

IDENTITY THEORY AND *THE LUNAR CHRONICLES*: EXPANDING THE STUDY OF
IDENTITY IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

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Sarah Rose Silvernail

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with
North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards
for the degree of

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Kelly Sassi

Chair

Dr. Alison Graham-Bertolini

Dr. Pamela Emanuelson

Approved:

April 7, 2017

Date

Dr. Elizabeth Birmingham

Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This Master's Thesis applies Identity Theory from Social Psychology to *The Lunar Chronicles*, a young adult novel series by Marissa Meyer. In this thesis, I explain the theory in detail, apply it to the text, and discuss what can be gained by applying such a theory to young adult literature. Young adult literature (YAL) works with the concept of identity, and applying a Social Psychological theory of identity to YAL can provide a new vantage point from which to examine the concept of identity as portrayed in YAL. Through my application of Identity Theory to the texts, I demonstrate how we can apply this theory to young adult novels, focusing on three specific identities of the main character, Cinder. Following this analysis, I discuss potential pedagogical implications of this type of textual analysis in addition to implications for the field of YAL itself.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In cultures, fairy tales are important because they are among the earliest stories we learn. As Ariel Cunningham describes them, fairy tales are “first stories” (113). In her article, “Engaging and Enchanting the Heart: Developing Moral Identity through Young Adult Fantasy Literature,” Cunningham explains,

In almost every culture, there is a canon of “first” stories in the form of nursery rhymes, lullabies, or fairy tales. These stories tell children about the nature of the world and who they are in that world. . . . they speak in the language of “first things,” of that which is foundational, essential, or central to our perspective and world view. (113)

By looking at retellings of these fairy tales, we can see what might be considered a culturally acceptable identity. Peter J. Burke, a prominent social psychologist who works with Identity Theory, defines identity as “*a set of ‘meanings’* applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is” (“Identity Processes and Social Stress” 837, emphasis in original). Indeed, identity is something all humans have, and though it is idiosyncratic to the individual, it does depend upon the cultural environment in which one is raised. Returning to fairy tales, Cunningham further states, “These first things are the building blocks by which we construct our framework of identity and reality” (114). In other words, fairy tales help us to learn culturally acceptable behavior and ideals, important measurements in regard to identities. Young adult literature (YAL) also serves this function, but with the specific audience of adolescents in mind.

In every interaction we, as humans, have, we work to meet identity standards or meanings that we hold. The particular impressions we try to give are communicated through behavior and speech. Our ideas of which impression we should give off in a certain situation

vary based on a number of factors, including social context (which country are we in, what are the expected societal standards, etc.), the individuals involved in the interaction (for example, is it a parent or a friend we are interacting with), and the type of person we believe we are.

Literature is a great place to see what societal standards of identity (the specific meanings applied to individuals by themselves or by others) are at certain times, and can help us to understand how society has changed over time, specifically in terms of identity. Identity Theory, one of the social psychological theories of identity, provides an opportunity to examine identities as processes, rather than as fixed things. Applying this theory to contemporary YAL will allow us to examine how identity is portrayed and envisioned by contemporary authors.

Young adult literature, literature specifically aimed toward adolescents, works with identity, or the series of meanings individuals have for themselves, and, as Patty Campbell has put it, “[t]he central theme of most YA fiction is becoming an adult, finding the answer to the question ‘Who am I and what am I going to do about it?’” (quoted in Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4). Adolescence is “a particularly volatile time of life” in which, “at least in contemporary, technologically advanced western cultures, [...] one is confronted with the task of self-definition” (Alsup 3; Jane Kroger, quoted in Alsup 3). In this sense, identity is of great importance to adolescents. As Janet Alsup asks in her “Introduction” to the edited text *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms: Contexts for the Literary Lives of Teens*, “given the focus on identity development during adolescence, and the importance of building narratives of the self, might not adolescence be the perfect time to read and explore literary narratives that encourage critical reflection?” (4). Indeed, adolescents are highly impressionable, and literature aimed at them can have a major impact. Because of this, this literature should be, and is, studied in-depth.

This master's thesis proposes that we use the lens of Identity Theory from Social Psychology, more specifically Peter J. Burke's branch of it, in addition to the many lenses through which YAL is already studied. By adding this particular lens, we will gain a new viewpoint through which we can see identity processes as portrayed in YAL. This viewpoint will allow us to see how identity processes are portrayed by contemporary authors.

