

How the father-daughter relationship affects the daughter's identity:
A socio-psychological analysis of Sandra Cisneros's *The House on
Mango Street* and *Caramelo*

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tutkielmassa analysoin isän vaikutusta tyttären identiteettiin Sandra Cisneroksen romaaneissa <i>The House on Mango Street</i> ja <i>Caramelo</i>. Yhdysvalloissa meksikolaistaustaiseen perheeseen syntynyt Cisneros kuvaa naisten asemaa Yhdysvaltain meksikolaisessa kulttuurissa. Aiemmissä Cisneros-tutkimuksissa on usein todettu Cisneroksen isä-kuvausten olevan positiivisempia kuin isät yleensä meksikolaistaustaisten yhdysvaltalaisnaisten kirjoissa. Ensimmäinen tutkimuskysymyksistäni onkin analysoida mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat siihen, että Cisneroksen kuvaamat isät näyttäisivät olevan positiivisempia hahmoja kuin isät yleensä tämän genren kirjallisuudessa. Lisäksi yksi tutkimuskysymyksistä on: mitä voimme päätellä isien merkitystä tyttäriensä identiteetille näissä kirjoissa. Kolmas ja viimeinen tutkimuskysymys on: miten yhdysvaltalaisen sosiologi Peter Burken versio identiteettiteoriasta on hyödyllinen fiktion tulkinnassa ja missä kohdissa on ongelmia.</p> <p>Analyysissa käytän materiaalina kirjojen kohtauksia, joissa isä ja tytär kommunikoivat keskenään tai joissa tytär pohtii isäsuhdettaan. Materiaalin tulkitsen Burken identiteettiteorian pohjalta tavoitteena selvittää kuinka kyseisen teorian pohjalta voimme syvemmin ymmärtää isän vaikutusta tyttärensä identiteettiin.</p> <p>Isät eivät Cisneroksen kirjoissa ole pelkästään hyviä hahmoja, jotka vaikuttavat tyttäriensä identiteettiin positiivisesti. Esimerkiksi <i>Camelossa</i> isä yrittää kovin sanallisin keinoin muokata tyttärtä haluamaansa suuntaan. Toisaalta <i>The House Mango Street</i> –kirjassa päähenkilön isä näyttäisi olevan empaattisempi ja sallivampi kuin muut latinalaisamerikkalaiset isät, joita kirjassa on kuvattu. Cisneroksen kuvaus isistä on siis moniulotteinen, joten mustavalkoisia tulkintoja ei voi tehdä.</p> <p>Sekä Burken teoria että Cisneroksen kirjat käsittelevät omilla erityistavoillaan samoja asioita: ihmisiä ja heidän identiteettiään. Näiden kahden lähestymistavan yhdistäminen ja vertailu auttaa asioiden nimeämisessä ja identiteettiprosessien ymmärtämisessä. Lisäksi teoria auttaa ymmärtämään Cisneroksen romaanien päähenkilöitä syvemmin, kun tarkastelun alla on nimeomaan isän vaikutus tyttäriin. Tutkielmassani tulen siihen tulokseen, että isät ovat yksi keskeisimmistä henkilöistä, jotka vaikuttavat tyttären identiteettiin. Siksi isien merkitystä kannattaisi tutkia lisää sekä Cisneroksen kirjoissa että Yhdysvaltain-meksikolaisten naisten kirjoittamassa tuotannossa ylipäätään. Cisneroksen kirjat osoittavat, että isä ei voida kategorisoida stereotyyppien pohjalta.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

“Even though my father can’t read English, everything I have written has been for him”, Sandra Cisneros (Walker 2001: 89)

The aim of this study is to look at fictional literature through socio-psychological lenses, in order to better understand the effect fathers have on their daughters’ identity in Sandra Cisneros’s fictional works. Another key aim is to test a socio-psychological theory called identity theory as a tool to understand fictional characters and their identity development. Sociologists (e.g. Inglis 1938, Cosbey 1997) have for a long time been asking the question of how the field of sociology can profit from fiction. This question can also be reversed: how can we profit from sociology when analysing fiction. This is, in fact, the question my study aims at answering. As a tool I have chosen the version of identity theory developed by an American sociologist Peter Burke. The theory is developed from the theory of structural symbolic interaction¹.

Mexican-American fiction written by women is called Chicana² fiction, and Chicana fiction has been widely studied from the perspective of an identity development. The focus of the academic studies, however, seems to have been mainly on gender and ethnic and cultural identity (for example identity moulded by Mexican myths). Also so called hybrid³ identity has been widely studied. These are all important issues considering Chicana literature, and will be helpful in studying the father’s effect on the daughter’s identity. The fact that the father is namely Mexican (in both novels

¹ *structural symbolic interactionism* (as defined by Burke 2009: 9-18): the term coined by Sheldon Stryker (1980) to refer to set of ideas about the nature of the individual and the relationship between the individual and society. Relies heavily on *symbolic interactionism* [term coined by Herbert Blumer (1962), who was building his theories on the basis of work of George Herbert Mead’s (e.g. 1934)]. Symbolic interactionism, according to Oxford Reference Online is: “the view of social behaviour that emphasizes linguistic or gestural communication and its subjective understanding, especially the role of language in the formation of the child as a social being.” According to Burke (2009) symbolic interactionism views the meaning of behaviour more important than the behaviour itself (when looking at interaction between individuals.) (Burke 2009: 16)

² the word *Chicana* refers an American female (*Chicano* refers to male) with Mexican origins. ‘Chicano’ derives from the word ‘Mechicano’ (Kanellos 2003: 20). **Chicana literature** refers to literature written by Mexican-American women (American women with Mexican origins).

³ *hybridity* according to Oxford Reference Online: “A term used in contemporary Postcolonial Studies to theorize and to a certain degree celebrate a global state of mixedness—a mixedness of cultures, races, ethnicities, nations, and so on.”

studied in the present study) has a big part to do with the daughters' identity, thus the cultural and ethnic influence is evident. Therefore, in the present analysis the effect of culture and ethnicity is a crucial element, but mainly from the perspective of the relationship between fathers and daughters.

Burke's identity theory is socio-psychological and its main focus is on social roles, which are considered as products of the surrounding structures of society yet deeply influenced by each individual inhabiting a certain role – in this case the roles of a Mexican father and his Mexican-American daughter.

I believe that through fiction one can draw conclusions that can apply also in real life, connecting events and phenomena in one's own life. For example the reader of Cisneros is able to first recognize patterns in which the fathers affect the daughters' lives, and might be able to see patterns that are similar to their own father-relationship: for example to help understand the complexity of a father-daughter – relationship. At its best fiction describes accurately what it is like to be a human being: the joys and sorrows experienced through human interaction – a reading experience creating a universe of its own where the reader makes his or her own interpretation of the world presented to her or him through fiction.

I have been privileged to enter this unique universe of its own when interpreting Sandra Cisneros's works. Encountering a universe of its own in fiction has also been referred to by Keith Oatley calls as the "meeting of minds". Oatley has studied what happens when a reader feels connected to a piece of text. In his view, there are two kinds of theories which strive to depict the relationship between fiction and society. These are the reflection theory and the determination theory. He (Oatley 1999), compares art with physical sciences, concluding that physical scientists strive at consensus (for example convincing others of vitamin C as necessary to human health) while art strives for something different what he calls "meetings of minds". "Yet, when a real meeting occurs of a reader with an author or character (via a novel), it can be as profound, perhaps even more profound, than a change of scientific belief" (Oatley 1999: 440).

The relationship between fiction and society has been studied for decades. For example Ruth A. Inglis (1938) set the question regarding the relationship between fiction and society that I find still most interesting: "does literature reflect society?

And if so, is the reflection a true or a distorted one? What aspects of society are reflected?” (Inglis 1938: 526). Inglis presents a thorough study in which fiction was analysed in order to investigate whether it is society that affects fiction, or fiction that affects society. In her view, there are two kinds of theories which strive to depict the relationship between fiction and society. These are the reflection theory and the control theory. In her words: “Succinctly, the reflection theory holds that literature *reflects* society; the control theory, that it *shapes* society”. (Inglis 1938: 526). Inglis comes to the conclusion that evidence for both theories can be found, and argues that effects either way depend on the way in which writing is related to a particular society (Inglis 1938: 527). For example in her quantitative study of American short stories and American society (regarding women entering jobs) she argued that the fiction seemed to reflect more the values of the Americans than the actual facts of American life:

...examples indicate that although the stories do not consistently reflect actual conditions in American life, they do mirror certain typical American attitudes and ideals, such as the tendency to take prosperity for granted, the lack of class consciousness and belief in freedom of opportunity for everyone, the glorification of wealth and of youth and of those who entertain us. In these respects, the American pattern of values is reflected more clearly than the actual facts of American life. (Inglis 1938: 531).

Almost sixty years later Janet Cosbey (1997) concluded that the “sociology of literature has long recognized that literature reflects society.” (Cosbey 1997: 227) She also points out that towards the end of the 1990s there was a growing trend to use fiction to illustrate sociological theories and concepts (Cosbey 1997: 227). She continues that “this experimental (albeit fictional) world provides an arena in which to trace sociological processes and patterns” (Cosbey 1997: 228). In the present study I am following this idea of fiction as an arena where it is possible to successfully apply sociological theories – with the reservation, however, that in this study I use sociological theory in order to analyse fiction, whereas Cosbey used fiction as a tool to understand sociological theories.

When I originally read Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros 1984) during my exchange-student year in the United States in 1997, I felt deeply touched by the novel and its rephrasing of emotions, thoughts and experiences which I regarded similar to mine, even though the protagonist is Mexican-American and I am Finnish. And this is how a true piece of art works: it speaks to its readers, viewers and listeners despite of their place of origin. This is because an artist has a capability

of grasping something essential of the human mind, and is able to convey the message through a piece of art. It is intriguing to now examine the initially touching topics from a theoretical perspective – to see whether one’s “meeting of minds” deepens - or whether it is completely confused by all the new concepts and ideas that might have an effect of reducing the initial excitement that the texts have offered. Nevertheless, I predict the approach to be useful, at least to some extent, as the identity theory emphasizes the individual’s internal processes in developing identities, and Cisneros’s first person narrators allow the reader into the characters’ heads. This particular choice of a narrator allows one to access the characters’ thoughts and views, and these thoughts and views can be analysed through Burke’s identity model.

The present analysis of Cisneros’s work will be based mainly on Peter Burke’s (Burke and Stets, 2009) psycho-sociological theory called *identity theory*. For decades Burke and his colleagues have been developing a model for understanding identity processes. Burke’s specific contribution to identity theory is highlighted by Hogg, Terry and White (1995), who explain that this particular version of the theory explains social behaviour in terms of the reciprocal relations between self and society from the symbolic interactionist perspective which emphasizes that society affects social behaviour through its influence on self. (Hogg, Terry, White 1995: 256).

One of the reasons why I have chosen the two novels as my materials in this study – *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo* – is that in the two Cisneros seems to portray daughter-father –relationships that appear to be more positive than daughter-daughter relationships generally portrayed in Mexican-American literature written by females – furthermore even more positive than representations of fathers in contemporary American literature in general. A lot of academics have referred to the father of the protagonist in *The House on Mango Street* as being clearly more positive than are the other fathers in the novel, or fathers in Chicana literature in general. Regarding the protagonist in *Caramelo* it seems that there is less research on the father figure in the novel. Thus regarding *The House on Mango Street*, I have more previous research to lean on, as for *Caramelo* the conclusions of the father being more positive than in Chicana literature in general, are more conclusions that I have come to in my own analysis. The tendency of the contemporary American literature to portray fathers often in a negative way has been stated also by Josep M.

Armengol-Carrera (2008). In his view the American literary fathers are often absent, but when they are present, they tend to be represented as authoritarian and repressive figures. (Armengol-Carrera 2008: 211).

It seems that both within the Mexican-American literature itself, and within the research on it, fathers are somewhat positioned as they are in American literature in general: either absent - or present, but repressive. Instead of father-daughter - relationships, the scholars in the past decades seem to have concentrated more on female bonds in Chicana literature. The tendency to overlook fathers has been stated also in various studies about Chicana literature. For example Segura and Pierce (1993) argue that the mothers are more in the main focus: “many Chicana/o scholars have characterized the existence of multiple mothering figures as a distinctive feature of Chican/o families.” (Segura, Pierce 1993: 62). According to Estill (2001) most Chicana literature emphasizes the relationship between mother and daughter or grandmother and granddaughter. According to Estill the father, when he does appear, is usually an ambivalent or a negative force. (Estill 2001: 46)

However, there seems to be a growing number of scholars who take an interest in this aspect of Chicana literature as well. With the present study I aim, on my part, at contributing to studies in Chicana literature, by bringing the young females and their father-relationships into focus, in order to have a deeper understanding of the Chicana representations in contemporary American fiction. I have come to a conclusion that the representation of the Mexican-American fathers in Cisneros’s novels portrays a complex picture, where one cannot conveniently place them in any stereotypical category. A further analysis is thus in order.

Both Cisneros’s novels and Burke’s theory speak of the human mind in general, thus anybody interested in father-daughter –relationships will hopefully find this thesis of interest. In the present thesis I will aim at illustrating the basic elements (namely relevant for studying father-daughter relationships) of Burke and Stet’s identity theory, and discuss how the theory might help us to understand the effect the fathers have on their daughters’ identities. However, I would like to stress here that as a student majoring in English philology my possible strengths do not lie in understanding sociological theories in-depth, but rather in analysing how fiction reflects a human life, and offering my insights in interpreting Cisneros’s texts.

As background I have also included some history and sociological studies on Mexican-Americans in order to be able to grasp the context and the background where Cisneros is writing from. For example the term *Chicana* and *Chicano* demand separate chapters, as the terms themselves include political history of the minority of Mexican-Americans in the United States. Also it is crucial to have an understanding of Mexican-American values concerning family life, as the roles of daughters and fathers can be better understood with the knowledge on traditional values and role expectations that are included in the Mexican-American family system.

The socio-historical perspective is also important when one bears in mind that Cisneros's all fictional characters are either Mexican, American or Mexican-American, and all the locations where she places her characters are either in the United States or Mexico. Since the characters and the settings are strongly bound to a certain physical place at a certain point in history, it is crucial to have a good basic understanding of both the place and the history.

The history of Mexican-Americans is rich in various ways and it could be studied from several angles each being as fruitful and exciting. And indeed, several studies, journals and books have been written alone in the rich mythology and history of Mexican-Americans – the studies mostly carried out in the United States. In several US universities there are separate departments dedicated to Chicano and Chicana studies. As to the present day, in Finnish universities there has not been very much research carried out on Chicano and Chicana literature. However, a few theses on the Chicano/a literature and also on Sandra Cisneros have appeared in Finland. For example two theses in the University of Helsinki, one of them being Kirsi Hemanus's (1993) thesis where she has looked at the issues of gender and ethnicity: *Sukupuoli, etnisyyt ja chicana-identiteetti : meksikolais-amerikkalaisen naisen representaatio Sandra Cisnerosin teoksessa Woman Hollering creek and other stories* (Gender, ethnicity and Chicana-identity: representation of Mexican-American female in Sandra Cisneros's *Women Hollering Creek and Other Stories*.) [My translation]. Another example of studies on Cisneros carried out in Finland is Päivi Ibl's (2008) thesis in which she has analysed *The House on Mango Street: Rumbo a "Via Esperanza": el discurso contrastante en The house on Mango Street o La casa en Mango Street de Sandra Cisneros*. (The road to "Via Esperanza": a comparative discussion of the *House on Mango Street* and *La Casa en Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros) [My translation]. So Cisneros's works are not

completely unknown in the Finnish universities either. Hopefully more people will be interested in Chicano/a literature in the future, as such writers as Sandra Cisneros can offer an alternative window to modern American fiction and society.

One of the pioneering American scholars in the area of mythology and history of Mexican-Americans is Gloria Anzaldúa who offers a feminist perspective to what it means to be a Mexican-American female. Her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (first published in 1987) has served as groundwork to rely on in numerous studies carried out on Chicana literature, including Sandra Cisneros's work. She has illustrated (as described by Segura and Pierce 1993, Madsen 2003 and Kanellos 2003) the world of Mexican-Americans as being a socio-psychological "border" state – an uncomfortable one – where the Mexican roots seem rather distant to the current inhabitants of the United States; and where they still do not feel accepted in the United States because of their Mexican roots. Anzaldúa also draws vastly from the rich mythology of the Mexican-Americans (as described by Segura and Pierce 1993, Madsen 2003 and Kanellos 2003), where few female characters – for example the "all-good" Virgen of Guadalupe and the "vicious" Le Malinche shape the identity of Mexican-American females, urging them to choose one or the other of the drastically different roles.

