town in America. Among a crowd of men there is one wearing a noose, held at gunpoint. The first factor that stands out to me is the people. Their presence in this image creates a clear power dynamic between the man wearing the noose and the men holding him at gun point. This exchange of power creates a story for the viewer, who’s interaction is passive compared to the first image. For the camera angle is not used to explain the story, but the people themselves are. Authority subjects participating in images among the symbol of the noose have other connotations such as slavery in America. The discrimination upon people of color that has occurred during slavery and has been ongoing since in America is closely tied to the symbol of the noose and its connotation among authority subjects in images. Many times throughout America hateful groups have used this imagery to hurt and scare people of color. This dates back to slavery, and the noose’s role in killing or threatening slaves in America. This followed through to the hateful groups of modern day, using it in the intention of being feared. This is terrible, and the fact that people still maintain this is disheartening for humanity. This shows a stark contrast to the second image mentioned, as one may ask what the man wearing the noose did in that old western town to receive the punishment from authority. To now, where viewing a noose in an image among people of color brings sadness and anger to most, looking back to a time where the hurtful, hateful and incorrect views had control in America.

Finally the third image offers a new connotation. This involves people of authority among a person who is wearing a noose. The difference in connotation is seen in the gestures of the authority figures within the image and their own body language. An additional factor is the man wearing the noose, and his use of the symbol. This image offers a different story occurring in front of the viewer. The viewer still has a passive interaction same as the last image. Yet with similar content, how can such a different connotation be taken from the image? The answer is first seen in the NYC police, and how almost every officer is not concerned with the man wearing the noose or his actions. That is because the image reveals the aftermath of a sucide in a park in New York City. The officers are arriving after the fact. Their body language shows more emphasis to searching, covering and learning about the suicide, in contrast to controlling, forcing and punishing seen in the last image. The man who has passed away is directly interacting with the symbol of the noose, it’s full potential exemplified. The combination of these gestures by both the man wearing the noose and the authority figures, created a different connotation for the viewer while using the exact same components as the second image. This better exemplifies the complex use of power dynamics in images and their role in telling a story about what is going on. When people are found in images, it shows that not only their appearance and perceived role in society matters when creating connotation, but also their own body language and what is captured in that moment.

Overall a semiotic analysis reveals the symbol of the noose has a clear denotation of rope. Yet it offers varying connotations that depend on different factors. One is image content, and the viewer’s interaction making social associations that allow for a story to be built. Another factor is power dynamics portrayed between the subjects within an image thus specifies the details of a story. Lastly, body language can be seen as another way the connotation of the noose in images can change, even when the image holds similar physical content to other photos.