The Lunar Chronicles, a young adult novel series written by Marissa Meyer and published between 2012 and 2015, follows the incarnations of several fairy tale characters that Meyer has created, specifically Cinder (Cinderella), Scarlet (Little Red Riding Hood), Cress (Rapunzel), and Winter (Snow White), as well as their respective "princes." The series is split into four novels, each named for one of the four characters listed above. Throughout the series, these characters join forces to overthrow Levana, the evil queen of Luna, "an Earthen moon colony [established] centuries" before the events of these novels, and subsequently save Earth and its citizens from Levana's control (*Cinder* 43). Throughout the series, Cinder encounters knowledge about herself that requires her to renegotiate her perceptions of herself as well as how those perceptions are reflected in the Earthen and Lunar societies.

Two principal races exist in *The Lunar Chronicles*, Earthens and Lunars. The Earthens resemble human beings, much like the readers themselves. The Lunars hail from the moon colony, Luna, descendants of Earthen colonists from centuries prior (Meyer, *Cinder* 43). The Lunars, unlike their Earthen brethren, have developed the ability to manipulate bioelectricity, a form of energy emitted by most living beings, namely Earthens and most Lunars (43). Cyborgs can be either Earthen or Lunar, though "[i]t's rare" for Lunars (176). The three groups mentioned above are the primary focus of this thesis, though other groups do exist within *The Lunar Chronicles*. These other groups are described in chapter 3 (YAL and *The Lunar Chronicles*).

Within *The Lunar Chronicles*, Cinder is possibly the most complex character in the series, and her complexity is due to the amount of time Meyer allots to Cinder's point of view. Throughout the series, the reader experiences chapters from the points of view of different characters, such as Cinder, Scarlet, Cress, Winter, Iko (an android and Cinder's best friend), Queen Levana, and a number of other characters. Out of the various points of view the reader experiences, Cinder's appears most often, appearing in 89 of the 243 chapters. The next closest point of view in terms of frequency is Cress, with her point of view appearing in 43 of the chapters, just under half as often as Cinder's. The number of Cinder's identities that we get to see obviously adds to Cinder's complexity as well. From Cinder alone, we see a multitude of identities. Cinder's identities include: cyborg, Earthen, Lunar, friend, noble, rebel, fugitive, stepdaughter, stepsister, mechanic, and love interest of the prince. Another major identity Cinder has is her moral identity. This paper limits its discussion to the cyborg (Earthen and Lunar), Lunar, and moral identities that Cinder has because those three identities are the most salient throughout the series, meaning that they are the most-activated, and therefore most-seen. In addition, these identities seem to be the ones that change the most throughout the series.

For each of these identities, Cinder holds specific meanings, and these meanings make up the ideal version of Cinder in those identities, her identity standards. Cinder, as per Peter J. Burke's feedback loop within identity theory, tries to behave in the way that gets reflected appraisals, or how she interprets how others see her, to match the ideal self that she holds particular meanings for. Or, Cinder behaves as she expects herself to, based on the meanings for the identity, and she knows if she is successfully achieving those meanings based on how she perceives others are reacting to her. For example, in the third novel, *Cress*, Cinder glamuors, or bioelectrically manipulates, one of her companions, Wolf, forcing him to escape with her and the

rest of their companions when he really did not want to go, as he was mourning the kidnapping of Scarlet. Controlling Wolf in this way clashes with Cinder's identity meanings for her moral identity because she did not act in a way that aligned with her moral identity meanings, and this was reflected in Wolf's reaction to her a couple pages later, when, as she readied Wolf to fight, "she felt a new spike of emotion from him. Hatred, she thought. For her" (*Cress* 365). As they escape, Wolf agrees with one of the Farafrah villagers that "There's nothing worse than your own body being used against you" (370). This prompts Cinder to apologize to Wolf for making him escape when he obviously did not want to (370), which allowed her to reconcile her Lunar and moral identities a bit.

This thesis also examines how Cinder comes to terms with her Lunar identity, which at first conflicts with her moral identity. As this thesis explores, Cinder's identity meanings change in order to accommodate her 'new' identities. At first Cinder believes she is an Earthen cyborg and that Lunars are essentially evil. Approximately halfway through the first novel, Cinder finds out that her lineage is actually Lunar, not Earthen. As such, she needs to renegotiate how she views Lunars (the identity meanings she holds for what it means to be Lunar) because her identity meanings for herself do not include that she is evil, and just because she now knows that she is Lunar does not automatically make her evil. In terms of her moral identity, Cinder views herself as a moral, or good, person (she was "not one of *them* [Lunars]" *Cinder* 178). She views Lunars as inherently evil (43). When she finds out that she is actually Lunar, not Earthen like she thought, there is a major discrepancy in how she sees herself and how she sees her newfound lineage. This creates great distress, which, if left unchecked or not addressed, can lead to identity change, given enough time according to Peter J. Burke's work with identity theory, specifically the concept of identity change. This distress needs to be dealt with, and so Cinder needs to

change her identity meanings of the Lunar identity, since she cannot change her ancestry. This change in identity meanings will reduce the distress Cinder feels when her identities are clashing with each other. One way to monitor this is by adjusting her behavior so the reflected appraisals she sees fit more in line with the identity meanings she holds. In other words, she changes how she acts so she can, based on how she perceives that others perceive her, meet the specific identity meanings that she holds. By examining this in *The Lunar Chronicles*, we can see how Meyer portrays identity. Since, as mentioned above, self-definition is one of the major tasks adolescents must complete, examining the portrayal by Meyer can help us to understand a contemporary view of identity processes.

