

## **Symbolic Perception Transformation and Interpretation: The Role and Its Impact on Social Narratives and Social Behaviours**

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### **Abstract**

The primary purpose of this investigation is to inform how indigenous symbols are incorporated into meaning making of social narratives, and the impact of misappropriation, misuse and misinterpretation of symbols with their original intentions. Literatures discussing the process of symbolism perception transformation capacities are reviewed, to present relevant theories and review the consequences of wrongful usage, to understand the unconscious effects of symbols on social construction of behaviours. Perspectives about meaning-making processes and symbolic perception transformation provide insights about the dynamics of symbols' usage for individuals and groups in contemporary society and the impact of conscious and subconscious appropriation in the context of social behaviours. To seek in-depth understanding of the subject, qualitative methodology was applied for this study through interviews with Malaysian educators to uncover the nature and extent of symbolism's influences on societal behaviours. Interviews revealed issues relating the role of symbols' interpretative difficulties to cultural and social narratives, and in the appropriation of significant signs for psychological impact, aesthetic value, and propaganda purposes. Findings suggest the capabilities of symbols to unite and inform about the origins of humankind have weakened, in terms of their representational roles in the evolution of cultures, and their capacity to invoke social identity and change. In conclusion, recommendations are given on ways to enhance the perception transformation through the educator's role in creating accurate symbolism perception, interpretation and universal standards.

**Keywords:** symbol, meaning making, social construction, narrative, perception transformation

## Introduction

Since Guy Debord's 1967 treatise on its historical uses as cultural material to signify ideas, beliefs, actions, events or physical entities, symbols have been instrumental for human communication and commodification in our "society of the spectacle". The study of symbols seeks to understand symbolic forms of mediation and the mediated, and aims to critically demonstrate symbolic construction in its cultural role as meaning-makers in postmodern era (Hall, 1996, pp. 163–170). Works and research by eminent structuralists, semioticians, linguists and artists recognise the heterogeneity, universality and commonality of ideas and concepts behind symbols, in their service as "metaphorical texts of social transformation, cultural change [and of various] scenarios and possibilities" (Hall, 1996, p. 286).

Symbolic complexities derive from configurations of meanings and values, socially and culturally. Indigenous symbols represent sacrosanct meanings but the construction of behaviours, emotions and values based on universal characteristics of symbols among different groups in society, has been a longstanding problem. In the process of social change, symbolic perception transformation refers to the removal of symbols' original context, overthrowing old social hierarchies, imbuing fresh interpretations, resulting in dilution of inherited meanings, further rending global and indigenous communities apart.

### Objectives of Research

In this study, perception transformation of symbols, their social roles and impact will be discussed, to consider their importance in the social construction of narratives. The research seeks to understand whether significant exposure, encounters, usage and mediation of symbols in human interactions affect the rate of symbolism's perception transformation, resulting in unconscious consumption of misappropriated icons, incomplete information, inaccurate knowledge and indiscriminate misinterpretation. The loss of symbolic significance is extrapolated in further analysing why social organisations such as brand communities continue to repurpose symbols and icons for strategic purposes. The transformation of indigenous symbols' perceptions in modern narratives, and the effects of transformation on societal behaviours, will be explored.

This paper seeks to enjoin theoretical perspectives from the arts, media culture, social constructionism theories and anthropological science to authenticate the meanings of symbols for intended audiences. This investigation contributes to research through discourse insights from arts and anthropology scholars' perspectives. By examining how symbols are incorporated into the meaning-making schemas of social narratives, this paper raises the issue of misappropriation and misinterpretation of symbolisms as an implicit perception transformation from original symbolic function for intended (aboriginal) audiences. Critical analysis for this paper is underpinned by the question: How could authentic meaning be restored to symbols that are transformed and inaccurately perceived?

### Literature Review

Julien (2012, p2) in *The Mammoth Book of Lost Symbols* states that symbols, along with myths, folktales and legends, were the original means of communication, from the early stages of civilisation when visual metaphorising and allegories prevailed. For indigenous peoples, symbols represented abstract concepts, phenomena, ideas and emotions. Symbolisms are still pervasive in modern times, even though perception processes have shifted from earlier epochs. Abstraction of symbolic meanings has become a vague undertaking for the average person

today. This happens because original primitive peoples used to think “by way of analogy”, which does not seem rational to modern individuals (Julien, 2012, p.2). Symbols are misunderstood and misperceived a lot of times due to personal interpretive modes that guide our judgment, that eschew consideration for the thousands of years of social evolution that have shaped our collective minds. Accordingly, symbols are as antiquated as they are powerful (Julien, 2012, p.3).