While I acknowledge the vast importance of Anzaldúa's work, I will choose slightly different perspective on Cisneros's novels. I will focus on the psychological effects that society has on an individual – namely the father-daughter relationship. However, the perceptions and interpretations that Anzaldúa has made, are still very much present in my analysis. For example the two contrastive female characters, Virgen de Guadalupe and Le Malinche, also are very much determining the protagonists's identities in both novels analysed in the present study.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Mexican-American culture of machismo and the role of men and women within Chicano and Chicana –ideology

First it is essential to clarify the terms *Chicano* and *Chicana* used in the present study. Both terms refer to persons of Mexican descent living in the United States: *Chicano* refers to a male, and *Chicana* to a female. In the 1960s (Segura and Pierce 1993, Madsen 2003, Kanellos 2003), the term Chicano arose as the symbolic representation of self-determination, conveying a commitment to political struggle to improve the conditions of the Mexican-Americans. The term *Mexican-American* also refers to people of Mexican descent living in the United States, but it does not bear the same political connotation as the term Chicano. (Segura, Pierce 1993: 63).

Chicanos invented the term machismo - a model of extreme masculinism typical of Mexican-Americans (Madsen 2000, Kanellos 2003.). Armando Rendon wrote *The Chicano Manifesto* in 1972 where he stated that racism, economical exploitation and political domination are to be strictly opposed. In his manifest Rendon also brought up “machismo” as an important idea to follow both as a principle for the Chicano movement and family life. (Chabram-Dernersesian 2005 : 167). The ideology of machismo sees only men as having the right to be active social subjects. Machismo also describes the male as preoccupied with sexual conquest and domination over other males who threaten the family (Lopez and Carrillo 2001: 190).

Within the political rise of the Mexican-Americans referred to as the *Chicano movement* in the 1960s, it was men who were actively speaking and writing in public, whereas women held the position of caretakers, coffee makers, cleaners of the offices etc (Segura and Pierce 1993, Madsen 2003, Kanellos 2003). The movement at first aimed at a strictly working-class ideology only for Spanish-speakers or bilingual, rurally oriented with a very strong heritage of pre-columbian culture. (Kanellos 2003: 20). The idea was to reach for equality between white Americans and Mexican Americans and to end racism.

From a sociological perspective it is the long history of immigration between Mexico and The United States that might also affect fathers' attitude towards their daughters. Based on her studies on abusive Latino families Flores-Ortiz (referred to in Lopez, Carrillo 2001, 171) developed a term “cultural freezing”, which means that families

adopt rigid, stereotyped values and behaviours due to a difficult acculturation process. According to Flores-Ortiz, freezing may occur when a woman desires more independence or shows signs of bringing shame to the family name (e.g. losing her virginity before marriage). The father feels entitled to punish her in order to keep the family unit together and keep the “facade clean”. According to Lopez and Carrillo (2001) women also feel they have to stay with the abusive father in order to preserve the family unit important for Mexican Americans (Lopez, Carrillo 2001: 171).

In the 1970s, however, Mexican American women started to publicly criticize the male dominance of the Chicano movement. Men in their part saw this as an attack against the culture of Machismo - the cultural heritage of Mexico and the traditional power of men. Thus women shifted the focusing point of the movement from racism to sexism and from society to family, echoing the view expressed by Monica Kaup (2001): “The feminist project begins at home, with a radical critique of the social architecture of domesticity” (Kaup, 2001: 13-14).

Chicana feminists were greatly influenced by African-American feminists, since Chicanas felt they had more in common with other women of colour rather than white US females. Thus the term Chicana also includes the feminist aspect of the movement alongside with the opposition of racism and white political domination. Even though Chicanas and Chicanos want to put the emphasis on their own subculture, the surrounding, dominant system and culture of the white Americans have a strong role, as echoed by Kaup (2001): “The narrative writings of Chicano women and men must be understood as different from and in resistance to traditional American literature, yet must also be understood in their American context.” (Kaup 2001: 4).

Chicana women have modest and indirect styles of communication which might discourage them to discuss their family problems publicly. Also mothers in many cases want to spare the daughters the pain of being different or at odds with cultural norms which do not support women speaking up in public about domestic violence (Lopez, Carrillo 2001: 186). Thus for a Chicana writer, such as Sandra Cisneros, an act of writing of these issues is a courageous act in itself. The protagonists of the two stories represent to a certain extent the modest and submissive role traditionally related to Mexican-American (and Latinas in general) females, but both of them also

express themselves in more non-traditional and direct ways. Looked from the outside, they seem to fulfil the traditional role of a Chicana, but inside they rebel against it. They do not want to obey their fathers to live up to expectations of marrying and having children. Instead they want to be free - just like men are.

2.2 Chicano and Chicana literature and Sandra Cisneros

2.2.1 Chicano movement and Chicano fiction

Chicano fiction of the several past decades is greatly affected by the ideology of the Chicano movement which was blooming in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus it is useful to have a brief look at the history of Chicano movement followed by a look at the contemporary Chicano fiction.

The origins of contemporary Chicano literature are found in the sixteenth century, when the Spaniards brought to the Southwest (e.g. present day New Mexico and Colorado) both their oral and written literary traditions (Tatum 1982: 167). Mexico's loss of much of the Southwest and California to the United States in the mid-1850s had a profound and lasting effect on the area's Spanish-speaking population. During that time hundreds of Spanish-speaking newspapers were established, so the will for the Spanish to survive in print was strong. Chicano writers published their works in those newspapers, however they generally avoided controversial social theme - with a very few exceptions (Tatum 1982: 167).

Due to socio-political circumstances, the Chicano-movement intensified in the 1960s and early 1970s. Social protest and search for identity were expressed and portrayed in an outburst of Chicano writings. In the 1960s the Mexican American working class, students and farmers founded a movement striving to improve the conditions of the Mexicans living in the US.

In the sixties the grass root movement was soon joined by the academics, and university-based magazines were circulated, publishing houses formed, and Chicano studies and bilingual education departments institutionalized (Kanellos 2003: 20). Gradually writers began to identify themselves more as creative artists instead of merely writing in order to gain social justice. (Tatum 1982: 168). According to Charles Tatum (Tatum 1982: 168) it is important to note that Chicano writers played

an essential role in the creation and development of the socio-political and cultural consciousness that formed the base of the Chicano Movement during the 1960s and 1970s.

The birth of the Chicano movement also resulted in a blooming of Chicano arts. A similar phenomenon also took place in Harlem, New York in the 1920s-30s, when the African American art blossomed and the white Americans also took interest in their art.

Chicano literature is based in “in-between –experiences” – a confrontation of two cultures (Katzew 2001: 11). Lilia De Katzew argues that strong feelings were in a key role when the Chicano movement was founded, ensuing the intense flow of Chicano fiction:

Anger, frustration, and violence are associated with this movement. The Chicanos find themselves in a constant confrontation with an Anglo world, a world that is foreign to their Mexican origin. At the same time, they find themselves distanced from their Mexican culture, since they have been living in the United States. They are condemned to live continuously between two cultures, without ever finding a secure anchor in either of them. The creative energy that flows from this constant juxtaposition, however, has become the driving force of their fictional words. (de Katzew 2001: 2)

De Katzew concludes that Chicano/a literature is very much defined by the juxtaposition of two cultures (Mexico and United States). She has analysed Chicano/a writers of 1970s and 1980s, such as Tomàs Rivera, Rudolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa, Miguel Mèndez, Alejandro Morales, Estela Portillo, Ron Arias and Sandra Cisneros (*The House on Mango Street*). (These novels were published in the 1970s, except Cisneros’s in 1984). De Katzew notes that identity is a central theme to all these writers with the fictional characters as being unable to confirm their identity because they are balancing between their Mexican origin and their existence in the Anglo world of the United States. According to de Katzew it is the facing of that particular ambiguity on daily basis, which in turn creates the energy and attraction of their novelistic writing. (de Katzew, 2001: 4).

In her book about Mexico and United States, Lee Stacy (2003) is naming partly the same writers as de Katzew when she is listing books that she regards as “classics” in the field of Chicano literature: Tomas Rivera’s *Y no se lo tragò la tierra* (1971); *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1987) and Josè Antonio Villarrela’s *Pocho* (1959). Both writers tell stories of labour migration along with the development of a central

character. Stacy notes that such stories are common in Chicano literature (Stacy 2003: 175). On top of these two, Stacy lists some other important contemporary Chicano works, and notes that a lot of them rely on a revisionist history that looks to Aztec icons and symbols for collective formation, solidarity, and political consciousness. “Many concern themselves with the frustration of psychological exile, as characters yearn for a homeland to which they cannot return.” A few notable Chicano books, listed by Stacy Lee, are Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me Ultima* (1972), José Antonio Burciaga’s *Spilling the Beans* (1995) and Alejandro Morales Caras’s *Viejas y vino Nuevo* (1975) (Stacy 2003: 175).

Themes in Chicano literature draw from the notion of not belonging and “the lost land”, echoing the history of Mexico losing land to the United States. According to John Chàvez (as cited by Villa 2000: introduction) the experience of being displaced in various ways from a perceived homeland has been a key element of Chicanos’ social identity in the United States. That element is widely presented in the imagery and rhetorics of ‘the lost land’.” (Chàvez, John 1984 as quoted in Villa 2000: introduction). Furthermore Chicano literature is mixing two languages – Spanish and English – a type of “interlinguism” which Juan Bruce-Novoa describes as the “form of expression that is the true native language of Chicano communities”. (Bruce Novao as quoted by Katzew, 2001: 9).

2.2.2 Chicana fiction

Chicana writers were only admitted to publish stories and plays in a larger scale in the 1975, with the publication of Estela Portillo Trambleys *Rain of Scorpions*. According to Kanellos (2003: 20) Portillo's influence has not been as enduring as some of the other writers appearing in the 1970s. Until the early 1980s it was mainly Chicano-owned publishing houses and journals that published Chicano short stories. Towards the 1990s Chicana writers started to emerge more in the public sphere. Frederick Luis (2009) points out that they all portrayed strong women and used the form of a short story – one of these writers was Sandra Cisneros:

By the early mid-1980s, the mainstream publishers began to take notice of Latino borderland authors generally: Pat Mora, Denise Chàvez, Cherrìe Moraga, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros and Helena María Viranomens used the short story to invent unheard-of characters: border crossers, complex and strong women, lesbians. Mora and Moraga used the short fiction form to explore the possible alternative roles for Chicanas to those defined by a restrictive Virgin/Malinche paradigm that permeates Chicano culture. For Latino borderland authors, the short story form has

been a main vehicle for authors to draw readers into fictional worlds informed deeply by the Chicano experience and cultural identity. (Luis 2009: 135-136)

Until the early 1970s Chicanas were mainly presented as stereotypes in, for example, films and TV. The stereotypes included spicy Mexican women of the saloons or suffering mothers (Rebolledo and Rivero 1993, 1). But due to the strengthening of the Chicano identity in the 1960s – the Chicano Renaissance – Chicanas were in their part ready to write about their own experience and brought about Chicana Renaissance. The Chicana Renaissance coincided with the renaissance of ethnic women's writings in general since the civil rights activism in the 1960s in the United States. (Madsen 2000: 1). In literary sense this meant a development of a distinctive feminine ethnic/racial voice through literary themes, imagery and style – all reworked so that elements of a racial cultural tradition become expressive of a feminist voice instead of expressing traditional patriarchal Mexican values. (Madsen 2000: 1)

Along with Gloria Anzaldúa, another influential Chicana writer is Cherrie Moraga. She is perhaps best-known for an anthology of feminist thoughts which she co-edited with Gloria Anzaldúa: *This Bridge Called My Back : Writings by Radical Women of Color*. In one of her essays, she strongly criticizes the US imperialism on Latin America: “Right now, we witness a fractured and disintegrating América, where the Northern half functions as the absented landlord of the Southern half and the economic disparity between the First and the Third Worlds drives a bitter wedge between a people.” (Madsen 2000 :28). Deborah Madsen analyses Moraga's writings and concludes: “Moraga requires the transformation of a resilient and powerful cultural ideology. Not only the transformation of the patriarchal structure of Mexican social and gender relations but the imperialistic assumptions of United States self-definitions – challenged by the Chicano movement –are targeted by the transformative politics of Chicana feminism (Madsen 2000: 28).

In her book (2000) Madsen lists the most prominiscent Chicana writers by that time: Ana Castillo, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Denise Chàvez, Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, Mary Gelen Ponce, Alma Luz Villanueva, Helena María Viramontes and Bernice Zamora.

Chicana and Chicana-fiction as terms have only been entering the public writings - including articles and books - in recent decades, as many scholars have tended to concentrate on Chicano-literature in their books and articles about Mexican-American literature.

2.2.3 Sandra Cisneros

Sandra Cisneros is a follower of those Chicana poets that Tatum (1982) describes as being distinguishable "...in their exploration of the role of the Chicana within contemporary society in general and within Chicano culture in particular" (Tatum 1982: 160). According to Deborah Madsen (2000) Cisneros is one of the first writers to challenge the patriarchal character of Chicano movement (Madsen, 2000: 18).

Cisneros's first book was *Bad Boys* – a collection of poetry. Her second book the *House on Mango Street* (1984) - a collection of vignettes⁴ - brought her national recognition in the United States. *The House on Mango Street* has been translated into 11 languages. The book has sold two million copies and has made Cisneros one of the best selling Hispanic writers in the U.S. (New York Times, 2002). This is the one of her books that has presumably most affected the public's view on Mexican-American females – and fathers.

Altogether Cisneros has published eight books: *Bad Boys* (1980), *The House on Mango Street* (1984), *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (1987), *Women Hollering Creek* (1991), *Loose Woman* (1994), *Hairs and Pelitos* (1994, children's book), *Caramelo* (2002) and *Vintage Cisneros* (2004). Cisneros's books vary from poems to prose. The themes revolve around issues of Mexican American society from women's point of view. Cisneros vastly uses her Chicana background and Chicano subculture throughout her books.

Cisneros was born in 1954 in Chicago (www.sandracisneros.com). Her late father was Mexican (born in Mexico) and mother is Mexican-American (born in the U.S.). The family has six sons and one daughter. In addition to writing she has also worked as a teacher to high school dropouts, as poet-in-the-schools and as an arts administrator. Although she was already writing when she was a young girl, she was

⁴ vignette = "Any brief composition or self-contained passage, usually a descriptive prose sketch, essay, or short story" (Oxford Reference Online)

shy to bring her own writings into attention of the class and did not want to read her texts aloud. The voice of the young girl could later be heard in her books about coming of age, e.g. *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, her only prose books so far as her other books are collections of poetry.

Cisneros has claimed several literary prizes in the U.S. She currently lives in San Antonio, Texas. (<http://www.sandracisneros.com>). In Finland she is not widely known and her books have not been translated into Finnish. Currently a few English copies of some of her books are available in the libraries and bookstores.

Ms. Cisneros graduated from Loyola University and attended the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. She returned to Chicago to teach but in 1984 decided to move to San Antonio to be closer to the border that defines her bicultural identity. Cisneros herself is a Buddhist who believes in compassion, nonviolence and "putting my writing to service." This is something that can be also be considered as a daughter's rebellion against the fathers: the Catholic girl converting to Buddhism, as in the Catholic world heads of church are referred to as fathers.

2.2.4 Previous research on Cisneros

In previous research the notion of identity in Cisneros's writings, as well as in other Chicana writers' works, is often analysed from the perspective of gender or hybrid identity (two cultures simultaneously affecting the identity).

One of the few studies on the meaning of fathers in Cisneros's works, is Rachel Collin's Master's thesis (2010): *An analysis of father/daughter relationships in contemporary Chicana fiction*. Collins analyses five contemporary Chicana writers including Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek*. She concludes, on the basis of her analysis of the five authors' work, that there seems to be three types of father/daughter relationships. Firstly there are relationships where daughters fall prey to the demands of Machismo and continue to obey the path approved by their fathers. Secondly there are relationships ending in the rejection of a father or Latino culture altogether. Thirdly there are relationships in which the daughter is able to overcome machismo or cultural expectations resulting in functional relationships. (2010: 10). According to Collins (Collins 2010: 10) Sandra Cisneros represents the third category. Hence she represents what she calls

‘functional relationships’ between fathers and daughters. In *The House of the Mango Street*, for example, Cisneros portrays a number of abusive fathers who restrict their daughter’s freedom, but through the protagonist, Esperanza’s relationship with her father, the reader is able to see there are also other types of father/daughter relationships:

Even though some fathers fall prey to macho ideals and do ultimately enact the stereotype of the overly macho father, there are fathers present in literature that work against this stereotype. Some, such as Esperanza’s father in *The House on Mango Street*...attempt to equal the gendered playing field by teaching their daughters to be successful and independent. (Collins 2010: 47).