Applying these identity processes to *The Lunar Chronicles* will allow us to see how Marissa Meyer in particular portrays identity, more specifically the identity meanings held by Cinder for each identity she has. Taking this specific example, we can use the same method with other texts to gain a broader idea of how authors portray identity and the meanings we hold for them, which can give us a better idea of popular conceptions of identity. Applying the specific identity processes to YAL will also allow us to approach the idea of identity from a different point of view, providing us with a broader view of identity, and helping us to see that identity is a process and this is reflected in some YAL. It is important to study identity processes because that is how identities are actually formed; the meanings held are negotiated and renegotiated based on every interaction we have. Studying this can perhaps benefit in helping us to understand current understandings of adolescent identity and the process of forming an adult identity as portrayed in literature aimed at adolescents.

This thesis will begin by explaining Identity Theory (chapter 2). Chapter 3 explains YAL and gives a more in-depth description of the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*. The final chapter before the conclusion analyzes three of Cinder's most salient identities as seen in the series.

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY THEORY

This chapter provides a brief general overview of Identity Theory, including the three main branches associated with it (those of George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, Sheldon Stryker, and Peter J. Burke). This chapter focuses on Peter J. Burke's contributions to Identity Theory, which will be used in this master's thesis. Near the end of the chapter, the author identifies the specific aspects of Identity Theory that will be applied to *The Lunar Chronicles*.

Theoretical Lens/Literature Review

Identity Theory is one of many social psychological theories that stem from symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism examines humans in relation to society, more specifically looking at communication and behavior. The major tenets of symbolic interactionism are as follows:

Axiom A: All humans share a common nature that is unique among all animals but obscured by human social differences.

Axiom B: Humans generally behave in socially proper ways.

Axiom C: Human conduct is self-regulated

Postulate C-1: A person is a social animal.

Postulate C-2: Fundamental to society is communication.

Postulate C-3: Fundamental to person is mental life.

Postulate C-4: The key link between society and person is the looking-glass self.

Postulate C-5: Self-regulation is a process. (McCall 2)

These "core themes" show that human interaction between society and the self moderates behavior, a measurable aspect of identity (2). The "feedback loop" connected with Peter J. Burke's branch of Identity Theory, which would later be integrated with Sheldon Stryker's,

represents this “looking-glass self,” which allows an individual to measure themselves against society’s standard as well as their own standard of identity (Stryker and Burke; Stets, “Identity Theory” 96; McCall 2).

Stryker and Burke provide two of the major definitions of identity within Identity Theory, each of which helps explain the visualization of identities as hierarchies. Identity, as defined by Stryker, is “an ‘internalized positional designation’” (Stets, “Identity Theory” 89). This designation is a standard, or self-meaning, that a person strives to uphold (Burke and Reitzes, “An Identity Theory Approach to Commitment”). Burke defines identity as “*a set of ‘meanings’* applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is” (“Identity Processes and Social Stress” 837, emphasis in original). These meanings are usually ranked in identity hierarchies and individuals work to make those meanings apparent in their interactions. Generally, hierarchies are labeled either prominence (George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons) or salience (McCall and Simmons, Stryker). McCall and Simmons’s prominence hierarchy is concerned with “the ideal self” (Stets, “Identity Theory” 92). Their salience hierarchy explains “the situational self,” a more fleeting incarnation of the ideal self to which individuals strive (92).

Stryker also examines hierarchies, though he focuses on salient identities, which are “identit[ies] that [are] likely to be played out (activated) frequently across different situations. That salience hierarchy focuses on how social actors will likely behave in a situation” (Stets, “Identity Theory” 93). In this sense of situational influence, Stryker’s salience hierarchy is similar to that of McCall and Simmons. However, Stryker’s salience hierarchy “predicts longer run behaviors . . . [which means it] has the same effect as McCall and Simmons’s prominence hierarchy; it captures the more enduring rather than fleeting source of behavior” (95).

Throughout the literature, Stryker's salience hierarchy seems to be more referenced than McCall and Simmons's hierarchies. Within these hierarchies, there are multiple factors that affect salience.