### **Symbolism in Theory: Anthropological Perspectives**

The notion of symbolic arbitrariness makes symbolic signs a creative force to be reckoned with, with folklore and mythical inspiration embedded into everyday discourses, creative inspiration and material narratives (Bruce-Mitford, 2008), but as semiotician Charles Peirce points out, successful semiosis (meaning making) derives referentially by association to the interpreter’s own culture, environment and backgrounds (Innis, cited in Valsiner, 2012, p. 260). This *semiosphere* (Lotman, cited in Valsiner, 2012, p. 260) characterises the subconscious interpretations of symbols and their classification into archetypes based on social encoding in individuals’ upbringing as well as personalities, attitudes, reactions and habits. Consequently, the cultural interpretation of symbols, or ethnographic observation of tangible, behavioural outcomes involves structuration of language (both written and oral traditions), mythical conceptualisation, visual resources and other aspects of encoded or inscribed information that survives (Bodley, 2011, p. 18). Anthropological discussions of symbolisms mainly seek to understand the influence of symbolic construction on people’s perception of their living environment and behavioural outcomes, rather than what it meant to people of the past (Wilkinson, 2009). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1996, pp. 157–158) argues that reductionist approaches to interpret cultural objects and textual inscriptions are unfeasible, since the complexities of social construction and mediated forms of articulation produce symbolic contradistinctions and struggles in their evolutionary quest for survival.

Appraising the rules of linguistic codes forms the study of semiotics or meaning-making. The use of signs, imageries and symbols is presumed to be the observable by-products and expressions of one’s culture and linguistic faculty, as there are “no pre-existing ideas” in the mind before language (Narey, 2009). Mastery of these codes or “modalities” enables analogous intertextual connections to understand and communicate through signs and images; or to find significant cultural meaning in signs and images which surrounds and connects them (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, pp. 134–156). However, social semiotics that allows the same language to be understood and expressed is a problematic approach since symbols contain denotative and connotative meanings with diverse psychological, religious, historical, socio-political and moral contexts (Julien, 2012).

### **Perception and Interpretation of Symbols in Design**

In studies of historical symbolism, the “other”, exotic or indigenous cultures embody sensibilities towards objects and signs which advanced cultures may deem irrational, inferior, and distinctly pre-modern (Morley & Robins, 1995). Conversely, iconic representations may adapt layers of implicit and explicit meanings, diluting its symbolic authenticity, creating contentions and confusions about their purposes and meanings for intended groups, unless universal consistency and recognisable standards of motif, style and forms are applied (Lidwell, Holden & Butler, 2003). Designers’ interpretive analyses of cultural symbolism, as Steven Heller (2004, pp. 323–5) explains, range from the study of semiotics (function of signs) to *semantics* (meaning of signs), *syntactics* (visual representation) and *pragmatics* (effect of signs on recipients). Although many traditional symbolic environments, family, community, tribes, have evolved and devolved due to global transformation of socioeconomic systems of

production, distribution and consumption, the cultural representations which express symbolic power and resources of specific cultures have not materially progressed. Symbols, according to human-centred design researcher Dr Goncu Berk (2013, p.14), are viewed differently now than how they were created for and interpreted by indigenous societies. Unfortunately, society is still being served imageries that imply isolation and fragmentation of individuals and groups into “lonely crowds” as acceptable realities, although in design research, some practitioners propound the use of cultural *perceptual filters* in working through problems (Goncu Berk, 2013, pp. 186–223).

Essentially, the premise of interpretive requirement is similarity of judgement towards symbols. However, today’s large amount of accessible information, widespread commercialisation and consumerism widens our perceptual sense-making towards the same symbol. Jonathan Rey Lee (in Weiss, Proppen & Reid, 2014, p. 99) discusses LEGO® plastic construction blocks as a metaphor of the symbolic power of designed mediums, and its ability to disrupt “subject-object relationships”: creativity in artificial form becomes a self-centred, privileged act of indulgence, reshaping human dominance over the natural environment (in contrast to indigenous dependence on environmental realities), catalysing consumer culture and trends into a universal reality. While the principle of iconic representation is predominant in the fields of arts, sociology and humanities, research in architectural and built spaces acknowledge that symbolic expressions are difficult to signify (Davis and de Duren, 2011). Consequently, accurate perception of symbolic architectural constructions such as buildings, must reside in meaningful discussions about intentional spatial imageries (Skclair, cited in Davis and de Duren, 2011, pp. 182–183).