In the present analysis I will look more into what kind of mechanisms can be found in the relationship between Esperanza and her father, that might lead us to see the father in more positive light than other fathers portrayed in the novel *The House on Mango Street*. For example Josep M. Armengol-Carrera argues that in the contemporary American literature dealing with fathers, Esperanza’s father stands out as a “sensitive and emotional man” (Armengol-Carrera 2008: 223).

Adriana Estill (Estill 2001) in turn, argues that it is worth noting that in the majority of Chicana literature the “father is conspicuous by his absence”. In her view, one reason for this may be the patriarchal nature of the Chicano culture. As a result female Mexican American writers have created worlds full of women and have concentrated on female bonds. Estill (Estill 2001: 46) also brings into attention the fact that two Chicana writers, Sandra Cisneros and Ana Castillo, have chosen to write about the father-daughter relationship, thus challenging the mainstream in Chicana literature, where: “men appear rarely in Chicana texts, especially when compared to the almost mythic role that *abuelitas*⁵ occupy”. (Estill 2001: 46). Furthermore, according to Estill (2001): “most Chicana literature emphasizes the mother-daughter or grandmother-granddaughter relationship: when the father does appear, he represents a thoroughly ambivalent or negative force”. (Estill 2001: 46).

In other studies, identities in Cisneros’s writings are often examined with the emphasis on the US and Mexican cultures affecting the identity - for example different value systems, different languages (mainly Spanish and English) and different customs affecting the way the representations of Mexican-Americans are portrayed. Also feminist theories are central in the studies of Cisneros, for example

⁵ abuelita=grandmother.

Jacqueline Doyle (1994) has compared *The House on Mango Street* to the one of the key stones within feminist writings: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Doyle discusses how *The House on Mango Street* extends the white middle-class feminist perspective expressed in Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*. According to Doyle, Cisneros included a working-class Chicana feminist perspective to Woolf's vision of the importance for a woman to have a room of her own:

Cisneros has acknowledged the importance of Woolf's belief that a room of one's own is a necessary precondition for writing. Allowing her room of her own, Cisneros's mother enabled her daughter to create: "I'm here," Cisneros explained to an audience of young writers, "because my mother let me stay in my room reading and studying, perhaps because she didn't want me to inherit her sadness and her rolling pin... In "Living as a Writer," Cisneros again stresses that she has "always had a room of [her] own": "As Virginia Woolf has said, a woman writer needs money, leisure, and a room of her own. (Doyle 1994: 9).

Katherine Payant has studied Cisneros's texts from a point of view of a hybrid identity shaped by two cultures:

In *The House on Mango Street*, like Cisneros's childhood home, located in Chicago's barrio, the protagonist Esperanza says, "Mexicans don't like their women strong" (10). One could say that all of Cisneros's female characters either struggle to be strong and succeed, thus transcending culturally dictated gender roles, or are defeated in their struggle (Lewis 69). The fact that they live "on the borders," straddling two or three cultures, requires them to combine several ways of thinking and being, a stressful situation that also has great potential for empowerment. Though some of her characters seem to fail in effectively creating a healthy hybrid identity that works for them, several others find new insights and strengths. (Payant 1999: 95)

Also Lilia de Katzew (2001), in her doctoral dissertation continues along the lines of two cultures affecting identity. She analyzes the Chicanos' quest for identity, and concludes that Chicano writers – including Sandra Cisneros – constantly describe the continuous struggle between the two cultures. de Katzew sees Cisneros as one of the writers succeeding in creating the tension that derives from the everyday struggles of Chicanos and Chicanas to balance between the Mexican heritage and their existence in the United States. (de Katzew 2001: x-xi).

I agree with Payant and Katzew with their idea of conflicting forces making it interesting for the reader to follow the daily struggles of Chicanas presented by Cisneros. In addition I would say that Cisneros, in particular, manages to portray the complexity of both the sociological and the psychological factors that make the daughter-father –relationships intense and important for the girls' identities. Thus it is not only the fact that the two cultures (Mexican and American) are colliding, but

intensity is also developed from the struggle of two individuals in a close relationship placing expectations on each other, and trying to either fulfill or reject those expectations.

Annalisa Waite Wiggins (2008), in her thesis, suggests that one should look into Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* more from the relational identity – perspective rather than the historical and mythical angles that are most commonly presented by scholars. “I argue that Cisneros shows a model of relational identity development, wherein the individual develops in the context of her community and is not determined solely by myths and elements of genealogy”. (Wiggins 2008: abstract). Wiggins emphasizes three aspects: gender, home and language. In her study she discusses how individual identity development is better understood in terms of relationships and experience rather than historical models. I also find it necessary to broaden the historical and sociological approach into a more psychological approach, where the individual develops also in the context of her closest relations, of which the relation to the father is one of the determining one.

Also Shannon Wilson discusses the Chicanas' position in the Northern-American culture and does this by analysing Gloria Anzaldúa's work (Wilson 2010: 31). Wilson emphasizes the role model of a “good mother” as being essential to Chicanas' identity, and she emphasizes the females' roles as mothers and wives being essential to Chicana identity. Wilson (2010) argues that the qualities of the good mother are associated with selflessness, where she feels obliged to fulfil both the needs of her children and the husband. (Wilson 2010: 32). Wilson intensifies her idea: “In short, the model of the good mother limits female access to the totality of the human psyche and the autonomy of the physical body.” (Wilson 2010: 32-33). I find that Cisneros in her portrayals of daughters is presenting female characters that seem to strive to the opposite direction of what Wilson calls “the model limiting female access to the totality of the human psyche”, meaning that these daughters are not primarily aiming at fulfilling the role of a good mother, but identify themselves more as independent beings with their own desires, for example desires to study. Then again, the daughters presented by Cisneros very much aim at fulfilling the role of a “good daughter”, which shares attributes with “the good mother” such as act of selflessness and obligation to fulfil needs and wishes of the father, for example

cleaning the house or cooking instead of reading books. Thus one cannot make drastic simplifications either of Cisneros's representations of daughters or fathers. Characters simply do not fall into rigid ideas or stereotypes and cannot be narrowly defined.

Finally Nina Todorova (2007) looks at women's desire in the fiction of Sandra Cisneros. In her thesis, Todorova also dedicates a chapter to 'representation and identity', adopting Rosi Braidotti's view that 'identity is made of successive identifications' (Todorova 2007: 12).

If we adopt Rosi Braidotti's idea that "identity is made of successive identifications" with culturally available role models, where identification is the unconscious process of internalizing images that "escape rational control", we can analyze the contemporary Chicana consciousness and see how some internalizations lead to self destructive behavior. (Todorova 2007: 12).

Todorova is looking at identity by concentrating on women's desire and emphasizing also the role of the multicultural America affecting the identity:

Further, to grasp the intensity of the Chicana experience, we need to look at her existential struggle in the context of multicultural America. Here, the two monolithic influences are the conflicting Mexican and Anglo-American cultures. Alas, more often than not, the mixing of symbols and conceptions of what woman should and should not be and where her place in society is produces a multitude of paradoxes that seem to have no solution. One way of looking at Sandra Cisneros's fiction is as a space where Chicano women can discuss and attempt to resolve the symbolic struggles that take place in their bodies and minds. The author writes stories about women's psychic reality from the Chicana perspective. She invites female readers to identify with the characters and assess their lives outside of the context of dominant representation. (Todorova 2007: 12)

In her analysis, Todorova leans on feminist theories on Chicana literature, exploring the virgin-whore paradigm typical of Mexican-American culture:

Like feminist activists Pat Mora and Gloria Anzaldúa, Cisneros represents her characters as women perpetually exposed to the oppressive influences of sexism, racism and classism, which when internalized create the dialectic nature of the Chicana identity. (Todorova 2010: introduction)

Todorova claims that one cannot read Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek* as separate fictional wholes. According to her, one should examine these texts in relation to other cultural texts that have represented and constructed the image of the Mexican-American woman through time. "Her work represents an intricate intersection of history, social practice, Chicana feminism and

Mexican popular culture. The ideas and behavior of her characters are determined by the bonds they have formed with their families, communities, cultures and countries.” (Todorova 2007: 8).

I very much agree with other scholars’ views of Cisneros’s characters being strongly determined by the surrounding society in various ways. Yet, in the present study, I mostly overlook the theories concentraing on identities from a point of view of gender and ethnicity. In order to gain deeper understanding of the impact of fathers on their daughters’ identities, I adopt a socio-psychological theory by Peter Burke’s and Jan Stet’s, which aims at explaining identity processs with Burke’s model of the processes influencing the individual’s identity.

2.3 Peter Burke’s socio-psychological theory as a tool for investigating the father-daughter relationship

2.3.1 Burke’s Identity Theory

In the present study, I will apply Peter Burke’s identity theory as described by Burke and his colleague and wife, Jan Stets, in the book *Identity Theory* (2009). Peter Burke is an American sociologist who, with his colleagues, has contributed to the sector of sociology called symbolic interactionism (defined earlier). He builds his theory on previous theories of identity theory, and introduces a cybernetic control model of the self. It is an attempt to visualize the process of a self regulation that individual goes through when trying to influence the way in which they *think* others perceive their identity. According to Burke and Stets (2009) one is constantly trying to achieve balance between how she herself views her identity and how the significant others view her identity. If the balance is disturbed, and individual is likely to change her behaviour in order to make the two views match. Burke, compared to many other theorists in identity theory, has contributed by adding a more psychological perspective to explaining processes of identity. Also his theory emphasizes the behavioural consequences that identity processes result to.

According to Burke and Stets (2009: 9) works of numerous sociologists mainly in the 2000th century have laid the groundwork for their theory by developing an approach

for the scientific study of identities and the study of the relationships between identities and society, based on the theory of symbolic interactionism. Thus, Burke and Stets extensively build on earlier theories and contributions to a structural symbolic interactionism. Burke and Stets (2005) describe Burke's identity theory – also called identity control theory (ICT), as follows:

Identity control theory (ICT) had its beginnings almost 30 years ago with the development of a theoretically based measurement system to capture the meanings of the self in a role (Burke, 1980). The idea was formulated, based on traditional symbolic interaction views, that people choose behaviors, the meanings of which correspond to the meanings in their identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Tully, 1977). [Burke and Stets 2005: 1]

“To choose behaviors, the meanings of which correspond to the meanings in their identity” means that people hold a certain set of meanings according to each identity in a certain role, for example a female in a daughter-role might have meanings like “obedient”, “respectful”, “beautiful” and is then choosing behaviours that support those meanings. For example if the father is asking her to do her homework, she will do so without objecting. She has thus chosen a behavior supporting the meanings of the daughter-role instead of choosing behaviour which does not support the meanings included in the role, for example she does not choose to skip doing the homework altogether, which would refer to a meaning of “disobedient”.

According to Burke and Stets, an identity is what it means to be who we are:

Within ICT, an identity is the set of meanings that define who one is in terms of a group or classification (such as being an American or female), in terms of a role (for example, a stockbroker or a truck driver), or in terms of personal attributes (as in being friendly or honest).” (Burke and Stets 2005: 2)

Burke and Stets (2009) further explain that individuals simultaneously have multiple roles in society:

People possess multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, are members of multiple groups, and claim multiple personal characteristics, yet the meanings of these identities are shared by members of society. Identity theory seeks to explain the specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities they claim; how these identities relate to one another for any one person; how their identities influence their behavior, thoughts, and feelings or emotions; and how their identities tie them in to society at large. (Burke, Stets 2009: 3).

Both the individual and society are linked in the concept of identity. (Burke and Stets 2009: 3) This is why this theory, in particular, is useful for the purposes of the present study, it provides tools for investigating the individual's identity in a particular

group, and furthermore in relation to specific person in that group, who also holds a specific role in relation to the individual – father to his daughter, furthermore a Mexican-American father to his Mexican-American daughter.

Building on earlier identity theorists (e.g. Cooley 1902, Coleman 1990 and Stryker 1980 and 2002) Burke and Stets argue that the individual and society are two sides of the same coin. Like the earlier theorists, Burke and Stets also hold a view that society (social structure) is created by the actions of individuals, though it is recognized that these actions are produced in the context of the social structure they create and are influenced by this context (Burke, Stets 2009: 4).

There is, thus, an elaborate system of mutual influences between characteristics of the individual and characteristics of society. This being true, we need to understand both the nature of the individuals who are creating society as well as the nature of the society in which the individuals are acting” (Burke, Stets 2009: 4).

Following this idea, I have attempted to understand both the nature of the representations of the daughters in Cisneros’s texts and the ways in which their identities are both individual and shaped by social structure – in this case the family as a particular kind of social structure.

In Burke’s identity theory *identity* is composed of four basic components (figure 1): an *input*, an *identity standard*, a *comparator* and an *output*. Each of the components is a part of a process dealing with meanings within the environment and within the self. The processes are connected in a continuous loop of processes. According to Burke and Stets (Burke and Stets 2009: 13) it is crucial to remember that all components of identity process are organized into a control system that operates to control the *input (perceptions)* to the system. Based on Burke’s and Stet’s examples I will now explain what each of the components mean in practice with the analysis of father-daughter relationship presented by Cisneros in mind.

Burke and Stets rely heavily on structural interactionism, where signs, symbols and language play a major role:

it is in understanding interaction that we are forced to deal with the two levels of the individual and society. Signs, symbols, and language are key to this. When we examine social action generally, and interaction specifically, we see two different kinds of things going on: the use of symbols and the use of signs. Individuals use symbols (words, language, and the namings of things including self) to engage in what Herbert Blumer (1962) called symbolic interaction to bring order out of the chaos of the world. ...

We must learn the identity of the others with whom we would interact. They must be labelled symbolically (named) and thus given an identity. We, too, must be identified or have an identity. The categories and classifications that are used for this purpose are provided by language and culture in which we are enmeshed. (Burke and Stets 2009: 13)

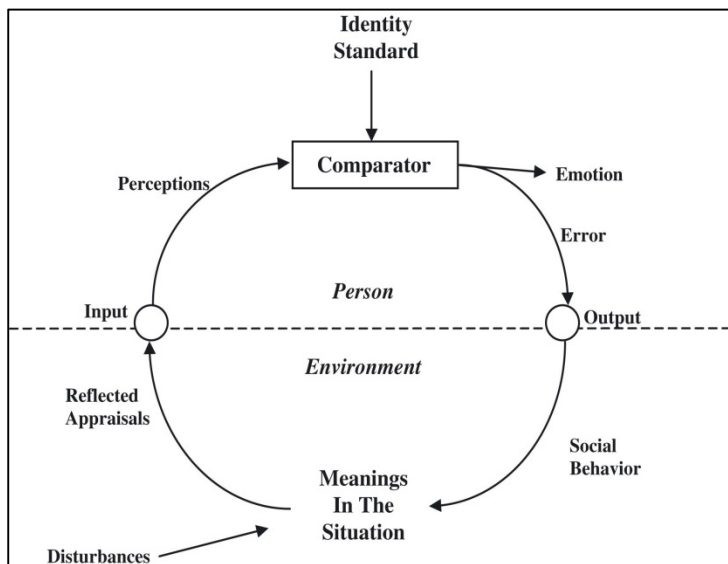
Burke and Stets establish here, that it is the humans' ability to label symbolically things around them, that is the basis of identity theory. By labelling we can examine the relationship between social structure and individuals by referring to the "labels" people give to different things (situations, roles, other people etc). For example, a father might give a symbolic meaning of 'virtuous' to her daughter. Thus he holds certain expectations regarding her behaviour. If the daughter perceives the daughter-role as including 'virtuous' especially in respect of his father, she will then behave in way that will fulfil those expectations. This means that both the father and the daughter have mutual agreement on the symbol 'virtuous' and what kind of behaviour it requires to be seen as virtuous. The mother, on the other hand, might have different symbolic meanings of what it means to be a daughter. Thus the daughter's behaviour as a daughter might vary depending on which parent she is interacting with. Especially in a case of a Mexican-American female, the shared symbols vary greatly depending on whether the individual is interpreting the symbols from a Mexican or a North-American point of view. The symbol 'virtuous' might hold different meanings in different cultures. For example a Mexican father might expect his daughter to keep her virginity a lot longer than would expect an Anglo-American father.