Identity is not fixed; it is fluid. In an identity hierarchy, one has a number of identities that they activate across the course of all their interactions in life. Because of the nature of human relationships, and particularly an individual's specific life situation, certain identities are activated more often than others. However, since people's lives tend to be more dynamic than static, the more-activated identities can change, even within similar situations.

When a person enters any interaction, a number of identities are available to them for activation. However, not all of these identities are as likely to be activated as others. This is what is meant by identity salience; certain identities are more likely to be activated than are others in specific situations. Those identities more likely to be activated are the more salient ones, which also happen to be higher in the identity hierarchy in these situations. However, different situations, as well as different roles, affect the saliency of identities. For example, one might consider themselves a hard-working, serious person while also considering themselves a fun-loving, easy-going person. Each of these identities could be high in saliency, meaning that they are among the most likely to be activated. They may even be equally salient, each being activated as often as the other. However, the specific situation in which this individual finds themselves, as well as the specific individuals also involved, will determine which identity is actually activated. Specifically, this hard-working, serious but also fun-loving, easy-going person may find themselves at a company picnic. In this situation, they are likely to run into their boss, which is a specific counter-role to this person, who, upon encountering their boss, would then define themselves through the role of employee. When interacting with their boss, this person would normally only

act like the hard-working, serious individual they see themselves as in their job. However, since the setting is changed from work to a picnic, the situation itself has changed, and so the salience of the hard-working, serious identity would decrease in favor of the fun-loving, easy-going identity. So, at the picnic, they are more likely to act fun-loving and easy-going, though the hard-working, serious identity will still be present and rise higher to the surface in interactions with the boss, even at the picnic.

With identity hierarchies, particularly Stryker's, the amount of commitment one has to an identity greatly influences the salience of that identity (Stets, "Identity Theory" 93). Burke and Donald C. Reitzes state, "Commitment measures the degree to which people strive to keep these inputs [the reflected appraisals that indicate whether the person is seen by others in the situation as meeting their identity standards or self-meanings]" ("An Identity Theory Approach to Commitment" 250). Jan E. Stets and Burke explain, "The greater the number of ties to others and the greater the strength of these ties to others, the stronger is the identity commitment" ("The Development of Identity Theory" 59). The greater the importance and effort placed in a particular identity, then, the more salient it is, and the more likely it will be called upon in the situation, particularly when one has a choice of identities to activate (59; Serpe 53; Serpe and Stryker 45).

As Stryker and Burke explain in "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," "Burke and Reitzes (1991) found that the ability to predict from identity meanings to performances was greater for those with more strongly committed identities" (289). In other words, the higher the commitment to an identity, the more likely it will be acted out. One example might be a person who considers themselves a moral individual. In this case, the moral person would search out opportunities in which to act in a moral way. For example, the moral

person might become a firefighter or a lawyer, since both of these jobs can involve helping others and would allow the person to activate their moral identity. The firefighter helps people by putting out fires and saving people from burning buildings; the lawyer might help by successfully defending a wrongly accused person or by successfully prosecuting a guilty person. The roles that a person holds, and the amount of “overlap . . . strongly impact commitment” to identities (Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt 119). So, the different roles a person holds and the number of situations in which those role identities are activated increases the commitment to those identities.

Identity standards are generally categorized in three types: role identities, social identities, and person identities (Stets, “Identity Theory” 89). Role identities are how the individual sees themselves, namely “the different positions or roles [they hold] . . . Each [of which] includes all of the *meanings* that a person attaches to himself while performing a role. These meanings are, in part, derived from culture and the social structure” (89, emphasis in original). Examples of role identities include teacher, student, parent, and child. Each of these role identities has specific cultural expectations associated with it, so no matter the person or social identities of an individual who occupies one of these roles, the expectations are generally the same, though the exact ways in which those roles are acted out vary by person.

A *Lunar Chronicles*-specific example would be Emperor Kaito’s responsibilities as a ruler. As a ruler, he should do what is best for his people in order to help them. He should be kind, compassionate, level-headed, and he should put his citizens’ needs first. For example, when Cinder goes to kidnap Emperor Kaito (Kai), he refuses to go with her, saying, “My responsibility is here. I have a country to protect. I’m not running away from that” (*Cress* 456). In this particular scenario, Cinder is kidnapping Kai to prevent a marriage alliance that would be

detrimental to all of Earth. However, Kai initially accepted the marriage alliance in order to stop attacks against his country, as well as the other Earthen nations. In this way, Kai is placing his citizens' needs above his own and fulfilling the role of ruler.

