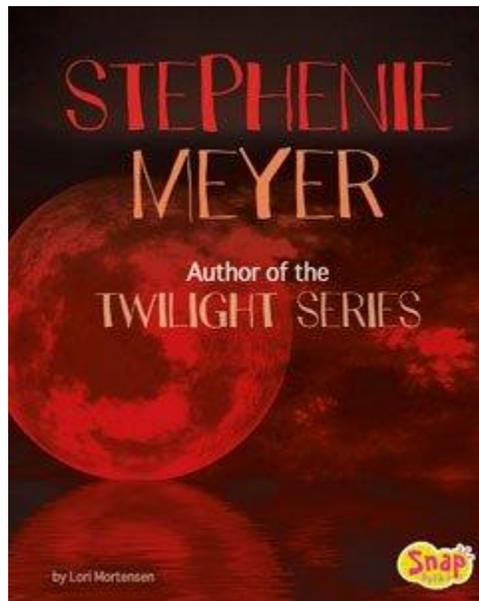


**Implicit Discrimination:
A Study on Racism and Sexism in Stephenie Meyer's
*The Twilight Series***

D. Naomizara and Dr. SP. Shanthi



Courtesy: <http://www.capstonepub.com/library/products/stephenie-meyer/>

The Twilight Series

Psychology calls implicit memory as unconscious memory or automatic memory. Implicit memory uses past experiences to remember things without thinking about them no matter how long ago those experiences occurred. The memory system plays a key role in decision-making and memory is susceptible to biases. The reason for our preferences may reside in implicit memory and thus be unknown to us. Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Series* is a vampire-based fantasy romance novel where Bella Swan, a young girl in her teens falls in love with a 117 years old vampire Edward Cullen. *The Twilight Series* was released annually from 2005 through 2008. It has gained immense popularity and commercial success as a young-adult fantasy and has drawn much controversy with its theme and portrayal of characters.

Main Character Isabella Swan

Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Series* is knit against one main character Isabella Swan or Bella. There are many recent novels that place female character as a centre focus but Bella has a major difference from them. Bella is made a clumsy girl with low self-esteem who is helplessly in love with intelligent and gorgeous Edward Cullen - a bloodsucking vampire. On the other side, Jacob a werewolf is in love with Bella and she has a liking for him as a soul mate.

Decision/s of Bella or we may call Meyer's writing seems little prejudiced and has implicit racial and sexist implications. It may be outdated cliché to discuss discrimination based on sex or color in the modern society, but we cannot totally deny them because it is not eradicated, just has gone underground.

Modern prejudices are subtle and camouflaged making it less obvious to be seen. Though we may think rational and speak of equality our implicit memory by default makes connections with stereotypes around us. We tend to imagine an angel in 'white' and a devil in 'black' making white pure and black sin and evil. In the same way it may be applied to skin colour. The more we discuss on skin colour and equality the more stereotype we become.



Stephenie Meyer

Courtesy: <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/conclusion-stephenie-meyer-twilight-series-feels-reader-article-1.317627>

A New World of Vampires

Stephenie Meyer has created a new world of vampires. Most of the earlier tales on vampires associated them to darkness, evil and afraid of sunlight. But Meyer's vampires are unique. They live in sunlight only that it makes them glow and sparkle. In book one, Edward Cullen is introduced as pale skinned and flawless man with serene look. Bella feels on

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the first sight and thinks ‘Like a mirage, too beautiful to be real’ (Twilight, 281). On exposing himself in the sun,

His skin, white despite the faint flush from yesterday’s hunting trip, literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamond were embedded in the surfaces. . . A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal. (Twilight,281)

Whiteness

A killer becomes an angel when he saves Bella. Not just Edward but all the vampires are of the same pure, white and beautiful where Meyer uses the white is equal to good association.

To white black makes a perfect enemy where Meyer chooses werewolf. Jacob Black, unlike Edward is a Native-American with dark features like dark skin, black hair and dark eyes. To impose a stress of the contrast with Edward he has ‘Black’ as his surname. Though Jacob is not a representation of evil, the impression he makes to Bella is negative. After Jacob- Bella’s first meet at La Push beach Bella gets a nightmare where Jacob turns to be werewolf and Edward steps in to save her.

‘Jacob’ I screamed. But was gone. In his place was a large re-brown wolf with black eyes. The wolf faced away from me, pointing towards the shore, the hair on the back of his shoulder’s bristling, low growls issuing from between his exposed fangs.

‘Bella, run!’ Mike cried out.

. . . And then Edward stepped out from the trees, his skin faintly glowing, his eyes black and dangerous. He held up one hand and beckoned me to come to him. The wolf growled at my feet. I took a step forward, towards Edward. (Twilight, 139-140)

Stereotyping Native Peoples

It is stereotyped that Native people are savages, dangerous and are often called as ‘mongrels’ and ‘dogs’ in the series. Meyer uses flaws on Jacob to make Edward more likable. Jacob tries to kiss Bella twice but Edward as 117 years old virgin. Emily is attacked by her fiancé werewolf making werewolf dangerous than vampires. This attraction makes Bella to choose Edward over Jacob.

The Most Loved Character Bella Swan

Authors’ especially Young-Adult fiction authors have more responsibility. Adolescent readers tend to fall in love with the characters and make them their heroes. Meyer’s Bella Swan is the most loved character for many readers as she is the only human in a mass of supernatural beings. This is the main reason why feminists criticized Bella for being portrayed as a weak, subservient to male characters. She herself admits it ‘I didn’t know if there ever was a choice. . . I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now’ (Twilight, 139). Like a damsel in distress she waits for Edward to save her. Bella puts herself in danger just to feel Edward’s presence and believes he would come to rescue her.

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. . . so the hallucinations must be triggered by something else. . . I felt adrenaline coursing through my veins again and I thought I had the answer. Some combination of adrenaline and danger or may be just stupidity. (NM,188)

Bella decides to jump off the cliff for the thrill of hearing the voice of Edward. She tries to kill herself and she enjoys that because it feels easy for her to die than leaving Edward.

. . . why would I fight when I was so happy where I was? Even as my lung burned for more air and my legs cramped in icy cold, I was content. I'd forgotten what real happiness felt like.

Happiness. It made the whole dying thing pretty bearable.

. . . Goodbye, I love you was my last thought. (NM,374)

The underlying hyperbole of Bella's decision on becoming a vampire or refusing to abort the vampire child in the name of sacrifice is to make Bella a 'good' woman. Young readers may fall in love with this fairy-tale where Bella and Edward 'lived happily ever after' but leaves making the Bella Swan a stereotype of 'Perfect Woman' by sacrificing herself to become Edward. In an age where we have almost achieved equality, it may be unfair to break down the intellectual progression we have made so far for so many years. Stephenie Meyer may not have intentionally made the characterizations but with young readers utmost care must be taken by the writers to avoid such implicit prejudices.

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