### Cognitive and Social Influences on Symbolic Perception

Symbols as vital sociological communication forms representing religion and beliefs (Figure 1), are powerful embodiments of cultural traditions and heritage, concepts crucial in preserving social harmony (Tresidder, 2000). Swiss psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung believed symbolism to be a crucial marker of individuals’ personality and self-identity, founded on one’s psychological subconscious and the collective unconscious, and the process of decoding their meanings in dreams and imageries associated with heroes, myths and archetypes produces awareness (Julien, 2012).



Figure 1: Religions and Their Symbols

Cognitive bias research, re-examining decades of work by social psychologists, produce a body of findings suggesting that a large selection of interpretative schemes of thinking and memory of symbols and signs today, biological, social, psychological, those involving sensorial faculties, have resulted in increasing public-private dissociation (Wagoner, cited in Wagoner, Jensen and Oldmeadow, 2012: pp. 135–42). Some cultural psychologists argue for the removal of symbolic consciousness that imbue or stimulate certain intended goals or messages in market

commodities, leaving signs and symbols to take the abstract rather than concrete forms (Ratner, cited in Valsiner, 2012, p. 210).

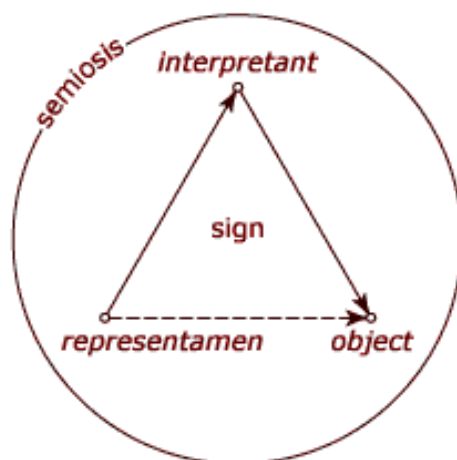


Figure 2: The Process of Semiosis

Symbolic perception of objects as meaningful signs is a sense-making activity which resides in the context of cultural and social groups. Charles Peirce (1976) elaborates that concept in Semiotic Triangle (Figure 2), acknowledging that objects used to represent something else have infinite semiotic capacity, since the equivocation of a sign is based on the decoding process, the degree of connection and relationship of the *interpretant* (signified message) to the *representamen* (sign), and mediation abilities of the interpreter (Salvatore, cited in Valsiner, 2012, p.245). Semiotician Daniel Chandler (2017), detaching from de Saussure's pioneering model, bracketing the referent, builds on the social principle of meaning-making by noting that communication and entertainment media, films, photography, television, have succeeded in making indigenous symbolic codes arbitrary in reflecting reality, yet are still discernible as cultural texts so long as social codes and conventions are adhered to, or understood, by the sense-maker.



Figure 3: Contemporary Symbols

While transformation signify social progress, the basic question of ideologies remains. Transmittal of culture implies social adaptiveness and mainstream integration (Bodley, 2011) of aboriginal society, yet the arbitrariness of meanings of signs, symbols demonstrate modern societies' capability to retain their inherited fascination with icons that survived through time, while building layers of archetypal meanings into them. Postmodernists question current practices where symbols are appropriated for ideological and aesthetic purposes to create organisational "identity kits" (Davis & de Duren, 2011, p. 191). Kapferer (2004), for instance,



Undertaking quantitative surveys would not capture subjects' subconscious reactions, as emotive and physiological dimensions are not invoked through the instrument of a standard questionnaire. To gain a critical interpretative analysis of symbolism, a less-structured methodology consisting of face-to-face interviews with scholars in relevant fields was chosen to be a more substantive and reflective method to evaluate subliminal responses, in comparison to statistical survey and data analysis.