In social identities, “individuals identify themselves as members of particular categories [and] culture also defines the meanings of different group memberships and the behavior expected from those memberships” (Stets, “Identity Theory” 89). Social identities, then, are tied directly to the groups one associates with, such as a specific church/religion, a specific nationality or ethnic group, or even a club or organization of some sort. Social identities deal with in-groups versus out-groups. For example, in *The Lunar Chronicles* there are several different social groups, the most prominent being Earthens, Lunars, and cyborgs. Within *The Lunar Chronicles*, Earthens identify themselves by not being Lunar or cyborg. Earthens and Lunars ostracize cyborgs because of their difference from those groups, namely their need for mechanical enhancements/prostheses to live a ‘normal’ life.

Person identities are the “third basis of identity,” and they are “the set of meanings that are tied to and sustain the self as an individual rather than sustaining a group or role” (Stets, “Identity Theory” 90). So, person identities are those that follow an individual from situation to situation. Person identities tend to include specific qualities of an individual, such as being a good or moral person or being responsible. Person identities would include moral or responsible identities; these are identities that an individual carries with them from situation to situation. In any situation, a person might act morally or responsibly.

Person and role identities can often overlap and significantly affect one another. As Stets describes person identities versus role identities, role identities, such as gender identity, “sustain[-] the social structure . . . [since they] cannot be understood without reference to the

social structure” (“Role Identities and Person Identities: Gender Identity, Mastery Identity, and Controlling One’s Partner” 145). Meanwhile, person identities, in this particular case mastery identity, “operate[-] across various roles and situations” (134). Person identities (such as a moral identity) follow the individual, whereas the role identity (such as teacher or student) is more strictly tied to certain scenarios. With regard to role identity salience, or how high in the identity hierarchy the identity is and how likely it is to be activated within a given situation, Peter L. Callero examined the specific identity of blood donor (“Role-Identity Salience”). In this study, Callero collected empirical evidence to support role identity salience, and called for more research into the interplay of role identities, since “a single role-identity represents only a piece of a very complex self-structure” (214). With this study, Callero added empirical evidence to the realm of identity process measurement, a realm to which Burke and Judy C. Tully also added.

In terms of measurements for identity processes, Burke and Tully provided a more concise model of measurement for the measurement of identity. Rather than using profiles or other previously used types of measurement, Burke and Tully suggest using “Discriminant analysis [which] can be used to define (by discovering appropriate weights) a *set of dimensions* (items) to be considered when measuring the meaning of A-ness vs. B-ness” (886, emphasis in original). So, by having a list of x number of descriptions (for example, Burke and Tully measured gender role identity in 6th, 7th, and 8th graders by having the students identify themselves using a number of descriptors and their opposites, such as brave/cowardly), and having individuals self-identify, Burke and Tully were able to get a more refined but also still descriptive measure of identity. Within this study, they describe role identities and counter-role identities, a concept also discussed by Peggy A. Thoits.

Thoits added to this discussion by taking a more psychological stance as well as defining voluntary and obligatory roles, which have an effect on personal well-being. Michael J. Carter also adds to the conversation by calling attention to the deficit of contextual study of identity activation, or studying which identities are activated in which contexts/situations and why. Carter provides some evidence of this deficit with his study, “Advancing Identity Theory: Examining the Relationship between Activated Identities and Behavior in Different Social Contexts.”

Identity verification and nonverification also affect an identity and its salience, or rank, within the hierarchy, as well as whether an identity or self-meaning will change. The higher an identity is in salience, the higher it is in the hierarchy, and the more likely it will be activated in and across situations. Identity nonverification, as Peter J. Burke describes in “Identity Processes and Social Stress,” leads to stress, which may eventually lead to identity change in an effort to reduce that stress. As Burke describes,

The [identity control] system works by modifying output (behavior) to the social situation in attempts to change the input (reflected appraisals) to match the internal standard. In this sense, the identity control system can be thought of as having a goal—matching the environmental inputs to internal standards. (837)

Here we see a very brief description of Burke’s identity model that has been described in numerous sources, including Jan E. Stets’s chapter “Identity Theory.”

Burke’s description provides us with a standard model of identity and how individuals work to control their identity in interactions with others. Burke continues, “When changes in behavior do not result in greater congruence between self-perceptions and identities, feelings of distress result. However, if congruence cannot be achieved by changing outputs and inputs, then the identity or standard of comparison itself may be changed” (845). Prolonged inability to

achieve the identity standard can cause the individual to change the standard itself to reduce the stress of being unable to meet the standard they hold for themselves and that particular identity. Within *The Lunar Chronicles*, Cinder needs to renegotiate her identity standards to reduce the distress she feels caused by the perceived incompatibility of Lunar and moral identities. For example, someone who considers themselves an “A” student suddenly starts getting B’s without making a change to their work habits. If they change their habits and work harder, but still are unable to achieve A’s, they may have to either consider themselves a “B” student, or change their idea of what “A” and “B” students are. For example, some students who have always received A’s consider a B a failing grade. If they suddenly earn only B’s, in order to not constantly consider themselves a failure, they would need to renegotiate their idea of what a B means and that being a “B” student does not mean that they are a failure, it simply means they get more B’s than any other grade.