Burke and Stets compare the identity control system to a thermostat (Burke and Stets 2009: 62-63). The identity system controls input (perceptions of other people's reactions) just as a thermostat controls the heating system of a furnace. The thermostat perceives certain stimulus and "acts" accordingly. When the thermostat thinks it is cold, it will make the furnace turn up the heat. But it is not necessarily the furnace itself that is the origin of the message that the thermostat is receiving. It might be that someone is holding an ice cube next to the thermostat and the thermostat is thus "tricked" to believe that it is cold. In the same fashion an individual will perceive the meanings of other people's behaviour and will then act accordingly depending on whether s/he thinks that those perceptions match his/her own view of his/herself – that view being their identity. It is not always what other

people actually think in their heads, but it is how an individual *interprets* their gestures and utterances when determining whether an individual's own identity standard matches with what the others *seem* to think of the individual.

Below there is a picture of Burke's model, where different components of the identity theory are portrayed in a continuous loop. Out of the components I will now proceed to look at four of the key elements more closely: identity standard, input, comparator and output. For the sake of clarity I have chosen to concentrate on these core components as Burke names them as the main components. According to Burke and Stets (2009: 62) it is the four key components that are organized in a control system that aims at controlling the input of the system.

Figure 1. Burke's model of identity



Source: Stets and Burke, 2005:3

2.3.1.1 Identity Standard

The notion of the identity standard is a view that one holds of him/herself, how the person views him/herself as a person, what traits are essential to the "true self" from his/her perspective. According to Burke and Stets (2009): "Each identity contains a set of meanings, which may be viewed as defining the characters of the identity. This set of meanings is the identity standard." (Burke and Stets 2009: 63). Burke and Stets

give concrete examples of how to better understand how an identity standard could possibly be measured. According to Burke and Stets people may be characterized, for example, as more masculine or more feminine. They (Burke and Stets 2009: 63) also point out that the character of masculinity and femininity can vary from one individual and society to another. Yet individuals may see themselves as more feminine or masculine. The degree of each person's femininity and masculinity can be better understood if visualized as a continuum where at the other end there is "masculinity" and on the other end "femininity", and along that line the individual will be able to distinguish how she or he sees themselves as. For example, in a scale of 0-5 where 0 is most feminine and 5 most masculine, one can describe themselves as being "2", where they see themselves as being more feminine than masculine. According to Burke and Stets, when we find the location on that continuum, are we able to discover what it means to be male or female for this particular person in their own culture. "Again, this set of meanings is the identity standard". (Burke and Stets 2009: 63).

Burke and Stets proceed to explain that for each of these persons, with respect to their gender identity, there is a fairly stable set of meanings that characterizes who they are. Burke's and Stets's identity theory suggests that these meanings define the identity standard. The meanings defining the identity standard are stored in memory and are accessible to *comparator*, which is the component comparing the identity standard to the input that one receives from the environment (other people). (Burke and Stets 2009:63).

For each of the many identities that a person holds there is a separate standard containing the meanings that define the identity in question. In Burke's and Stets's view it is the *meaning* that is contained in the identity standard (Burke and Stets 2009: 64). There might be several meanings for one identity standard. For example a college student identity for a person might contain these four different meanings: academic ability, intellectualism, sociability and assertiveness. (Burke, Stets 2009: 64). One can represent these four dimensions in a single set of meanings. According to Burke and Stets, such a set of meanings may include denotative (for example "summer" meaning a season between spring and autumn) and connotative ("summer" also meanings such as "warm, time for vacation"), as well as emotional

meanings and meanings that have not yet been measured by scientific methods (Burke and Stets 2009: 64).

In sum, my understanding of Burke's and Stets's definition of identity standard is that it is a complex set of meanings that one applies to oneself within a certain role in a society. That set of meanings is what could be described as "true self", the way that one herself sees as herself essentially being. Identity standard refers to a fairly stable set of meanings that one associates with one's identity.

2.3.1.2 Input

According to Burke and Stets (2009) input is a perception that one makes of other peoples signals (Burke and Stets 2009: 65-66). Input means other peoples' meaningful behaviour in a social situation, something that draws an individual's attention and makes him/her to include that action into the identity process. According to Burke and Stets , input, in practice, can consist of other people uttering actual words, behaving in a certain way or making gestures or expressions on the face. (2009: 65-66).

Burke and Stets point out that eventually it is only our perceptions that we have and those are the ones that can be controlled – not other people's behaviour:

We often think ourselves as trying to control our environment, trying to manipulate physical and social objects, trying to interact with others. We pick up a pen or pencil....However, a little thought can convince us that we know of these things because we see them, we hear them, and we feel them. In short, we perceive them, and ultimately it is only our perceptions that we have. (Burke and Stets 2009: 64).

After the input is perceived, it will then be "sent" to the *Comparator* for analysis. It is important is to understand that input is received and selected as being meaningful to the individual's identity, and this process of "choosing what one sees and hears" Burke and Stets call perceptions: "the consequences of what we do are only known to us in our perceptions" (Burke and Stets 2009: 65). Also it is important to understand that the ultimate goal of the whole process is to make the input to match the identity standard. "Only when the perception matches the standard have we accomplished our goal, so to speak" (Burke and Stets 2009: 65)

It is the perceptions we aim at changing, not the environment itself. Burke and Stets (2009: 65) use the analogy of driving a car. We can see that the person is steering the wheel and thus controlling the direction of the car. We can assume that there are

several reasons for the person to steer the wheel at a certain point, and those reasons can be for example the wind, variations in the road, the sun beaming etc. However, we do not have the exact perceptions that the driver has, so we are unable to see the link between the disturbances and the steering motion. (Burke and Stets 2009: 65). Thus the steering motion keeps the vehicle where the driver wants it to be, and analogically, that would be his or her identity standard.

Burke and Stets (2009) state that it is difficult to know what exactly it is that one perceives without some kind of test. Perceptions may be perceptions of their own behaviour, behaviour of others in the form of overt actions or in the form of expressions given off, or it may be a combination of these and other things as well. (Burke and Stets 2009: 65). This is where Cisneros's two novels come in convenient: we get inside the characters' heads, and thus have almost full access to what it is that the protagonists perceive as they - in detailed manners - let the reader in their most secret thoughts.

To summarize again, my understanding of Burke's and Stets's definition of input is, that it is our perception of a reaction of someone around us. It is the reaction (for example words, gestures) that we register as being meaningful in relation to how we ourselves define ourselves (identity standard).

2.3.1.3 Comparator

The *comparator* is a component of the identity system which compares the individual's identity standard (how they view themselves) to the input (perceptions of the reactions of other people). If those two do not match, an individual will then try to change their own behaviour in order to affect the view that the others hold of her. The change in other people's views is manifested in their gestures and speech which is called input. Further, it is the individual's perception of the input that will be the final factor deciding whether the identity standard and the perceptions match. Thus it is a complicated psychological system of how one interprets the signals around her. An individual aims at changing their own meaningful behaviour which Burke and Stets call *Output*. If the identity standard and the input do not match, the comparator produces an "error signal" which is the difference between the input and the identity standard. (Burke and Stets 2009: 66). Burke and Stets (2009: 66) describe the comparator as being a component that: "...does nothing more than

compare the input perceptions of meanings relevant to the identity with the memory meanings of the identity standard.”

To understand better what the comparator does, I will refer to one of Burke’s and Stets’s examples where a person’s identity standard provides a criterion which tells him/her how masculine s/he is in his “true” self. It defines the person with respect to that particular identity. The person’s perceptions of the situation will tell him/her how masculine he is in that particular situation. For example, s/he might perceive that in a particular situation he is behaving in a slightly feminine fashion. According to Burke and Stets (2009: 66) these perceptions then form an input to the identity process and are sent to the comparator.

The comparator compares the identity standard and the input, and if those two do not match, the system will produce an ‘error signal’. The error signal result in the individual changing his/her verbal and nonverbal behaviour, which, in turn, changes the meanings of behaviour in the situation. (Burke and Stets 2009: 66).

Burke and Stets emphasize the relationship between oneself and others as central to the identity process: “As in a mirror, people see themselves reflected in the reactions of others to them. These are what we call *reflected appraisals* and constitute one of the main ways we come to understand who we are in identity theory.” (Burke and Stets 2009: 25). For example if others look confused, a person may realize she is not being clear on what she is saying. If others appear to be angry, the person may realize he did something to upset them (Burke and Stets 2009; 25).

Burke and Stets (2009: 25) refer to Charles Horton Cooley’s study in 1902 where Cooley recognized that people imagine the other’s response to that reflected view of who they are, and have an emotional reaction, such as pride or mortification, to what they think other’s reactions to them are. For example (Burke, Stets 2009: 67), based on other people’s reactions, a person might think that others perceive him/her as weak and might further imagine others being disappointed at him. The person might then be very upset by this imagined assessment. This element of being emotionally disturbed by the assumed assessments plays a crucial part in the identity theory. It is

the case where others do not seem to share and confirm the self-view that oneself holds for him- or herself.

Burke and Stets (2009) give examples where reflected appraisals play an important role when shaping an identity. For example, when a person gets married and takes on the spousal identity, she or he might have a lower social status than their partner, and will then be more likely to take on the spousal identity their partner wants them to have. (Burke and Stets 2009: 195). Burke and Stets note that young children in a family context are often less powerful with respect to their parents than spouses, as children are only starting to define their identities and define themselves in terms of how their parents see them. “If their parents see them as worthless and incompetent, they will come to define themselves as worthless or incompetent. If their parents define them as valued and capable, then they will come to define themselves as valued and capable” (Burke and Stets 2009: 195).

According to Burke and Stets (2009) the effect of parents’ input is strong as there is no prior identity, that the children act to maintain, and verify by resisting alternative definitions. “But we also know that even if there are some prior self-definitions that are different than the way the parents treat them, with no power to counteract this “disturbance”, their identities will change ultimately to conform to the set of meanings portrayed by their parents” (Burke, Stets 2009: 195).

In conclusion, people see themselves in reaction of the others. Burke’s and Stets’s definition of comparator is that it compares the individual’s identity standard to how an individual *thinks* the others view his or her identity in a certain role in a social situation. It has not so much to do with how the others actually do define the person’s identity, but has to do with the individual’s perceptions, and his/her reflections on the perceptions. Burke and Stets (2009) also add, relying on Cooley’s earlier research, that people imagine the other’s response to the reflected view of themselves. As a result they may have an emotional reaction, such as pride or mortification, to what they think other’s reactions to them are. For example one might imagine, based on others reactions, that they see him/her as weak, and as a result one is convinced that others thus disappointed in him/her. (Burke and Stets 2009: 25).

2.3.1.4 Output

According to Burke and Stets (2009: 66) an *output* refers to “behaviour in a situation, which behaviour is based on the error signal from the comparator”. The output then is the person’s meaningful behaviour in a social situation where s/he is altering behaviour (words, gestures, behaviour) in an attempt to change the others persons’ *input* (perception of their response/behaviour) to match his/her current *identity standard*.

Meaningful behaviour means that behaviour occurs in situations where the person will receive perceptions of inputs essentially regarding his /her identity. Burke and Stets (2009: 66-67) state that specifically, the output alters the symbolic character of the environment. With the symbols changed, everyone in the environment, oneself included, will have changed perceptions, which perceptions feed back up into the identity in a continuing cycle. The meanings have been changed. Burke and Stets describe the identity process as being a continuous loop where one processes inputs continuously.

For a person to change a level of a certain trait in their identity – for example the level of masculinity or femininity they have to know what the meanings of various kinds of behaviours are, and to choose those behaviours that move meanings in the correct direction. This movement of correction is a crucial element, as the ultimate goal of the identity process is to match the identity standard with the input.

Burke and Stets (2009) also emphasize that the more the individual is committed to a certain role, the more strongly s/he will act in order to keep the congruence between the input and the identity standard:

commitment to an identity is the sum total of the pressure to keep perceptions of self-in-situation meanings in line with the self-meanings held in the identity standard. One is more committed to an identity when one strives harder to maintain a match between perceived self-in-situation meaning and the meaning held in the identity standard. Commitment thus moderates the link between identity and behavior making stronger (high commitment) or weaker (lower commitment). (Burke and Stets 2009: 51).

Burke’s and Stets’s definition of *output* is that it is an individual’s behaviour (words, gestures) by which s/he aims at changing (perceptions of) how other people view her/his identity. Furthermore, if the person is strongly committed to his/her role, they

will act more forcefully in order to keep the balance between the identity standard and the received inputs.

2.3.2 Identity Theory as a tool for analysing the father-daughter relationships portrayed by Cisneros

In my analysis, I will aim at applying the identity theory presented by Burke and Stets (2009). Without a structured theory, the evidence of the father daughter relationship affecting the daughter identity, in Cisneros's two novels, might remain as an unorganized collection of instances, and it would be hard to pinpoint exactly what goes on between fathers and daughters. Thus it is useful to rely on a systematic tool to have a closer look at the elements influencing the daughters' identities, and maybe better understand how the relationship between the fathers and the daughters is meaningful in those books.

Burke's model of identity process is useful for the purposes of the present study as it offers a clear diagram with its main components and it is possible to find material for each component and make conclusions based on the observations. Burke also emphasizes the psychological aspect of the identity process where the individual's own perceptions play a key role, and Cisneros offers a lot of material of the daughters' own perceptions. Burke's model in a form of a clear paradigm offers an attractive tool for analysing fiction: one can cut off pieces of text, feed them into Burke's theoretical identity control "machine", and see what comes out.

I believe that by carefully viewing central components of Burke's cybernetic model of identity, we will come to a clearer understanding of the way fathers impact their daughters' lives. In addition, we might better understand that fathers in Sandra Cisneros's fictional work indeed are important agents, and should not be overlooked when researching Cisneros.

Burke and Stets (2009) point out that parents have a deep impact on their children's identities: "Children come to define themselves in terms of how they think their parents see them." (Burke and Stets 2009: 195). Also, Burke suggests that the closest people (for example mother, father, siblings) have a greater effect on the identity than more distant people, for example colleagues and neighbours, would have. Thus, we might assume that fathers are these kind of significant others to their daughters, and have a great impact on their identity processes as a whole.

Also according to Burke and Stets it is important: “to understand meaning not in an absolute sense but in relative sense” (Burke and Stets 2009: 93), In the present study, it is also of interest to some extent understand what it means to be a daughter opposed to being a father. Also it is of interest what are the shared meanings between the daughter and the father. And one of the shared meanings seems to be being a “Mexican”. The meaning of the attribute, however, seem to differ between the fathers and daughters in Cisneros’s novels.

3. THE SET-UP OF THE STUDY

3.1 Aims and research questions and their rationale

The aim of this study is, with a help of a socio-psychological theory of identity by Peter Burke and his colleagues, to examine the impact that the father-daughter relationship has on the daughters' identities in two novels by Sandra Cisneros. Another key element is to test how well the socio-psychological theory functions as an analytical tool.

Cisneros portrays at least two different kind of Mexican-American fathers when examined in relation with their daughters. In simplified and exaggerated terms the fathers can be categorized as the "good" and the "bad". The "bad" type as being controlling, suppressing and even physically abusive, the "good" type being supportive, emotional and loving. In this study I will examine what kind of elements there are in Cisneros's representations of father-daughter –relationship that makes certain kinds of fathers seem good or bad in relation to their daughters.

I chose to concentrate on the effect the fathers have on their daughters' identities for two reasons. Firstly, this is important because identity seems to be a core element of human existence, and secondly, because fathers seem to be core actors in their daughters' lives. I chose Burke's identity theory, because he sees an identity tied to a role and emphasizes the psychological process that influence people's behaviour in a society. Thus it is interesting to investigate the impact that the particular role of the daughter has on the identity of the daughters in Cisneros's novels.

The present study attempts to add in the analysis of fathers in the contemporary American literature, where according to Armengol-Carrera (2008: 211) the fathers have been more in the minority in novels and when present they tend to have been presented as authoritarian and repressive figures.

The research questions of the present study are the following:

1. Analysed on the basis of Peter Burke's identity theory, how do the fathers affect their daughters' (the protagonists') identities in Sandra Cisneros *Caramelo* and *The House on Mango Street*?

2. What are the characteristics of the two fathers in their relation to their daughters in *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, considering that Cisneros's representations of fathers seem to differ from majority of fathers in Chicana literature.

3. How is Burke's identity theory useful when analysing fiction, and in what parts there are problems?

3.2 The analytic methods

The method of the present study is qualitative in nature. I will aim on analysing two texts closely in order to gain a better understanding of socio-psychological aspects of daughter-father relationships in Cisneros's texts. I have chosen four components of Burke's identity theory, as they are the major four components in Burke's view on identity theory: Identity standard, input, output and comparator. My analysis is divided into four chapters named after the four components. In each chapter I will present extracts out of the two novels which I consider to be relevant to the father's effect on the daughter's identity. I will then attempt to analyse how these extracts can be understood when examined with the help of the identity theory.

