

Reading Swastika: Understanding Symbolic Contestations and

Other Symbols Perceived to Signify Hatred

Mausam Jariwala and Ms. Pooja Ichplani

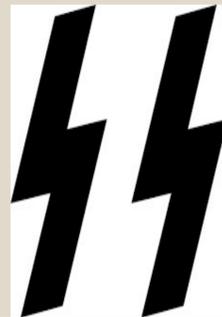
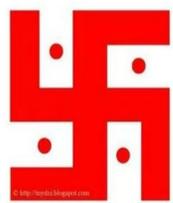
College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, College of Communications and Information



Background

- The swastika is an ancient symbol in the form of an equal-armed cross with each arm continued at a right angle.
- The swastika has been used for thousands of years in different cultures. Historically, it has been used as a symbol of good fortune in most cultures. Even today, it is still used as a symbol of good in many Asian countries
- In the western world, the swastika is synonymous with fascism.
- Due to the use of the swastika during World War 2 by the Nazis, it has held a negative connotation. If the swastika is used as a symbol of well-being in other parts of the world, why are people focused on the way the Nazis used it?
- The burning cross is the strongest symbol perceived to signify hate in the United States, it is associated with racial intimidation. It was a practice associated with the Ku Klux Klan. It was practice before the the Ku Klux Klan, used to protest the veneration of crosses.
- The SS Bolts are a common white supremacist/neo-Nazi symbol derived from Schutzstaffel (SS) of Nazi Germany.

The purpose of this study is to explore the swastika and other antisemitic symbols, such as the burning cross and SS bolt, and see how people react to them.



Methods

- To further proceed with this research, we started with collecting and deciphering research done by previous researchers.
- The research we are working on is based on people's interactions and reactions to the swastika and other symbols perceived to signify hatred.
- Every week, I found 5 new articles that relate to iconography perceived to signify hatred. To find articles for this research, I searched up keywords, such as “forms of the swastika” “burning cross” “bullying from hate symbols” “history of the swastika” “Nazis and the swastika” etc. After finding the article, I would read through it and find the author, year, study purpose, methods, and results of each article.

Conclusion

As this study continues, we will gather an understanding of the relations of symbols perceived to signify hatred and cultural backgrounds. The cultural view of a person deeply affects how a symbol is portrayed.

Acknowledgments

This research is made possible with support from our study team member, Dr. Jessica Wendorf Muhamad – who is Assistant Professor at FSU-CCI and Director of the PEAKS Lab.

Literature Review

- Iconography provides insight into the cultural and historical context of a symbol
- The main focus of the study is the swastika and how the meaning of this symbol has expanded and changed.
- In our study, each symbol was analyzed to see if people's reaction to the symbols was based on a cultural or religious standpoint.
- The Swastika had the most negative reaction because it was related to the Nazis.
- The Burning cross was mostly used as a tactic to spread awareness and express people's political views, so it was not much of a threat symbol.
- Burning a cross is symbolic speech that carries a message in an effective and dramatic manner.
- The SS bolt is used as a symbol of white supremacy. From this we found it was based on a cultural aspect.

Reference

Richer Erin, Wiener Richard L. Symbolic Hate: Intention to Intimidate, political Ideology, and Group Association, 2008 https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/stable/30218999?sid=primo&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Freed Ruth S, Freed Stanley A. RITUAL, SYMBOLISM, AND THE NATIVE VIEW, 1980 https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/63402/article_RIP661_part6.pdf?sequence=1

Friedlieb Linda, 2005 The Epitome of an Insult: A Constitutional Approach to Designated Fighting Words