Burke further explains that there are two levels of identity standards;

the identity standard is itself an output from a higher level control process with its own standard, comparator and input (Powers 1973). The input to this higher level control loop comes from the environment and some part of that input may be the same as to the lower level identity process. (“Identity Processes and Social Stress” 845)

So, the higher level is the master control identity, essentially, while the lower level is the more flexible, more accessible identity. Ultimately, Burke states, “an individual’s identity can and will change, but it does so only if the lower level identity process cannot maintain congruence of the reflected appraisals and the identity standard over some period of time or number of disruptive events” (846). The longer or more often an individual cannot achieve their identity standard in interactions, the more likely they are to change their identity. For example, if someone believes

they are a good person, but how they perceive others reacting to them (reflected appraisals) does not match their identity meanings over a long period of time, and changes to their behavior do not bring the reflected appraisals and identity meanings back in alignment, in order to reduce the distress they feel, the person would need to change their identity meanings.

Burke also explains that there are several conditions that may lead to identity change, such as an irreversible change in situation, small changes to reduce dissonance that add up over time, and “events that are beyond the control of individuals which change the self-relevant meanings in the situation” (“Identity Change” 94). The moral identity is one specific example of an identity that can change. For example, in *The Lunar Chronicles*, Cinder struggles with maintaining her moral identity while also accepting that she is actually a Lunar. In the series, Earthen identity meanings for Lunars result in Lunars being considered suspect, if not downright evil, by Earthens. In this view, they are the opposite of moral. In order to reconcile the two identities (Lunar and moral), which early in the series seemed like polar opposites to Cinder, she needs to alter her identity meanings and behavior to reduce the distress she feels. Moral identities have been studied in the literature on Identity Theory, including by Stets and Carter.

Stets and Carter examined moral identities, and found “it is not simply moral identity meanings that guide behavior, but the relationship between the meanings and the perceived meanings of who one is in a situation” (135). The meanings of moral identities, then, as well as the reflected appraisals in the specific situation determine an individual’s behavior. In this way, an individual works to maintain their moral identity, which, when performed effectively, will not result in identity change. An individual maintains their identity through their behavior, which affects the reflected appraisals they perceive. For example, in *The Lunar Chronicles*, Cinder tries to act morally, though she does not always succeed. When she kidnaps Emperor Kaito, she

receives negative feedback because she is acting like a Lunar, meaning that she is using her glamour on others to make them do what she wants, not to mention that she is breaking the law. Because the feedback Cinder is receiving indicates that she is not acting morally, it brings into question her moral identity because her behavior and the reflected appraisals do not align with the identity standards that Cinder holds for being a moral person.

As we have seen previously, “behavior is used to control perceptions” (Stets and Burke, “Identity Verification, Control, and Aggression in Marriage” 174). In the study “Identity Verification, Control, and Aggression in Marriage,” Stets and Burke examined identity nonverification of the spousal identity in “newly married couples” and how this nonverification would lead the spouse with the nonverified identity to “reaffirm” their identity through control, and eventually aggression, if control did not work (160). In a study similar to Stets and Burke’s “Identity Verification, Control, and Aggression in Marriage,” Stets and Teresa M. Tsushima examined negative emotions, specifically anger, within identity status and how identity status (high vs. low) affects its length and intensity. Stets and Tsushima found that group-based identities tend to have more intense anger while role-based identities tend to have “longer-lasting anger” (283). They also found that “persons with a low-status identity report more intense and longer-lasting anger” (283). In this sense, identity status affects anger, as does type of identity. Stets and Michael M. Harrod studied social structure’s effect on multiple identities and found that higher identity status leads to greater identity verification, a result of their “greater control over resources” (169). In terms of the identity of a cyborg, which is one of the more important identities in *The Lunar Chronicles* series, Donna Haraway provides a definition for the cyborg and explains how it fits in with our current understanding of society.

Within Donna Haraway’s “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” she defines the cyborg as

a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. . . . The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion. (2190)

The cyborg is a hybrid real and imagined, and as a hybrid, it is very familiar with boundaries, particularly those of identity. As cyborgs exist on the boundaries of dichotomies, particularly that of human and organism, they challenge those dichotomies, becoming "a kind of disassembled and reassembled post-modern collective and personal self" (2205). This may be part of what Meyer is doing, taking the patriarchy-reinforcing fairy tales that generations have grown up hearing and updating them, as it were, applying the concept of the cyborg to question these dichotomies.