### **Research Strategy and Collection Procedures**

As the nature of symbolic social reality includes understanding rational and emotional responses, the use of semi-structured interviews was justified in attempt to map individuals' perspectives on the dialogic principle, since personal interviews provide researcher and subject opportunities to articulate, debate, disagree and to suggest alternatives. Interviewees were approached in face-to-face contact, and for confidentiality purposes are stated as Participant A (PA), a scholar in visual anthropology; Participant B (PB), an academic on the history of Islamic arts and researcher on indigenous and Islamic symbolism; and Participant C (PC), a journalist turned anthropologist and tattoo artist. The interviewees answered open ended questions in face-to-face sessions lasting two hours each to address the research questions. Notes from these sessions were transcribed. Several constraints were noted which mediated the results. As subjectivity is itself the symbolic environment of qualitative research, the specific expertise of participants produces the possibility of research bias. A control factor was the set of interview questions, designed to appropriate precise information from each. Being educators, however, participants' respective experiences do not necessarily impute similar social and cultural perspectives from the public. Nevertheless, participants' ages, ranging from 35 to 65 years, was a decidedly positive factor in enabling a range of depth perspectives. The following section collects the responses to key questions raised and discusses the findings.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Participants spoke of symbols as "highly regarded" cultural information, texts, objects, visual material, icons of faith (e.g. the Cross, Star of David, Buddhist mantra, etc.) as well as geographical emblems. On society's perception and interpretation of symbols and what factors contribute to their transformation, PA assents the evolution of symbolic perceptions produces the variations adopted by religions, cultures, fraternities and societies. He illustrates the crescent and star, universally perceived symbols of Islam and its divine authority, as seen on the flags of Muslim countries, as having originated from ancient Sumeria and Persia, but modified later by the invading Ottoman Empire, adopted for decorative purposes over mosques. Islamic associative contexts of these emblems remain unclear, though as PA notes:

It's a natural progress for symbols to represent completely different elements, but these perceptions would depend on the individual's historical framing and cultural worldview.

### **Role of Symbolism**

Asked why establishing universal standards of meaning for indigenous symbols was important, PB states the evolution of symbols has "diluted perception of forms", as economic advancement, issues of urbanisation and other social problems distance societies from deep appreciation of contemplative subjects of the meaning of signs. Not having access to discourses about original conceptions of indigenous symbols leads to superficial perceptions and unresolved meaning.

PA cites the swastika, representing the circle of life and reincarnation in Buddhism and Hinduism, appropriated for military purposes, to represent Nazi Germany:

After Hitler used [the swastika] the way he did, to most of the Western world, the SS now represents the Nazi . . . symbol of domination, power. Don't expect Western people to react to the original meaning. It once had a sacred, profound meaning and that is . . . lost now. Within the societies where that symbol originates, [the pure meaning] is still there. Still, [other people] who encounter the swastika today should be conscious of the symbol's misappropriation. Regardless of your culture, you should never use the swastika as your branding image just because you are a corporation that offers, say, solar energy [solutions].

PC: I think while globalisation, celebrities, TV shows, the Internet, social media, the whole deal . . . contribute a great deal to the way things are perceived, the changes [brought about in the current uses] of symbols had started but, I think this has increased greatly in pace.

When asked whether the proliferation of misrepresented indigenous symbols could cause negative or unintended consequences, participants agreed perception problems arise, but political and cultural attitudes must also be accounted for:

PA: Yes, they do. These symbols are part of history [but] the rapid increase of these symbols being used as logos and fashion statement shifts the focus away from the identity of the symbol, and towards the aesthetic value.

PB: For indigenous groups who actually [use] certain symbols and forms, it's definitely annoying. When you [know] their symbol has a great deal of meaning to them, but you still accept its casual, thoughtless use . . . could cause racial and cultural issues. I think any ideology, right or wrong, could adopt symbolism in different forms to produce specific results. But that's not the fault of the symbols, you know, it's the perception.

PC: Globalisation means that cultures are constantly meeting in today's world. 50 years ago, you wouldn't find a large community of Malaysians in the UK, for example. You wouldn't be watching TV shows and advertisements from other countries on the Internet and on television. That's what's happening today, so it is vital that there is awareness and understanding of each other's interpretations of symbolism and its significance.

### **Social Misuses and Misinterpretations**

On their current social influences, PA highlighted symbolism's recent use as "fashion statements: clothing patterns, tattoos, emblems and logos of brands", and the analogical codes and metaphors calculated for preferences in consumption experiences, depending on how symbols are decoded and whether the analogies make sense culturally. PB adds:

They play a superficial role, that's what they do. Form has become more important. No one thinks about the content, everything is [what I call] fast food cosmology. People want immediate results, and when they see an interesting symbol they don't go to find the root meanings, simply the outer look of the image



and use them whichever way they like. If they were find out, I think it would be a kind of cultural shock.