3.3 The materials

I have chosen material relevant to father-daughter relationship, for example dialogue between fathers and daughters and narrators' accounts on their thoughts. The reason why I chose especially Cisneros's texts, is that she seems to differ from a lot of Chicana-writers as she portrays fathers as actively present in their daughters' lives, and also being loving, caring – in two words: sympathetic representations. I collected data from *Caramelo* and *The House on Mango Street* that is directly relevant to the fathers' effect on their daughters' identities. The patterns that I see in two representations of father-daughter –relationship are to some extent consistent with Burke's identity theory, and can be further analysed based on his version of identity theory.

The novels under investigation here both present a girl coming of age, and the inner struggles crucial for the development of their identities. In addition to creating a believable fictional world with its utterly sympathetic characters both in *The House*

on *Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1984) and her novel *Caramelo* (Cisneros 2002), Cisneros also portrays a full picture of an identity process of young female protagonists: Esperanza in *The House on Mango Street* and Celaya in *Caramelo*. In these novels Cisneros describes the life of a Chicana female from a child to a grown up woman. In *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo* the protagonists are young girls, their age approximately spanning the years from 7 to 15 in both books. In *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza's age is not directly stated, but she speaks of school and activities typical of children who have just started school, and towards the end of the book she discusses things more typical to a teenager. In *Caramelo*, the protagonist Celaya, is first a child, approximately six years old, and at the end of the book she is fifteen.

The voices in the books vary from that of a little girl to that of a teenager growing up as a woman. Through all stages the protagonists are very much in the process of figuring out their own identity, and constantly mirroring it in the reflection that they receive from the close society around them, for example family and school peers.⁶

3.3.1 The House on Mango Street

The House on Mango Street (in the present study also referred to as *Mango*) is - in the terms of public recognition - the most important of Cisneros's works. The book is the most sold of her books, and it is widely recognized as a part of college and high school curricula in the United States. Thus this is the one of her books that has evidently influenced a great deal the public's notion on the characteristics of Mexican-American – and Hispanic in general - fathers.

The House on Mango Street is short prose, a collection of vignettes in which a young girl Esperanza is the narrator and tells her story about living in the Hispanic quarters in Chicago. The family is a nuclear family, mother and father married and both looking after the children. Esperanza's father is a loving man, who has both his strengths and weaknesses. He is not a central character in the novel, as Esperanza is

⁶ In my analysis I will concentrate on *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, but here I would like to mention that in her collections of poems *Loose Woman* and *My Wicked Wicked Ways* Cisneros describes more a grown up Mexican-American females, often emphasizing strong sexuality and need to rebel against male figures.

more keenly observing the peers in the neighbourhood and seeing their fathers, who are acting more in the terms of machismo than her own father.

Some girls of Latina origin (not necessarily Mexican) in the book even get beaten up by their fathers, and the fathers often violently restrict both their daughters' and wives' freedom by locking them inside their homes.

In *Mango*, Cisneros describes the early stages of becoming a writer and also recognizes a strong social consciousness, a need for telling the story of the oppressed, submissive and restrained Latina women in the neighbourhood: "They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out" (*Mango*: 110). It may be that for Cisneros to leave is a symbol for becoming independent and the act of returning is a symbol of writing, which will bring her back to her people. The ones who cannot out are the Chicana – and other Latina - girls and women who stay in their houses, in the most drastic cases abused or mistreated, not being able to live the life they dream of, not being able to be free.

When it comes to analysing the identity of the daughter, *the House on Mango Street* is essential, as it uses the symbol of a house for the protagonist Esperanza's personality and identity. This is also echoed by Kanellos (2003): "Somehow the spirit of independence and creativity grows in Esperanza and leads her to escape the barrio in search of a house of her own – her own personality and identity – presumably through literature" (Kanellos 2003 :86).

3.3.2 Caramelo

Caramelo (the title refers to a colour and to a Mexican type of rebozo, or shawl) is a novel about a Chicano family living in Chicago, and travelling back to the father's homeland Mexico for vacation. The novel can also be described as a road trip –novel in which the road trip functions as a symbol of the protagonist making a journey from a little girl into a teenager. The family history extending over a hundred years is told by a young girl Celaya who through her stories introduces her vast family with six brothers, the mother, the father, the grandparents, the aunts and the uncles. The father is portrayed in a sympathetic way, as someone who is very close to Celaya. In

the book the family travels to Mexico and back, bringing the Mexican grandmother along to live in Chicago.

In *Caramelo* Celaya functions as the narrator, and she describes her growing up from a baby to a teenager. Throughout the years the father is very much present, and is caring for her daughter both physically and mentally, for example changing her diapers when she is a baby, and supporting her in love crisis when she is a teenager.

Despite the loving relationship between the two, there are still a lot of controversies and ambiguities in the relationship. For example when Celaya expresses her desire to study at the university, the father opposes it, because according to him, Mexican girls do not leave their fathers' houses to study, but to marry. Thus, the father is not consistently supportive of all Celaya's needs, which causes anxiety in her.

With this book Cisneros wanted to honour her father, who died while Cisneros was writing it (in 1997). In the book Cisneros is telling her father's story, wanting to bring the story of a Mexican American immigrant for the public to read. (*The New York Times*, 2002). In the *NYT*-interview Cisneros has also told that the story developed over a long period of time, and is based on the trips she made with her family from Chicago to the father's native Mexico, where his mother (Cisneros's grandmother) lived.

4. THE ANALYSIS

4.1 Identity standard of the daughters

According to Burke and Stets, with respect to each individual's identity, there is a fairly stable set of meanings that characterizes who they are. (Burke and Stets 2009:63). This set of meanings is what they describe as identity standard: "Each identity contains a set of meanings, which may be viewed as defining the characters of the identity. This set of meanings is the identity standard." (Burke, Stets 2009, p. 63).

Cisneros offers a lot of material and clues for the reader to grasp what kind of identity standard the protagonist Celaya in *Caramelo* holds. In *The House on Mango Street* the clues are more indirect and subtle when regarding the daughter's identity in relation to her father, and often her identity standard is expressed metaphorically, for instance the narrator compares herself to a tree outside her house. The identity standard is also more clearly stated in her peer role in relation to her female friends. Thus I will also look at the identity standard as presented through peer relations in order to gain a fuller picture of her identity, as I believe that her identity standard does not change completely from role to role, but some core of it stays the same regardless of the role she is holding.

Here I choose to concentrate on two traits of the two protagonists' – Celaya's and Esperanza's – identity: how strongly they feel about being Mexican, and how strongly they feel being persons with intellectual prospects when it comes to producing pieces of artistic work or studying. In the chapter concerning input I will discuss how their fathers enforce or oppose these characteristics of their identity. Both of these characteristics are essential from the point of view of the father-daughter –relationship and its effect on the daughter's identity, as both fathers have a strong influence on the daughter's identity as Mexican. In addition both fathers in the novels are to some extent stereotypically Mexican males, therefore holding certain expectations for their daughters' roles in society – for example that they should leave the father's house only when they marry, not for any other purpose.

First I examine Celaya's identity in *Caramelo*, following with the analysis of Esperanza in *The House on Mango Street*.

Celaya in her peer role as a college student to hold a strong identity standard of a Mexican girl, but in the role of the daughter her “Mexicanness” gets questioned by his father. A particularly clear example of this – at least when she is in a role of a college peer – is the one where she is in her teens and her peers at school question her “grade of Mexicanness”. To this she replies: “Look I don’t know what you’re talking about when you say I don’t look Mexican. I *am* Mexican. Even though I was born on the U.S. side of the border.” (Caramelo 353).

Burke and Stets present a diagram that helps us to characterize the strength of each characteristics regarding the individual. With the help of their “identity scale”, we can measure Celaya’s grade of Mexicanness in an individual, by assigning it a value from 1 to 5, where 1 could equal to feeling “not very Mexican” and 5 “Extremely Mexican”. In *Caramelo*, Celaya could have the value 4. This can be seen an episode where she is elaborating the chores that she does in the house: “Clean the bathrooms, make beds, wash dishes, scrub pots and pans, mot the floors with pine disinfectant, clean out the refrigerator and pantry. But I don’t know how to set a table for güeros.” (Caramelo 322). Here Celaya is listing number of chores that can be thought to be included in a daughter role a dutiful Mexican girl. But she does not know how to set a table for güeros (‘güero’ means ‘blond’ or ‘white’ in Mexican Spanish). One could argue that she is still not having the full value of 5, as she seems to regard her Mexican father as being more Mexican than she herself is. For example, she sometimes looks at her father from an American point of view, noting on him having a strong Mexican accent and him presenting customs and manners typical for the original Mexican culture. One episode showing that Celaya sees her father as being a “true Mexican” and herself as not being a “full Mexican” (value 5) is when immigration officers come and search the shop that the father owns, accusing him of hiring illegal immigrants. The father is defending himself saying that he has even fought in the war in the side of the United States:

There are two officers, and what’s really sad is one of them is Mexican.

–Now you see, I no lie, Father says, waving his papers. One dated the 23rd of November, 1949, said he was honorably discharged from the Armed Forces...

The INS officers simply shrug and mumble, –Sorry. But sometimes it’s too late for I’m sorry. Father is shaking. Instead of – No problem, my friend—which is Father’s usual reply to anyone who apologizes, Father runs after them as they’re getting in their vans and spits, –You...*changos*. For you I serving this country. For what, eh? Son of a mother!

And because he cannot summon the words for what he really wants to say, he says, –Get outta here...Make me *sick*! Then he turns around and comes back in the shop, pretending he’s looking for something in the stack of fabric bolts. (*Caramelo*, 377).

Here Celaya, the native speaker of English, notes that his father is making grammatical mistakes as he is speaking:” For you I serving this country” instead of the correct form: “For you I have served this country”, and also “I no lie” instead of “I do not lie”. Thus it seems that, for her, the father bears all the characteristics of a Mexican – including speaking Spanish as his native language. This example seems to suggest that Celaya’s identity standard as a Mexican is not very strong in a role of a daughter, whereas in a role of a college peer her Mexican identity is strong. It is interesting to see how the identity standard changes from role to role, and that would be a case for further investigating. However, with the present study I will focus on the role of the daughter, but wanted to highlight the different aspects of identity and how they shift and change from role to role.

Celaya holds a very strong identity of an intellectually creative person – that of a writer, but also an academic student. Celaya’s parents move her from a catholic school to public school, which she originally was hoping for, but at the end she is disappointed as the school does not challenge her intellectually:

But Crockett’s a vocational school. That means there’s nothing here for me. I don’t want to wind up being a farmer or a beautician. I want to take classes like anthropology or drama. I want to travel someday. Be in a movie, or even better, make a movie. (*Caramelo*: 352).

The notion of her feeling strongly as someone with academic and artistic skills, is further supported when Celaya has a discussion with her father about her future.

– I just thought maybe I would want to try stuff. Like teach people how to read, or rescue animals, or study Egyptian history at the university. I don’t know. Just stuff like...like you see people doing in the movies. I want a life like...

–Girls who are not Mexican?

–Like other human beings. It’s that I’d like to try to live alone someday.

–*Sola*? How? Why? Why would a young lady want to be alone? No, *mija*, you are too naïve to know what you are asking for.

–But my friends say...

–Oh, so your friends are more important than your father?

–You love them more than me? Always, remember, Lala, the family comes first – *la familia*. Your friends don’t think of you first. Only your family is going to love you when you are in trouble, *mija*. (*Caramelo*: 361).

Here Celaya expresses her identity of an independent young woman pursuing her academic – and other – skills. Her father opposes this, and thus reinforces Celaya to stick to her daughter identity more than her peer identity. The father gives a strong message that it is only safe to follow the identity path that he has in store for her, as otherwise she will be rejected in times of trouble. In this particular passage, the father is at his most cruellest towards his daughter in the novel. Here the exact two identities are in question: that of a Mexican and that of an intellectually ambitious (student and artist).

Also in another episode Celaya is elaborating on her identity more clearly: “I’m not meant for kitchen even if I’m the only daughter”(Caramelo: 322), when she does not feel she is up to working as a household assistant in a priest’s house. Here she refers to her role as a daughter, which traditionally would include ambitions in kitchen work, but she states that as a Mexican-American daughter she still does not regard as that being a part of her daughter-role. She is thus actively opposing that meaning of an identity, that seems to be generally involved in the meaning applied to an identity of a ‘Mexican daughter’.

Esperanza in the *House on Mango Street* also seems to strongly identify herself as a Mexican, which is manifested when she thinks about her own Spanish name. She feels herself as being Mexican, but at the same time she thinks that the name does not reveal her true self, thus wanting to change her name to something else:

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters...It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing...I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do. (*Mango*: 10-11).

In my opinion her concluding that “Zeze the X will do” shows that she feels like she cannot clearly identify with either being Mexican nor American and thus is choosing the global sign for anonymity “X”.

Numerous scholars have been drawn to this particular chapter, in which Esperanza fantasizes about changing her name, mostly interpreting it as a strong symbol of her view on herself and society. For example Calderón and Saldívar call the vignette a “fresh vision of self and society” (Calderón and Saldívar 1991: 85).

Cisneros often uses a house, as a symbol for identity, thus Esperanza's descriptions of houses can be interpreted as her views on her own identity: how she is, or how she would like to be seen as. In one episode Esperanza thinks a house in Chicago is looking like a house in Mexico. Only her Chicana sister sees it in the same way, whereas the others do not see it like that at all:

Look at that house, I said, it looks like Mexico. Rachel and Lucy look at me like I'm crazy, but before they can let out a laugh, Nenny says: Yes, that's Mexico all right. That's what I was thinking exactly. (Mango: 18).

Here Esperanza intuitively recognizes her Mexican identity (in her peer role), which I interpret as her holding a strong Mexican identity. There is however, some indication that Esperanza, just like Celaya, might see her father as being more Mexican than she herself is, for example him using Spanish:

Your *abuelito* is dead, Papa says early one morning in my room. *Esta muerto*, and then as if he just heard the news himself, crumples like a coat and cries....(Mango, 56)

In the above extract it also seems that 'sadness' is one of the attributes that Esperanza uses when she is describing someone being as Mexican. There is also another instance, where the same indication of sadness as being essentially a Mexican characteristic, is seen:

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing. (Mango: 10).

Here sadness is further associated with the father listening to his Mexican records, "songs like sobbing". According to Burke and Stets (2009), these kinds of characteristics are part of the meanings that consist the identity standard (how an individual him/herself sees themselves as really being). Burke and Stets (2009) give an example of people having meanings that they apply to themselves when they are a student, worker, spouse or parent (these are the roles that they occupy), or claiming they are outgoing individuals or moral persons, which would be categorised as personal characters that one applies to oneself (Burke and Stets 2009: 3). It seems, indeed, that sadness here is a meaning that is closely associated in relation to being Mexican. Following this idea, it seems that Esperanza often describes herself being sad – for example this shows in a metaphor she uses of shoes as representing herself:

I like to tell stories. I tell them inside my head. I tell them after the mailman says, Here's your mail. Here's your mail he said.

I make a story for my life, for each step my brown shoe takes. I say, “And so she trudged up the wooden stairs, her sad brown shoes taking her to the house she never liked.

I like to tell stories. I am going to tell you a story about a girl who didn’t want to belong.
(*Mango*: 109)

Here Esperanza once again reinforces the idea of her identity standard as being ambiguous, not clearly American neither Mexican. She expresses the same ambiguity in her desire to re-baptize herself as “Zeze the X”. This particular extract is from the last vignette of *The House on Mango Street* called *Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes*. In this vignette there is no mention of the father, only the peers get to be mentioned. However, following the thread of sadness as being characteristics to a Mexican, it could be argued that Celaya feels that part of her identity standard is due to her father being Mexican. In my interpretation sadness and listening to “songs like sobbing”, refer to ability to express feelings which might be seen as more typical for Mexicans than Anglo Americans: “My brave Papa cries” (*Mango*: 56). The fact that the father cries means that he is able to show emotions – characteristics that Esperanza seems to associate with being Mexican. The fact that she refers to herself as being sad means, that this is a part of her identity that refer to (in terms of Burke and Stets) both being Mexican [membership in a particular group (Burke and Stets 2009:3)], and as an individual with certain characteristics – namely being sad. Here Esperanza recognizes that both the father and the daughter are sad [personal characteristics that identify themselves as unique persons (Burke and Stets 200):3)]. It could be argued that sadness is, in fact, a symbol of deep feeling of connection between the father and the daughter, and therefore something essential in her identity standard, something that she at least partly has inherited from her Mexican father – through his cultural background.