Other authors have also been challenging these dichotomies, which both Jennifer Mitchell and Leah Phillips have published on. As *The Lunar Chronicles* are less than five years old, there is little currently published on them specifically; however, Mitchell's "'A girl. A machine. A freak': A Consideration of Contemporary Queer Composites" and Leah Phillips's "*Real Women Aren't Shiny (or Plastic): The Adolescent Female Body in YA Fantasy*" speak directly to these challenges in *The Lunar Chronicles*, specifically *Cinder*. Since the series is so new, Mitchell and Phillips only discussed the first novel of the series. In addition to *Cinder's* hybridity, these two articles explore hybridity within two other authors' works. These works also question the hybrid nature of the protagonists' lineage, and ultimately the dichotomies that are still strong in contemporary society. Interestingly, the hybridity of all three of the characters

described is based in their physical identities. Hybridity undermines dualisms, which Haraway also discusses.

Dualisms, for Haraway, create the other, which is how the non-other knows itself (2217). Recalling that Burke and Tully note, “there is no role/identity except in relation to counter-role/identities,” we can see the self and other Haraway designates as role and counter-role (883). In this way, we as humans define ourselves by what we are and what we are not; we define ourselves in opposition to others. “High-tech culture” and the cyborg blur the boundaries of these dualisms, and “[i]t is not clear who makes and who is made between human and machine” (2217). Through these blurred boundaries, “One consequence is that our sense of connection to our tools is heightened” (2217). This results in the obsolescence of “[t]hese machine organism relationships” (2218). Haraway continues, “For us, in imagination and in other practice, machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves. We don’t need organic holism to give impermeable wholeness” (2218). We can see a rather literal form of this “machines [as] prosthetic devices” in *The Lunar Chronicles* in the form of Cinder. As the series continues, Cinder realizes that her mechanical prostheses allow her to do more, and she begins to appreciate them more. Indeed, Haraway argues that there is need to embrace the present hybridity that current culture affords us; in other words, ‘we’ should embrace this cyborg-ness as our world continues to be more and more impacted by technology and we continue to be more and more reliant on it. Haraway concludes with a brief statement of what we can gain through the figure of the cyborg: “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (2220).

This thesis uses Burke’s identity control theory, though now simply known as identity theory, to examine Cinder’s identity (Stets and Burke, “The Development of Identity Theory”

63). In this theory, the individual holds an identity standard, or self-meaning, that they try to achieve in each situation. This standard affects how the person behaves, leading to each person acting in such a way as to reach their standard. Within the situation, the person takes into account the “reflected appraisals,” or how they think others perceive them. With these reflected appraisals in mind, the person adjusts their behavior to bring it more into line with their identity standard based on their perceptions of the reactions of the people around them. This feedback loop continues throughout interactions with others. (Stets, “Identity Theory”)

In addition to this base feedback loop of Burke’s, this thesis utilizes his contribution to identity change as well. As Burke describes in “Identity Processes and Social Stress,” “an individual’s identity can and will change . . . if the lower level identity process cannot maintain congruence of the reflected appraisals and the identity standard over some period of time or number of disruptive events” (846). In other words, there is a higher-level identity standard that one strives toward which is more permanent than the identity standard one displays in interactions with others, the lower-level identity standard. The lower-level standard might be thought of as the situational self, to borrow from McCall and Simmons, and the higher-level standard might be thought of as the ideal self. In situations, the individual tries to attain the higher-level standard, and changes behavior in order to do so. These changes are made based on the reflected appraisals in the situation. If the changes cannot reconcile the situational and ideal selves as determined by the reflected appraisals, then the person becomes distressed. If that distress occurs for long enough, the only way to quell it becomes a change in the higher-level identity standard. So, for example, the student who considers themselves an “A” student, but suddenly gets only B’s without changing their work habits, as mentioned above. One of the important factors involved in identity change is commitment. Burke and Reitzes explain that

“Identities influence the choices made. The activity that results from the choice has meanings that correspond to, reinforce, and display the identity meanings of the individual” (“The Link Between Identity and Role Performance” 91). The more often these identity meanings are activated in and across situations, the greater the commitment to that specific identity, or those specific identities, becomes.