When asked what issues could arise in cases where organisations or society deliberately misused or misinterpreted symbols, participants responded:

PA: When I was a tour guide taking tourists to Penang, they were shocked and appalled at the sight of a big swastika sign outside a Buddhist centre. They thought that [the] place was a gathering for Neo-Nazis. Even after explaining what the swastika meant (to Hindus and Buddhists), they still seemed unsatisfied with my explanation and felt uncomfortable. Unfortunately, once a variation of a symbol makes its place in society and becomes famous, the identity of the symbol shifts from its origins.

PB: This is actually a serious issue, but not seen as such. When you don't know something, then at least you don't have preconceived ideas about it and you are open to get educated about it. But when you have a little bit of information [from] here and there, you may believe that you do know, therefore you are closed to the education that will come. So, a little scattered knowledge of a symbol makes people use them casually, they may not feel the need to go or seek out the symbol's owners to understand their interpretation.

PC: If one group demeans or devalues the cultural inheritance of another, problems [would] arise. When anything symbolic is ghettoized, the human brain trains itself to "cancel it out" from their thought processes. Trends cause this kind of cancellation. When we stop being subconsciously aware of symbols that have for centuries or millenniums been so vital to social interaction, cultural disintegration starts.

### **Restoring Meaning in Symbolism**

Asked whether symbolism is losing its meaning and purpose and if at all, the meanings of these symbols can be restored, participants concurred. Conversely, global trends for simplified signs for functional communication purposes subsumes the process of restoration. Deviation or variegation of a symbol made to represent a new or alternative ideology becomes a subjective form of "experimentation", since political tensions are created out of misuse and misinterpretation.

Participants also agree that disintegration might be occurring due to unwise usage and the unstoppable power of information technologies in spreading misinformation, as noted:

PA: To the average person, symbols are not losing importance, but rather, they are not used seriously. Information is abundant but media could spread falsities intentionally. I think awareness is important. Undoing this casual attitude towards symbols, getting people to think about what symbols mean to them and to other people, before placing them on clothing and on TV. But I don't think, in the current situation, it's anytime possible to see everyone [having the same], standardised opinions about symbolic images.

PC: Personally, I am a fan of symbology, I try to discover information about the history of symbols, such as through media, websites and books. I like tattoos. If I

walk into a tattoo parlour, I'd be quite interested if there were some historical information on these symbols [in their portfolio]. A big poster with information on symbols in tattoo parlours, or in trendy clothing outlets, can be both entertaining and educational.

PB: [They are] losing their original meanings, but our awareness of that loss gives reasons to revive them. It's like when you get distanced from a source of inspiration; after a while you feel that distance, then the urge or thirst will return for you to rediscover that inspiration. In the old days, symbols meant what they meant; no one would write a thesis about [them].

Well, there are many ways to educate. Media is effective, and sometimes, they use that power to restore meaning. Even so, we have to wait and see because both currents of change [run] side by side, one is our natural attachment [to historical knowledge], the other is using social tools [like media and entertainment] to restore original meaning. In between, something happens and I think overall, this can be a positive thing.

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

As stated by Goncu Berk (2013: pp. 63–65), global changes and social adaptation contribute to symbolic perception transformation from ancestral traditions. Although symbols have accumulated social roles, delineating significant cultural norms, standards of behaviour and codes, evidence from literature and the present research suggest we have lost our connection to indigenous symbols as a society. Symbolism is associated to how we conduct ourselves in society, so when symbols are liberated from their original meanings to indigenous cultures, then those independent or distorted interpretations produce conflicts and dissociations (Wagoner, Jensen & Oldmeadow, 2012). In the context of urbanism and globalisation, this paper contributes to an understanding of how symbols are perceived and interpreted through evolving times, mediums and usage.

Difference in perception and interpretation is a natural occurrence. How people perceive imagery is interlinked with image associations within their environment. Naturally, cultural upbringings produce different perceptions of the same icon or symbol. It is arguable, and may even be vital, for symbols to “reappear” as transformed imageries in order to survive the test of time, even if it means these variations dilute the original myths and meanings further (Wilkinson, 2009). Reversion of indigenous meanings for symbols, once transformed, is not always possible due to individuals and groups' discordant interpretations using dissimilar conceptual processes of cognition which produces different psychological values and behaviours. Symbols as the *surface embodiment* of the urbanisation phenomenon act as perfect material expressions of modern consumers' “spectacle” hence, becoming a common language that abstracts individuals' identities, bridging that loss of identity and “the world's loss of unity” (Debord, 1967, p.29), rendering its original purpose less salient. As a result, the personal connection with the object (sign) becomes more significant than past cultural codes which the symbol was made to represent.