Esperanza also seems to have a strong identity as an artist and a writer. For Esperanza being artistic seems to mean several things, at least these characteristics included: desire to write creatively and urge to create independently. Esperanza is continuously dreaming of having more opportunities to write, and actively pointing out and remembering, if an adult will strengthen that view by encouraging her to write. Furthermore she actively seeks opportunities and places where to write her poems. For example, she visits her Aunt Lupe, where she brings books from the library, reads them aloud. Sometimes she even reads her own poems to Aunt Lupe.

In a vignette called “Four skinny Trees” Esperanza describes her identity of a writer as something strong, but yet again something that is hidden from the others. She sees the trees as representing her own identity. She points out that the trees both physically and psychologically resemble her:

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here, but are here... Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep. (*Mango*: 74)

I see the “ferocious roots” as a symbol for Esperanza’s creativity. “Violence” and “anger” represent the frustration she feels when other around her, father included, do not see her identity as she herself does. Also she recognizes the negative emotions as a source for creative energy: “...never quit their anger. This is how they keep.”

Throughout *Mango* Esperanza is reflecting on the father’s, but also other peoples’ inputs, where they express their view on what makes a person ‘bad’. It seems that being bad is essentially something for Esperanza to be afraid of and yet she is drawn to the idea of her being ‘bad’. In terms of Peter Burke’s identity theory ‘bad’ seems to be one identity that Esperanza holds, and an identity towards which she has very controversial and ambiguous ideas and feelings. The attribute ‘bad’ seems to be related in Esperanza’s various identities in her multiple roles, of which ‘daughter’ is one (others for example: friend, neighbour, student). Here I present a few examples of the complexity of the concept ‘bad’ in *The House on Mango Street*:

Born Bad:

Most likely I will go to hell and most likely I deserve to be there. My mother says I was born on an evil day and prays for me. Lucy and Rachel pray too. For ourselves and for each other... because of what we did to Aunt Lupe...

It was a game, that’s all. It was the game we played every afternoon ever since that day one of us invented it—I can’t remember who—I think it was me.

You had to pick somebody, You had to think of someone everybody knew. Someone you could imitate and everyone else would have to guess who it was. (*Mango*: 58)

My Name:

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters...

It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you’re born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their women strong. (*Mango*: 10)

In these passages the concept of bad is discussed more in Esperanza’s role as a Mexican female in her surrounding society, and more in relation to her female

relatives than the father. Yet again, in *My Name*, it is indicated that “Mexicans don’t like their women strong”, and my interpretation is that Mexicans here include, all Mexican men, father included. Thus, in terms of Burke’s identity theory, Esperanza is reflecting on inputs from various people important to her, and is concluding that something essentially part of her ‘core’ identity is regarded as ‘bad’ by other people. For example, it seems that being strong, independent and creative are essential meanings that Esperanza includes in her identity standard, but these particular characteristics are viewed as inappropriate, in other words bad, by other people. The notion of Esperanza labeling herself as bad, is also analyzed by Juan Busch (1993):

Another component in the process of self-labeling is Esperanza 's recognition of the word "bad" and how people construct her as "bad." Throughout the text people, the nuns, her friends and herself, label Esperanza "bad," evil. She subverts the word in order to resist being "bad." Esperanza reflects on her father’s opinion of "bad," "Papa said nobody went to public school unless you wanted to turn out bad." (Busch 1993: p: 130)

The choice of the word ‘bad’ is also interesting when weighed through Burke’s and Stets’s (2005) description of behaviour explained by identity theory:

Blaming the self for not being able to verify one’s identity standards are set by the self or others, usually involves a negative evaluation of the self as “bad”, and directs negative feelings inward. Blaming others for not being able to verify one’s identity standards keeps intact the evaluation of the self as “good”, and redirects negative feelings outward, onto others. (Burke and Stets 2005: 9).

It seems that Esperanza is precisely directing negative feelings inward when labeling herself as ‘bad’. Alternatively Esperanza, just as well as Celaya, could direct the negative feelings towards their fathers and blame him. This, however, is something that neither of them seems to do – they stay loyal to their fathers. From this I conclude that both protagonists are deeply committed to their role as good daughters to their fathers. They rather name themselves bad – not the fathers.

In conclusion, both Celaya and Esperanza seem to include at least three characteristics defining their identity standard: “Mexican”, “artistic” an “academic student”. As regarding the attribute ‘academic student’, Celaya seems to identify to that even more than Esperanza, as in *Caramelo* she is older than *Esperanza* in *The House on Mango Street*, and is just entering the education after the junior high school. According to the identity theory by Burke and Stets, a person’s identity

standard can include three types of meanings, and all the above mentioned characteristics represent one of the categories defined in identity theory. One set of meanings refers to a role they occupy, for example student or a daughter; another set of meanings refer to memberships in a particular groups, for example ‘Mexicano’, and the third set of meanings refer to personal characteristics that identify themselves as unique persons, for example ‘artistic’. (Burke, Stets 2009: 3).

4.2 Perceptual input from fathers

According to Burke and Stets (2009: 65) perceptions (of others’ behaviour) are the *inputs* to identities. Perceptions can be made, for example, from actual words that others say, or the gestures which they make. According to their identity theory perceptions are “meanings in the situation that are relevant to the identity”.

When analysing Cisneros’s text, we can think of Burke’s and Stets’s (2009) analogy of a person driving a car. They (Burke and Stets 2009: 65) describe the identity standard as being the road and the input (perceptions) being the disturbances perceived by the driver (character in the novel). Disturbances in this case would not be the wind, the sunbeam and such, but things that the father says and does which are perceived by the protagonist and are thus being made visible also to the reader. The (perception of) *input*, particularly, is a component of Burke’s identity process, which gives us an opportunity to gain valuable insights into *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*. It offers us a position to be able to see into a person’s head and to “see” the characters’ the perceptions of the input.

The way in which Celaya and Esperanza perceive the inputs from the father must be closely examined, as it is only Celaya and Esperanza who know how the inputs and their respective identity standard compare to each other. “You don’t like to go out with us, Papa says. Getting too old?”, is an example where the input is the actual words, but the meaning for the daughter can only be understood when receiving more information on her thoughts and forming a fuller picture of the way in which she sees herself.

Celaya's father in *Caramelo* constantly reinforces her daughter-identity as one which should be considered as the most important. For example, the father says to Celaya: "Don't tell anyone but you are my favorite" (*Caramelo* 393). When the father says that the only daughter out of seven children is the preferred one, it is likely to make her more committed to her role as a daughter out of multiple identities she bears within herself. Thus this is the kind of input that reinforces her identity standard of a daughter, which in this case could signify as 'obedient to the father's wishes and rules'. In fact, Burke and Stets state that this is the kind of behaviour that is likely to make the daughter more committed to her role as a daughter, as individuals have a hierarchy of their multiple identities, regarding on how important they see a particular identity to be. According to Burke and Stets (2009):

The higher the identity in the prominence⁷ hierarchy, the more important it is. Where an identity appears in the prominence hierarchy depends upon several factors. First is how much individuals get support for the identity they are claiming in a situation. The more those individuals generate self-support and experience support from others for an identity they are claiming, the higher that identity in the prominence hierarchy. (Burke and Stets 2009: 40).

Celaya herself also describes how her father pampered her when she was a baby and expressed his desire for the father and the daughter to have a special bond and close relationship:

Days and days, months and months. Father carried me wherever he went. I was a little fist. And then a thumb. And then I could hold my head up without letting it flop over. Father brought me crinolines, and taffeta dresses, and ribbons, and socks, and ruffled panties edged with lace, and white leather shoes soft as the ears of rabbits, and demanded I never be allowed to look raggedy. I was a cupcake. – Quirn yr quiere? Who loves you? he'd coo. When I burped up my milk, he was there to wipe my mouth with his Irish linen handkerchief and spit. When I began scratching and pulling my hair, he sewed flannel mittens for me that tied with pink ribbons at the wrist. When I sneezed, Father held me up to his face and let me sneeze on him. He also learned to change diapers, which he had never done for his sons. (*Caramelo*: 232)

Here Celaya describes physical and emotional closeness to an extent that must be foreign to a lot of men, regardless of their cultural background as diaper-changing is traditionally something that mothers mostly carry out. In that context Celaya's father changing diapers suggests that the father has made an effort to be as close to his daughter as possible, indicating that his parental instincts are stronger than one would assume a Mexican-American father to have. Then again, some sociological studies

⁷ *prominence* hierarchy, according to Burke and Stets (2009), refers to a hierarchy that entails how individuals like to see themselves – given their ideals, desires, or what is central or important to them. (Burke and Stets 2009: 40).

suggest the opposite, as according to Segura and Pierce (1993: 75): “Chicano fathers actively parent and care for their children more than Anglo fathers.”

The father’s closeness to the daughter is also indicated when the family is in the United States, and the father’s father dies in Mexico. When the father thinks about going to Mexico to attend the funeral, he says: “I can’t go without Lala, Father keeps saying. Father and me on an airplane again, just like in the stories he likes to tell me about when I was a baby.” (Caramelo 250). Here Celaya (“Lala”) herself points out that the father has persistently kept her close to him, and when the grandfather dies, the father is seeking assurance - not in his wife or Celaya’s brothers - but in his only daughter. Here father also indicates that he sees his daughter’s identity as ‘caretaker’, someone who is warm, affectionate and reliable.

In a chapter already discussed earlier, when he and the daughter discuss what is appropriate for Celaya to dream for, the father further emphasizes the daughter’s – and the father’s - identity as being that of a reliable family member:

Oh, so your friends are more important than you father? You love them more than me? Always remember, Lala, the family comes first – la familia. Your friends aren’t going to be there when you’re in trouble...Only your family is going to love you when you are in trouble, *mija*” (Caramelo 360).

Then the father gives perhaps his strongest input when measured on the basis of its effect on Celaya:

If you leave your father’s house without a husband you are worse than a dog. You aren’t my daughter...If you leave alone you leave like, and forgive me for saying this but it’s true, *como una prostituta*. Is that what you want the world to think? *Como una perra*, like a dog. *Una perdida*. How will you live without your father and brothers to protect you? One must strive to be honorable. (Caramelo: 360)

When Celaya in *Caramelo* is confronted by her father on how she should not be dreaming of moving out of her father’s house in order to pursue her dreams, she perceives the input as most offensive. Father uses strong words such as ‘dog’ and ‘prostitute’ to emphasize his strong disgust of the idea that the daughter should move away for some other reason than getting married. Celaya perceives the words as controlling and physically hurting her: “When I breathe, my heart hurts. *Prostituta. Puta. Perra. Perdida. Papà.*” (Caramelo 360). This is probably the strongest kind of

effect that words can have on a person: hurting the heart, not in a metaphorical sense, but hurting the actual heart as she breathes. Thus she perceives the input as being the strongest kind of verbal opposition from her father, which, in my opinion, is the closest to physical abuse that the father comes across in the novel.

On the opposite side of the scale, Cisneros gives examples where Celaya's father is showing his utmost love and Celaya is interpreting the input as suggesting that she is the centre of father's universe. Celaya is describing how the father takes her to Mexico when she is a baby: "When I began to accept the bottle, Father bought one airline ticket and took me home to meet his mother. And when the Awful Grandmother saw my Father with that crazy look of joy in his eye, she knew. She was no longer his queen". (*Caramelo* p. 232). This reminds me of the Grimm's fairytale of Snow White where the Queen lost her place as being the most beautiful to Snow White, and could not bear losing. Just like Snow White is innocently unaware of the change in power dynamics, so is Baby Celaya, it is only later in life when she realizes she had become the most important woman in her father's life, thus she perceives her father's actions as indicating utmost love, loyalty and sacrifice whenever her daughter is in question.

Celaya's father gives contradictory information on how he feels about how Celaya should live her life. When she hesitantly expresses her will to "rescue animals, study Egyptian history" which involves moving out of the childhood home, he does not pick up on the studying, but feels insecure about her daughter wanting to live on her own: "If you leave your father's house without a husband you are worse than a dog." (*Caramelo*, 360). On another instance he gives input that gives another kind of signal: studying is something to strive for:

Father says as long as they're in school, it doesn't matter if the older boys stay in Chicago. – So they won't have to work like me. And then he adds for the benefit of us younger kids, –Study and use your head, not your hands. He holds out his palms to scare the hell out of us. Hand as hard as shoe leather, layered and yellow like a Bible abandoned in the field. (*Caramelo*: 300).

Here, however, he is primarily talking about his sons, for whom it is essential to stay in school. One could, however, interpret that he also accepts his daughter's identity as someone with intellectual skills, as someone with an identity of a potential

student. Celaya, nevertheless, seems to interpret these kinds of inputs as primarily concerning her brothers:

Father says the army will do Toto good, make a man out of him and all that shit. But what's available to make a woman a woman? (Caramelo, 361).

Here Celaya is wondering why there is not a concrete path (other than marrying) for her also to take in order to fulfil her father's ideas of being a good daughter. It seems that the father holds different role expectations for his sons compared to the role of the daughter: boys are the ones who study, the ones who go to army. With this kind of input the father indicates that he does not regard Celaya's identity as including "joining" school or army. Celaya is at loss how to make this input and her identity standard to match:

If I could, I'd join up with something, too. Except I don't know who would have me. (Caramelo, 361).

She herself sees her identity as of someone who would join a larger group in order to achieve a goal. Her father, on the other hand, sees the daughter as someone who should not join a larger group, but stick to the path of forming a small and close group: family of her own.

In *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza's father's inputs are less frequent, but there too are cases when the father's input can be seen in relation to the daughter's identity as a student with academic and intellectual skills. For example When Esperanza is reminiscing her first job, she is explaining why she had to earn money:

It wasn't as if I didn't want to work. I did. I had even gone to the social security office the month before to get my social security number. I needed money. The Catholic school cost a lot, and Papa said nobody went to public school unless you wanted to turn out bad. (*Mango*: 53)

Here the father gives input in a form of saying out loud that he expects his daughter to enter the Catholic school, not the public school. He reinforces the idea where a good daughter follows catholicism which is the main religion in Mexico. Viewed through Burke's identity theory, one can see that this particular passage does indicate that the theory also applies to the characters in the novel, as Esperanza is taking strong actions based on what the father has said to her. I will elaborate more in the

chapters dealing with *comparator* and *output*, and explain how each component can be found in this particular passage.

In *The House on Mango Street* there are also cases when the daughter's and father's closeness is indicated. One example is the scene where Esperanza's grandfather has died, and father comes to Esperanza's room to tell about the grandfather's death:

Your abuelito is dead, Papa says early one morning in my room. *Està muerto*, and then as if he just heard the news himself, crumples like a coat and cries, my brave Papa cries...And I think if my own Papa died what would I do. I hold my Papa in my arms. I hold and hold and hold him. (*Mango*: 56-57)

Here the input is more in the gestures than actual words. The fact that the father enters the daughter's room, indicates that he is willing to come close as he engaging her private space, and furthermore sharing one of his most private actions: crying. Regarding this particular vignette, I think it is important to note that Cisneros uses the house as a metaphor for 'self'. Inside the house as a self, the most private part is one's own room. Thus I interpret that the father entering Esperanza's room refers to the mental connection they have: they understand each other, so they can enter each other's rooms (room as a symbol for the most private part of mental self) without restrictions.

Also it is important to realize that throughout the novel Esperanza describes a world full of women locked up in their houses by the men who are outside and free to do as they please. Thus, to represent a father who is not only indoors with the daughter, but also in her room expressing his feelings (not abusing her or controlling her) indicates that they are close and have loving relationship – an element that seems to prove that indeed the father is one of the most important figures in Esperanza's life, in a positive way. As her father is asking her to comfort him, in a way he is asking for the roles of a parent and a child to reverse. Esperanza feels helpless in front of this new request: "I have never seen my Papa cry and I don't know what to do." (*Mango* 56). She feels confused about the way her Papa is seeing her in the new situation.

Father's input in *The House on Mango Street* is more implicit, and it takes further examining in order to find "evidence" of him being somehow different from the

abusive fathers in the neighbourhood. Thus, I will take an example of another person's input important to Esperanza's identity. It shows two things: how Esperanza describes a person whose input seems to match her identity standard, and secondly it shows, how it is possible to interpret the father's input, even when he is not present in the text. In the following example Esperanza recalls her visits to Aunt Lupe's house:

She listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own. I came very close. I whispered it into the pillow:

I want to be
like the waves on the sea,
like the clouds in the wind,
but I'm me.
One day I'll jump
out of my skin
I'll shake the sky.
like a hundred violins.

That's nice. That's very good, she said in her tired voice. You just remember to keep writing, Esperanza. (*Mango*: 61).

Aunt Lupe is one of the few adults in the book that directly express their support to Esperanza's desire to write creatively. Her father does not appear to be directly supporting these characteristics of his daughter, because he is not described as Aunt Lupe is in the extract above. However, he is not actively opposing the daughter's love for books and writing, but instead allows Esperanza to visit Aunt Lupe, where she can indulge in the world of books and writing. This is an input from the father: he sees Esperanza as someone who loves to read and he agrees with that. Thus the input from the father and Esperanza's identity standard match.

Following this, I must disagree with Collins (2010) who sees Esperanza's father as "teaching" the daughter to be successful:

Some, such as Esperanza's father in *The House on Mango Street*...attempt to equal the gendered playing field by teaching their daughters to be successful and independent. (Collins 2010: 47).

In other words, it is not so much the father actively teaching the daughter, but more as not violently objecting her desires to write for example.

In conclusion, there is more input from the father in *Caramelo* as in *The House on Mango Street* input is more implicit, and requires more reading in between lines,

putting emphasis on single words which indicate input. In *Caramelo*, the father gives out different kinds of input, where he is first of all strongly enforcing the good daughter's role on Celaya. In addition he indicates that the daughter is of utmost importance to him, and thus even her existence is enough for the father to give positive input, for example letting her sneeze onto his face when she was a baby. On the other hand, regarding Celaya's identity standard as a student or as an artist, the father clearly gives input that does not correspond to Celaya's identity standard. Celaya sees herself as a student or an artist and the father does not, giving input where he, for example, indicates that 'real' Mexican girls do not pursue things that include being independent and moving out of father's house. Then again his input is not consistent as in other occasions he might emphasize how important it is to study. In *The House on Mango Street*, the father's inputs indicate at least two things: firstly it enforces the close relationship between the father and the daughter (thus the daughter-role and its identity is strengthened in Esperanza), and secondly it gives input that seem to conflict Esperanza's identity standard of a 'good daughter', for example by saying that those who go to public school will turn out 'bad', which would mean that if Esperanza chose that path, she would no longer be seen as the good daughter. According to Burke's identity theory, it is the relevant inputs for a certain identity that are perceived – in this case the daughters' perceptions of how their fathers see the daughters. This input is then sent to the next component in Burke's identity model: comparator.

4.3 Comparator

Burke and Stets (2009: 66) describe the comparator as being a component that: "...does nothing more than compare the input perceptions of meanings relevant to the identity with the memory meanings of the identity standard." The *comparator* is a component of the identity system, which compares the individual's identity standard (how they view themselves) to the input (perceptions of the environment). If the identity standard and the input do not match, the comparator produces an "error signal" which is the difference between the input and the standard. (Burke, Stets 2009: 66).

For example, when Celaya tells her father what she would like to pursue in life (to study, for example, the father with his question states his opinion according to which

“real” Mexican girls would not do something like that, because they do not move out of their father’s house just on their own, they would get married first: “I want a life like... - Girls who are not Mexicans?” (*Caramelo*; 360). This, in turn, seems to mean that the father sees Celaya’s identity as less Mexican if she even considers pursuing academic studies. However, I gather that Celaya has a strong identity of a Mexican, as earlier on, with her peers, she was strongly pointing out that she sees herself as a Mexican, despite the fact she was born in the U.S. Thus the result, according to my interpretation of Burke and Stets (2009), would be that her own strong identity of Mexican would equal to “4”, and possibly her perception of her father’s input would equal to “1” (father considering her Mexican identity as being weak). When these two (identity standard and input) are compared, the “error result” would be “3”. Celaya, according to identity theory, would then be most likely to take actions in order to reduce the error signal, for example behaving more Mexican in the situations where the father is involved (mechanisms explained by Burke and Stets 2009: 66).

The episode, in which Celaya discusses studying with her father, also shows the difference in the way Celaya and her father view her intellectual/artistic identity. It seems like the comparator would produce an error signal when Celaya’s identity as an academic student (which includes attributes like ‘independence’):

It’s just that I want to be on my own some day. – But that’s not for the girls like you. Good girls don’t leave their father’s house until they marry, and not before. Why would you ever want to live by yourself? Or is it...you want to *do* something you can’t do here?” (*Caramelo*: 359).

The father does not even seem to recognize Celaya as having potential or desire to pursue her academic skills. This thought strikes him in the middle of the sentence and takes him by surprise. In later chapters I will discuss how this episode also gives the reader a lot of material to look it through the identity theory as a whole, as we can see all the major components of Burke’s identity theory being presented: input from the father, identity standard of Celaya, perceptions of the input, comparator and an error result when the identity standard and the input is compared.

In *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza’s father is not much physically present in the vignettes, thus it is hard to draw direct conclusions on how the comparator – component would function in regards with the input from the father and her

perceptions of it. As a reader, however, I can still conclude that by leaving her own father aside and concentrating more on the fathers of the other girls, Esperanza gives clues to what kind of a man his own father is not. By describing other girls' fathers as being abusive, manipulative and controlling, one can read this as hinting that all the other fathers are worse than Esperanza's father who at least is not physically abusing her or prohibiting her from leaving the house to play outside. In comparison this is something that other fathers on the street would not allow their daughters to do. Esperanza is even allowed to enter her aunt's house just to read fiction. All this would indicate that the father is at least not actively opposing or trying to suppress the daughter's identity as a writer, for example. Thus the father not being violent or abusive can be seen as an input, where he is indicating that he accepts Esperanza and her actions. Thus he supports Esperanza's identity standard as a somewhat free to do things, for example to go out and play with the others and read books.

Burke and Stets (2009) emphasize the relationship between oneself and others as central to the identity process. "As in a mirror, people see themselves reflected in the reactions of others to them. These are what we call *reflected appraisals* and constitute one of the main ways we come to understand who we are in identity theory." (Burke, Stets 2009: 25).

When examining father-daughter relationship in the light of identity theory, it is crucial how the daughters interpret the input (reaction of others) from the fathers.

Cisneros gives the reader an exclusive access to Celaya's and Esperanza's thoughts so that we can draw conclusions on how they interpret the input they have been given by the fathers.

We interpret the signals in social situations and draw conclusions based on them. For example, Celaya says "My father adores me", where from perceiving her father's inputs she has compared her identity standard to the input and maybe in this case the "error" is on the positive side as the father sees her qualities as "adorable" transferred in numbers as 5 whereas Celaya herself seems to regard herself as only 2 as in terms of "adorable", as she often says that she is ugly, too tall and not viewing herself as attractive:

When it comes down to it, I guess I inherited the worst of both families. I got Father's face with its Moorish profile, a nose too big for my face, or a face too small for my nose, I'm not sure which. But I'm all Reyna from the neck down. A body like a *tamal*, straight up and down. To top it off, I'm way taller than anyone in my class, even the boys. The last thing I need is the Grandmother pointing out my charms. No wonder I'm always depressed. (*Caramelo*: 258)

When Esperanza's father asks her why she does not want to go on Sunday walks to gardens with her family anymore "You getting too old?", Esperanza perceives her father as misinterpreting her, not being able to understand her daughter: "I don't tell them I'm ashamed – all of us staring out the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can't have." (Mango 1984: 86). Then again maybe the father does understand, but Esperanza fails to recognize this. "Getting too old" indicates that the father recognizes her daughter growing up and her ideas of the family and the world changing, where she would not value the family members as important as she did when a child, but seeks to enlarge her circles, wishing to venture to places of her own choice, not the ones her father picked for her.

In conclusion, in terms of identity theory, Esperanza seems to have a habit of turning the 'error signal' between the input (other's reactions) and the identity standard (how she sees herself) against herself. Thus in reflected appraisals she *thinks* that others see her as bad, if she does not seem to fulfill the role and the identity expected from the father. In *Caramelo* Celaya often reflects on her father's input and concludes that the father adores her. Thus her reflected appraisal in those instances is, that she thinks that the father sees her as a fully loveable person. "Because of Father, I'm used to being adored". (*Caramelo* 372). Thus the father gives input that indicates, that Celaya as a whole is to be adored and loved. I suggest, therefore, that Celaya's reflected appraisal of the father constantly praising her, would be, that the father ultimately would love Celaya, even if their idea of Celaya's identity standard do not match, and this gives Celaya the utmost comfort to ultimately stick to what she thinks is right for her. When examined through Burke's identity theory, both Esperanza's and Celaya's comparator produce "error signals" when the comparator is comparing the daughters' identity standards to the input perceived from their fathers. The whole purpose of the identity system that Burke and Stets describe, is to make the input and the identity standard to match. Comparator is the component that does the analysing, and if the input and the identity standard do not match,

comparator produces an “error signal”, which will most likely change an individual’s behaviour. This behaviour attempting to change the input, in terms of Burke and Stets, is called ‘output’.

4.4 Output/social behaviour

When an ‘error signal’ is produced by comparator, an individual is most likely to change their behaviour in order to make their perceptions of input and their internal identity standard to match. Output (to the environment), according to Burke and Stets (2009), is a component of an identity system that is behaviour “in the situation, which behaviour is based on the error signal from the comparator” (Burke, Stets 2009: 66). So when a person compares their *identity standard* with the perceived *input* (from the others), they might perceive as those two being clearly different. This difference Burke and Stets refer to as “error signal”, and according to Burke and Stets, an individual will try to reduce the error signal by altering the output/behaviour.

In cases that Cisneros often presents, the daughter has a strong identity (5) of a creative person (academically and artistically), but the input she receives from the father might suggest that the father regards her identity as a creative person only as low (1). Then, as a result, the daughter might act forcefully in order to change the father’s input to match her own identity standard where she sees herself as intellectually creative.

Words are action, as far as Celaya and Esperanza are concerned. Thus for the purpose of this study, words that indicate behavioural patterns are considered as output in the context of identity theory. In other words, it is not always direct actions that Celaya and Esperanza take, for example Celaya actually moving out of her father’s house, but it is her discussing her desires to act – or pondering them in her own head - which later on might turn into actions in a social situation.

In the passage where Esperanza is reminiscing about her first job, the father expresses his view that going to public school makes a person bad. Thus, in terms of Burke’s identity theory, the comparator (as discussed in detail in the previous chapter) might produce a strong error signal of “4” as Esperanza feels that she is not

being the good daughter she thinks she is, if she enters public school. Thus she produces outcome that enforces her identity as a good daughter. That includes going to work in order to get money to go to Catholic School, all in order to make the father approve of her choices. The fact that it is namely the Catholic School, not any other private school, most likely activates Esperanza's identity as 'Mexican' or 'Chicana', combined with the 'daughter', as according to the father good girls go to Catholic schools, and presumably that means that especially good *Mexican* girls only go to Catholic schools, as catholicism is the major religion for Mexican-Americans. Thus this particular output would activate Esperanza's identity as a Mexican daughter. All this leads to a strong form of output: behaviour in a social situation. Esperanza, regardless of her young age, has accomplished several demanding tasks: obtained a social security number and gotten herself a job. All this, in terms of identity theory, counts as output. What makes it all very sad for the reader, is that at the end Esperanza is sexually harassed by her colleague. And she did all this just to please her father. Esperanza describes the event, where her senior colleague is first being friendly, making her feeling safer at the new environment:

He had nice eyes and I didn't feel so nervous any more. Then he asked if I knew what day it was, and when I said I didn't, he said it was his birthday and would I please give him a birthday kiss. I thought I would because he was so old and just as I was about to put my lips on his cheek, he grabs my face with both hands and kisses me hard on the mouth and doesn't let go. (Mango: 55)

Celaya, in her part, recognizes the power of words when she is exaggerating her family's status to her peers in college:

I tell them a story. I come from a long line of a royalty. On both sides. The Reyes have blue blood going back to Nefertiti, the Andalusian gypsies, the dancing-for-their-dowry tribes in the deserts of North Africa...

- You are just like your father, Mother says. – A born liar.
- ...
- How can I explain? Talk is all I've got going for me. (*Caramelo*: 353)

In the same episode with her peers questioning Celaya's identity, she recognizes the difficulty of trying to change the way her peers see her just by talking:

I don't say a damn thing, but that's enough for those girls to hate my guts.

Pisses me off. What can you say when you know who you are?" (*Caramelo*: 354).

Celaya has similar troubles expressing herself to her father, but the output does not come out as aggressive as it does with her peers. It seems that revealing her true identity in a social situation is difficult for her, and as a result, she sometimes withdraws to silence instead of speaking out. Her social output in the situation is silence, but in her mind she speaks out.

- Cut it.
 - All of it.
 - All, the Grandmother says. – It will grow back thicker, you’ll see.
- Father nods and the beautician obeys. Father always does whatever the Grandmother orders, and in two surprised snips I am turned into a *pelona*.
- Snip. Snip.*
- The twin braids I’ve had since as far back as I can remember, the ones so long I can sit on them, now lie like dead snakes on the floor. Father wraps them in his handkerchief and tucks them in his pocket.
- *Snip. Snip. Snip.* The scissors whisper mean things in my ears.
 - In the mirror an ugly wolf-girl is howling. (*Caramelo*: 22).

Here hair can be seen as a symbol of Celaya’s feminine identity. She has long braids that seem to be crucial to her feminine identity which she has had as long as she can remember. The act of cutting hair gains an even deeper meaning as a violent act towards a female when reviewed on the light of Shannon Wilson’s analysis on Cisneros’s story “Little Miracles, Kept Promises”. Wilson (Wilson 2010) cites a cultural historian Peter Tompkins according to whom: “The soul was believed to partially reside in the hair, and the hair of woman was considered particularly powerful”. The act of women annually cutting their hair in devotion to the goddess is found throughout religions and mythologies. (according to Peter Tompkins, as cited in Wilson 2010: 39).

Cisneros, in her part, portrays the loss of power as seen through the eyes of a young girl who feels powerless when the father gives an order to cut her hair. In a symbolic sense the father together with the grandmother have violently taken off the soul of Celaya in the form of her hair. This particular passage gains more weight when Celaya compares the cut off braids to snakes – the symbols of evil in Catholicism which is the major religion of Mexican-Americans. It is important to know, however, that at the end of the book before his death, Celaya’s father hands him a present: A box with Celaya’s cut hair neatly tied up. He shows he has still valued the hair as

ultimately belonging to the daughter. My interpretation is, that this in terms of Burke's identity theory, can be seen as input from the father, where he recognises his daughter's identity standard as involving "feminine with long hair", respects her "core self" being something essentially hers, and thus returns the hair.

Another symbolic theft of an inner position is seen just a few pages before the hair cutting episode, when the family is travelling to Mexico and stops on the way. During the stop the father gives one of Celaya's dolls to a poor girl who happens to walk by:

Before I can say anything, my baby is in the arms of that girl! How can I explain, this one is my Bobby doll, two fingers missing on his left hand because I chewed them off when I was teething. There isn't another Bobby doll like it in the world! But I can't say this fast enough when Father hands the girl my Bobby. (*Caramelo*: 20).

On both instances Celaya is speechless while her father is violating her. Thus Cisneros is reflecting a picture of a submissive Chicana girl who obeys the authorities, in these cases the father and grandmother. In a social situation she acts obediently, but in her mind she keeps rebelling against the father, recognizing that her identity standard does not match with the input. My interpretation is that maybe she sees herself more feminine than the father does, and part of femininity for her is to have long hair, whereas father gives an input of cutting hair where she will interpret that father does not see herself as feminine as she herself does. If not femininity, at least beauty is involved in the meaning of hair for her, as she sees herself as "an ugly wolf-girl" after her hair has been cut.

Esperanza in *The House on Mango Street* is younger than Celaya at the end of *Caramelo*, and Esperanza is even more than Celaya manifesting her actions through her words. Actually, Esperanza is very strongly rebelling against the position that seems to be assumed for her by the surrounding society. Her identity standard seems to be different from the people in the environment. Assumably her father is included in the "people of the environment", as the two seem to have a close relationship. Other people that Esperanza mention are her brothers, mother, peers, teachers/nuns in the catholic school, neighbours, passers-by (for example bum on the street).

Through the metaphor of a house as a self, Cisneros strongly brings in Esperanza's anger and the need for autonomy in vignette *A House of My Own*:

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick after.

Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clear as paper before the poem. (*Mango*: 109).