The information sharing era offers digital media and communication technologies as chief mediation tools that shape ideological and cultural realities (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014; Weiss, et al, 2014). As a symbolic pseudo-environment, media influences truth perceptions and affects behaviours powerfully. Mediated perceptions of symbolic imageries may involve manipulation of reality for cultural information transfer (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014);

alternately, media provides an arbitrary range and choice of sense meanings and propaganda for different groups, “[preferring] none over another” (The Chicago School of Media Theory, 2017).

Qualitative research uncovered singular fascination with a familiar symbolism study case: the reinvention of the hooked cross, the swastika, an ancient Sanskrit symbol for auspiciousness, health and prosperity, appropriated by the Nazis (Heller, 2004, pp. 329–30; Julien, 2012, p. 157). Fixing symbols to certain ideologies distances and convolutes its original meaning for the next audience or group who reuse or reifies it. Hitler’s “self-styled heroism” led to political appropriation of the indigenous sign, and the dictator’s repurposing of the swastika’s context was driven by a need to see would-be communists “[succumb] to the suggestive charm of such a grand and massive spectacle” that his emblem could represent (Heller, 2004, p. 330).

The implication of qualitative findings shows that overall, current scholarly efforts to trace indigenous symbols to their original identities and to delineate purpose are rendered difficult as limited access to authentic historical artefacts and endless symbolic misperceptions exists, posing a near-impossible challenge to identify symbolic elements’ pure forms. Since accurate and acute symbolic construction of perceptions about signs and objects derive from memory, social experience, intuition and the subconscious, researchers should be more concerned with how perception transformation of a diverse array of symbols came to manifest in wayward interpretations.

This could lead to identifying and solving problematic issues on whether universal standards should be set in efforts to revive and regenerate the authentic, intended meanings of indigenous symbols. Even so, symbolisms incur understanding visual thinking, a challenge that is increasingly important for globally-connected societies advancing their economies into the 4th Industrial Revolution. Willemien Brand (2017) notes that the importance of visualisation to strengthen organisational culture, and to enable the creative dynamics of collaborative social groups to be harnessed for innovation. Since individual self-interest and participation are symbolic of social progress, the process of adaptation requires knowledge infusion and culture transmittal, and new standards of symbolic construction of social behaviours are keys to foster creative intelligence and to take advantage of opportunities for a more inclusive cultural revolution.

In summing this analysis, through this qualitative investigation, the pertinent issues addressed had been the perception transformation and interpretation of cultural and indigenous symbols on society. The impact of symbolic perception transformation on social liberation, and what it means for communities of practitioners, will now be discussed in the final section.

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

That we have a natural ability to be fascinated with anything of historical significance is obvious in the search to know more about ancient or retrospect art forms. Critical to keeping symbolic traditions alive would be initiatives and civic movements to rekindle public interest and encourage discourse about them. Nevertheless, as indigenous signs and symbols are orientated and integrated into globalised cultures, it is difficult to be sure of the original intended meaning which may be “good or evil” depending on how they are sanctioned and applied over time and who accepts [their] usage (Heller, 2004, p. 16).

Identifying symbols' value from a large range of interpretations is a task for cultural researchers which imputes aiming for interpretive balance between eternal and transitional valuation, and to exercise "creative license" in symbolic appropriation. To improve contextual awareness about symbolism, educators from fields such as early childhood education, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, art history, design, cultural studies and media communication need to learn to "see objects as representations of truths or deeper issues, such as the dual nature of existence" (Bruce-Mitford, 2008). Such awareness allows deeper reflection on symbols, enabling the construction of pluralised social narratives to promote symbolism's creative capacity for intercultural understanding. It is crucial to imbue audiences with symbolism's evolutionary history and their change processes, instead of regarding the transformation process as an inevitable erosion of indigenous cultures. By developing a broader, more inclusive range of discursive practices in the arts, design and humanities curricula, prominent spaces could be devoted to the exploration of symbolism's creative capacities from grounded historical conception and sensibilities, to increase awareness of symbolic perceptions among cultures.

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### **Images Credit**

Figure 1: How many religions are there in the world? Retrieved from <https://empoweryourknowledgeandhappytrivia.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/religion-timeline/>

Figure 2: The process of semiosis. Retrieved from <https://cseweb.ucsd.edu/~ddahlstr/cse271/peirce.php>

Figure 3: Sacred Symbolism in the media. Retrieved from <http://lofrev.net/brand-symbols-pictures/brand-symbols/>

Figure 4: Explore these ideas and more! Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/532550724657643990/>

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