Here Esperanza is producing an output that underlines at least two things regarding identity: autonomy and creativity as traits included in identity standard. According to Burke such attributes count as identity, as personal characteristics identify individuals as unique persons (Burke, Stets 2009: 3). Clearly her identity standard does not match the environment's and especially the father's, as she mentions that she does not want "a man's house" and furthermore "not a daddy's". My interpretation is that Esperanza feels that men in general do not view herself as she does, and 'daddy' is the most special of the all men, and thus he needs to be mentioned separately. The identity standard and the input from the father (and men), do not match and thus the output – in the forms of words – is to act more forcefully by moving out to a house of her own (claim for autonomy) and more specifically to a space "clear as a paper before the poem" which can be seen as a claim for right to create aka write poems.

Esperanza is full of controversial and strong emotions. She does not only want to move away from men, but she wants to declare war, and at the same time desires to be both like a beautiful and strong woman, yet like a man - independent:

In the movies there is always one with red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives the men crazy and laughs at them all away. Her power is her own. She will not give it away.

I have begun my own quiet war. I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate. (*Mango*: 89).

Via her output (leaving the table like a man) Esperanza seems to manifest her identity as a male, where one can read such attributes as "free, autonomous, self-willed" to be included what it means to be a man. Thus the traditional role of a Mexicana – the submissive – is rejected by Esperanza through her fantasized actions. Once again father being included in the concept of 'men', one could read that father is holding the more traditional view on Esperanza's identity (female's obligation to resignate to patriarchal power), which she strongly rebels against.

Esperanza also recognizes that others do not see her identity as a writer, where her true identity seems to be hidden from the surface, forcing her to suppress her creativity, her true identity:

Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor. (*Mango*: 9)

In conclusion, the two daughters respond strongly to their fathers' inputs – they change their behaviour in order to make the input and the identity standard match. In this respect it seems that Burke's identity model does apply to fictional characters created by Cisneros. However, the daughters' output is not always visible behaviour in a social situation, but action is directed into their inner thoughts, where they question the father's input, or even rebel against it. For example Esperanza saying that she is a "balloon tied to an anchor" can be seen as a metaphor for a person who sees that they cannot publicly act according to their identity standard. Also a tree with "ferocious" roots can be seen as a metaphor for a person who keeps their identity hidden. Thus Esperanza's and Celaya's practise of keeping it all inside them can be seen as a form an output.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the present study I have aimed to have a deeper understanding of the way that fathers influence their daughters' identities in Cisneros's two novels *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, both of which seem to convey a more positive representation of fathers than is the standard in Chicana-literature. This notion has also been made by numerous scholars studying both Cisneros and Chicana-literature in general. However, it seems that the role of fathers have not been specifically addressed in the previous studies, even though the subject has been often touched on in the studies of Cisneros, especially the past ten years or so; and this is precisely to what I aim at contributing with the present study.

Academic Chicana studies in general started to strengthen from the 1970s onwards with the rise of Chicana writers entering the public sphere. It seems that especially in the 1980s and 1990s the notion of identity was more studied from the ethnic- and gender-related point of view. In addition it became a trend to study the so called hybrid identity. This has also been looked at in numerous studies on Cisneros. One of the trendsetters in analysing Chicana literature has been a Mexican-American scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. She published her famous *Borderlands (the New Mestiza)* in 1987, and that very book has since been cited in pretty much all the scholarly work written on Cisneros. In *Borderlands* Anzaldúa presents her own theory of what it means to be a Chicana in the United States, where central is the concept of Mexican American females identity influenced by several cultures, nations and races. Also distinctive to Anzaldúa's writing is the strong emphasis on feminism and the vast use of her personal experiences in order to support her theory.

However, some recent studies – including the present thesis – while acknowledging the huge importance of Anzaldúa's work, have made attempts to find new ways at looking at Cisneros's texts. I am not suggesting that these “new ways” are groundbreaking in the field of studying literature in general, but they aim at offering fresh insights to studying Chicana literature, and in this particular case: new ways of studying Cisneros. Here I venture to argue that the focus of the present study is somewhat different from the most studies on Chicana literature and Cisneros in the

1980s and 1990s, when the Chicana studies seem to have begun to take off in the United States. Before the turn of the millennium it seems that identity in Chicana literature has mostly been studied concentrating on four elements: gender, culture, surrounding society and race. In contrast, the emphasis in the present study is socio-psychological, in that it pays attention to identity as shaped both sociologically and psychologically – by fathers. This is why I have chosen a socio-psychological theory developed by an American sociologist Peter Burke. His identity theory differs from the vast field of contemporary field of identity theories in bringing in not only what it means to be in a certain role in a society, but also including the “emotional reactions that people have in response to identity confirmation and disconfirmation”. (Burke and Stets 2005: 2). As for me, originally, Cisneros’s writings have been means to get in touch with my own emotions, it is crucial to have a theoretical tool that does not reject emotions as something not definable by theories.

I have specifically chosen to concentrate on the identity of two characters in Cisneros’s novels for various reasons. First of all, the two characters, both protagonists, seem to have a more positive relationship with their fathers than is generally portrayed in Chicana-literature – including Cisneros’s other novels and collections of poems where fathers are portrayed in more negative way. Secondly, both characters are young females and I believe that, in general in life and in scholarly studies, it is important to have a deeper understanding of elements that are included in the identity development of young girls. Thirdly, I have chosen these two characters as I personally have grown to deeply care about them.

The approach of the study is qualitative, where the focus is on analysing the two characters’ identities (in respect to their fathers’ influence) to my best ability, not including as many representations of female identities as can be found in Cisneros’s works. That, however, would be an intriguing topic for another study. It would be interesting to analyse different female identities as portrayed by Cisneros, and the ways in which identities are affected by the influence of the fathers. It would be enlightening, as for example in *The House on Mango Street* alone, there are representations of several fathers who fall precisely into the stereotype of a typical Chicano father, where he is either absent or abusively present.

I had three clear research questions that I aimed at answering with the present thesis, and I will repeat them here and then proceed to discuss the possible answers offered by the study:

1. What can we conclude on the fathers' meanings to their daughters' identities presented by Cisneros when examined through identity theory?
2. What are the characteristics of the two fathers in their relation to their daughters in *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, considering that Cisneros's representations of fathers seem to differ from majority of fathers in Chicana literature. (The stereotype being that the fathers are either not present, or are present, but suppressive, controlling and abusive).
3. How is Burke's identity theory useful when analysing fiction, and in what parts there are problems?

In Cisneros's two novels the fathers of the protagonists have a significant impact on their daughters' identities. Analysed through Burke's identity theory it seems that both Celaya and Esperanza seem to include at least three characteristics defining their identity standard: "Mexican", "artistic" and "academic student". Regarding the input from the fathers, there is more explicit input from the father in *Caramelo* whereas in *The House on Mango Street* the input is more implicit, and offers thus special challenges in the attempt to analyse it with the help of Burke's identity theory. One salient characteristic regarding the father-daughter relationship in *Caramelo*, is that the father is constantly emphasizing the importance of the daughter-role to Celaya, and Celaya has accepted the role as one of the most important in her hierarchy of roles. Thus the daughter-identity is regarded as highly important resulting in strong commitment, and causing stronger reactions if the daughter's identity standard and the father's input are not congruent. Burke and Stets (2009) throughout elaborating the identity theory, emphasize that the whole point of the identity mechanism is to balance the identity standard with the input. In other words, if Celaya feels that her father does not define her identity in the same way as she herself does, she will try to change her behaviour in order to make the father change his input (feedback relevant to her identity in a social situation). So the high

commitment to the daughter role is important when considering the impacts that the father has on his daughter's identity.

In turn, Esperanza in *The House on Mango Street* also seems to be highly committed to her role as a daughter, but the evidence given out by Cisneros on that matter is more subtle. For Esperanza it seems that the father's importance as the one influencing the identity is overridden by her peers. In fact, I would say that one notable difference between the two novels is exactly that: in *The House on Mango Street* it is the peers that affect the protagonist's identity more than the father, and in *Caramelo* it is the father that affects the daughter's identity if not more, at least the same amount as the peers. Therefore there seems to be a difference in the grade of commitment to the daughter-role which affects the whole identity loop, so that Celaya is likely to make most effort in order to "please" her father, and Esperanza is likely to make most effort in order to please her friends. This aspect, however, should be studied more, as in the present study I have not primarily aimed to compare the two identities (identity in a role of a daughter as compared to that of a peer), but concentrate on the aspect of the father affecting the identity. However, Burke's identity theory would also offer tools for comparing multiple identities and how they interact, as him and Stets (2009) have provided a thorough elaboration on the effect of multiple identities on an individual. That could be a topic for future research: "Multiple female identities in Cisneros's texts , socio-psychological analysis". Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare Cisneros's representations of Chicana identities to other Chicana writers' representations of Chicana identities.

As *Caramelo* is concentrating more on the father-daughter relationship, the novel gives the reader a fuller account of various sides of the relationship: also the negative traits of the father are presented. In *The House on Mango Street* father is not portrayed in a negative light, only that he is more absent than the father in *Caramelo*:

My Papa, his thick hands and thick shoes, who wakes up tired in the dark, who combs his hair with water, drinks his coffee, and is gone before we wake, today is sitting on my bed (*Mango*: 57)

In this extract we can see that father is usually absent, and only in this rare occasion is physically close to Esperanza. In general, Esperanza's father's inputs indicate at

least two things: to some extent enforcing the close relationship between the father and the daughter, and also giving input that seems to conflict Esperanza's identity standard of a 'good daughter', for example by saying that those who go to public school will turn out 'bad'. In fact, the word 'bad' is widely used by Cisneros in *The House on Mango Street*, just as is the word 'sad', and I think there would be a topic for another research regarding identity in the novel: "The meanings of 'bad' and 'sad' for the protagonist's identity in *The House on Mango Street*". In the process of conducting the present study, I came to realize that the word 'sad' is related to the identity as a 'Mexican'. This realization, particularly, came about with the help of Burke's identity theory, as he and Stets (2009) defined that identity can be constituted of three different types of characteristics (ICT standing for *identity control theory*):

Within ICT, an identity is the set of meanings that define in terms of a group or classification (such as being American or female), in terms of a role (for example, a stockbroker or a truck driver), or in terms of personal attributes (as being friendly or honest) [Burke and Stets 2005: 2]

When thinking about the classifications I realized that in the poetic style of *The House on Mango Street*, the reader is allowed (and also should do so) to interpret single words, and behind these single words, the new worlds open up. These worlds, for me, opened up with the help of identity theory, thus I can conclude that the theory proved to be insightful in interpreting fiction.

Next I will discuss in more detail the research question number 2: characteristics of the two fathers in their relation to their daughters, considering that the fathers seem to differ from the majority of representations of fathers in Chicana literature. First of all, the characteristics of Celaya's father (in *Caramelo*) especially is that he is strongly enforcing the daughter-role on Celaya, which in turn makes Celaya highly committed to her role as a daughter. Secondly, the father is continuously giving input where he indicates that he adores and loves his daughter. However, he is not always supportive of his daughter's identity, especially when it comes to identities that contradict the father's definition of a "Mexican daughter". These contradictory identities include that of an academic student and that of an artist. The implication seems to be that those roles would require Celaya to do something that would completely eliminate an essential meaning of a "good daughter" defined by the

father; that meaning being “daughter lives with her father until she gets married.” This is one characteristic of Celaya’s father that seems to be in harmony with the stereotypical representation and also a view presented of Mexican-American fathers in various sociological studies and writings about Mexican-American families. Thus the picture of Celaya’s father is complex. I cannot say that the father is “all good”, but neither is he “all bad” either. Thus Cisneros’s representations of fathers is highly complex and one cannot say that certain fathers are all positive, even though in the studies on Chicana literature, it has been often claimed, that especially Esperanza’s father in *The House on Mango Street*, is a more positive force than are fathers in Chicana literature in general.

It is precisely the complexity of father representations why I consider Cisneros’s representations of fathers as being believable. Furthermore, as since I originally got to “know” the Mexican-American fathers through Cisneros’s texts, I have never quite believed the often portrayed stereotype of Mexican-American fathers, as being oppressive and abusive to be the whole picture. I believe that in my case, as a reader, Cisneros’s texts have laid a profound basis for my understanding of the theme, and thus I tend to believe that Mexican-American fathers – like any other human fathers – mostly aim to be the best fathers for their children, but for various reasons this aim does not always materialize in everyday life. This brings me back to Keith Oatley (1999), who argued: “Yet, when a real meeting occurs of a reader with an author or character (via a book), it can be as profound, perhaps even more profound, than a change of scientific belief” (Oatley 1999: 440). Following from this it seems that this is yet another topic to study further: “How the stereotypes of the Mexican-American fathers presented in literature correspond to the actual Mexican-American fathers in American society.” Here my presumption is that Chicana writers tend to overlook the positive sides of the fathers and concentrate on the negative sides. If this is true, then it would lead to another question: why the Chicana writers have chosen to portray the fathers mostly as negative forces if that does not seem to correspond to the actual Mexican-American fathers in society. This would again lead to an interesting discussion what is the relationship between fiction and society. Furthermore it would be intriguing to further investigate the motivations of Chicana writers, for example how they may have made the fathers as metaphors of power-relations in society in general. Maybe one should try to understand the representation

of fathers more as symbols for something else but merely ‘biological fatherhood’, for example patriarchal oppression in Mexican-American society in general. Personally, however, I have great difficulties in doing just that, as I get emotionally involved with the characters and they become “real” for me, thus I tend to treat them more as real people instead of seeing them as representations for something else. But precisely for that reason, analysing the symbolic meanings of the representations of fathers would be an eye-opening project to carry out.

All in all I found Burke’s identity theory as offering useful tools (in the form of concepts, ideas and straight forward formulas of identity process) for insights in analysing the impact the fathers have on their daughters’ identities in the two novels. With the theory I could discuss and analyse the aspects of the identity processes, such as identity standard, input, comparator, output and reflected appraisals. These concepts, for example, have in a way worked as a pair of tweezers in analysing the texts. With the help of these concepts and Burke’s and Stet’s thorough elaboration of the theory, I have been able to pick up small bits (words) out a big chunk (novel) in order to make more accurate observations. I believe that without the theory those observations would not have been as organised and academically justified.

However, there have also been problems when applying the identity theory onto Sandra Cisneros’s novels. The novels do not always offer extensive material on each component of an identity process, and one cannot make any further questions to the characters as how *they* see themselves and others in situations. So the material is rigidly bound to the texts, one cannot gain further information if something seems to be lacking. On the other hand, fiction offers insights that might be hard to gain in real life, where identities of actual people would be studied. One major advantage, regarding interpreting fiction, is the analysing of the components *identity standard* and *comparator*. Identity standard refers to how an individual defines her own identity in a certain role, and comparator is a part of a process that deals with how an individual *thinks* that others see them. Cisneros offers insightful material on how the two girls define themselves, even though both are quite shy to bring these meanings to their identities become visible in actual social situations. Also Cisneros gives a lot of material for the reader to grasp how the two girls interpret how their fathers define them. Regarding the identity standard of the protagonists, there is

plenty of material in both *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*. However, regarding the reflected appraisals in respect of the father's input, there is more material in *Caramelo* than there is in *The House on Mango Street*, making it more challenging to analyse that aspect in *The House on Mango Street* through Burke's identity theory. But, nevertheless, it could be done, though the question remains: how solid are the arguments, and how much of the justification is mainly due to interpretation of the one analysing? This again, is one advantage and one serious problem when applying a psycho-sociological theory onto fiction: where are the boundaries of what can actually be objectively deducted from the text, and what is essentially just a reinterpretation, varying greatly between each reader?

One personal challenge, which also could be called a 'problem', is that originally I was not familiar with sociopsychological theories as I began carrying out the study. Thus it has taken time to grasp what Burke's version of identity theory is all about; and it has proved to be somewhat rocky path to take for someone who is more familiar with fiction than theories of sociology. Then again, it is a path well worth taking, as it has indeed brought not only insights, but also ideas for further studies where it might be fruitful to combine identity theory and fiction. Finally, both Peter Burke's identity theory and Sandra Cisneros's two novels essentially deal with human beings and their identities, thus they both deal with the same issue, only giving different concepts and ideas for the reader to understand the processes. Thus it is fruitful to combine the two approaches. The combination of the theory and fiction has proved perhaps not to give many final answers to questions regarding the father's impact on their daughter's identities, but to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that take also place in the novels. And the process, at its best, has provided more intriguing questions remaining to be answered. One of the further questions that arose during the project is: How have Cisneros's representations of fathers affected the readers' views on Mexican-American fathers?

Ultimately, when combining the background of Mexican-American culture and the analysis of the daughters' identity processes presented by Cisneros, I conclude that fathers should not be rigidly stereotyped or overlooked when examining Chicana literature in general.

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