The tool of commitment to an identity provides a useful avenue for exploring identities in *The Lunar Chronicles*, specifically Cinder’s. As Stets explains, “One is more committed to an identity when one strives harder to maintain a match between self-in-situation (perceptual self) meaning and the meaning held in the identity standard” (“Identity Theory” 98). In Cinder’s case, she is committed to the identity of a good person, putting others’ well-being before her own, such as when she surrenders to Aimery, Levana’s new head thaumaturge, in order to save the citizens of one of the Lunar sectors (*Winter* 357). This “good person identity” is the opposite of Levana (an example of what Burke and Tully as well as Haraway argue, that individuals define themselves through others), and Cinder’s commitment to this identity is demonstrated quite vividly when Cinder admits that she fears becoming like Levana after having acted in what she considers a non-moral way by torturing Levana’s head thaumaturge, among various other actions (*Cress* 547). As the series progresses, she continues to strive for that ‘good person’ identity. However, her actions at points, such as when she tortured Thaumaturge Mira, make her question if she is a good person, or if she is becoming like Levana.

By applying role and person identities to Cinder, we will glean a new understanding of Meyer’s representation of identities. Role identities are how individuals see themselves in the hierarchy of the situation, and these roles determine how they should act. Examples of role identities include student, researcher, and teacher, to name just a few. Person identities differ

from role identities in that they are not situation-based, rather they follow a person throughout many situations. Some examples of this might be being serious, funny, or professional. With these particular roles applied to Cinder using the backdrop of Burke's feedback loop, we can more thoroughly examine how Cinder reaches these different identities Meyer has constructed for her.

Burke's feedback loop provides a strong base from which to operate when applying identity theory to *The Lunar Chronicles*. Adding to this base, we have commitment to an identity, identity change, and different types of identities, specifically role and person identities. Using all of these tools will allow for a thorough, but also concise, examination of Cinder's identities. Analyzing Cinder's identities will provide one example of a contemporary portrayal of identity processes specifically aimed at adolescents.

CHAPTER 3: YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE AND *THE LUNAR CHRONICLES*

This chapter will provide major characteristics and themes of young adult literature (YAL) and describe what it does and how it does it. This chapter will also describe the universe of the texts to be examined, *The Lunar Chronicles*.

Young Adult Literature

Young adult literature (YAL) is typically considered to be literature aimed at approximately twelve- to eighteen-year-olds (Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, and Johnson 3; Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 3). YAL displays specific characteristics or themes that set it apart from other types of literature, though YAL is not a genre in its own right (Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, and Johnson 3). Some of the main characteristics of YAL are:

The main character is an adolescent who is at the center of the plot[; t]he events revolve around the adolescent's actions, decisions, and struggle to resolve conflict[; t]he events and problems in the plot are related to adolescents, and the dialogue reflects their speech[; t]he point of view is that of an adolescent and reflects an adolescent's interpretation of events and people, rather than an adult reflecting back on adolescence[; t]he book is written for young adults and marketed to a young adult audience. (Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, and Johnson 3)

Indeed, YAL focuses its energies on reflecting to adolescents, or young adults, scenarios relevant to their specific stage of life. Because of the great diversity within this category of adolescence, YAL itself is incredibly diverse.

Though YAL is quite diverse, its major theme encompasses that diversity. According to Patty Campbell of *Horn Book Magazine*,

The central theme of most YA fiction is becoming an adult, finding the answer to the question “Who am I and what am I going to do about it?” No matter what events are going on in the book, accomplishing this task is really what the book is about, and in the climactic moment the resolution of the external conflict is linked to a realization for the protagonist that helps shape an adult identity. (quoted in Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4)

This can be seen specifically in *The Lunar Chronicles*, where Cinder, the main character, thought she knew who she was, but was then forced to renegotiate that question based on new information that she received.

Campbell’s summary of the main theme of YA fiction, “Who am I and what am I going to do about it?”, addresses the idea of identity, or the meanings associated with the self at any given time in any situation. As Campbell’s quote states, “the resolution of the external conflict is linked to a realization for the protagonist that helps shape an adult identity” (Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4). This “shap[ing of] an adult identity” then would seem to be the main purpose of YAL. Adolescence is one of the more tumultuous times in an individual’s life (Alsup 3), and, because of this, a stable identity, or knowing who one is, can be difficult to achieve. YAL can help students in forming their identities through allowing them to explore different scenarios and helping them to see some of the potential consequences of different courses of action. Forming an “adult identity” seems to be the end-goal of adolescence, and subsequently its literature, because it implies an end to the tumultuousness and uncertainty of identity that adolescents suffer. As Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, and Johnson explain, “Adolescence is traditionally viewed as a period of incompleteness when hormonal changes need to be contained during growth toward adulthood, or completeness” (3). However, becoming an adult does not

automatically allow one to figure out their identity. As Burke's identity theory explains, there is constant feedback that one receives, and that feedback is what one uses to achieve their identity meaning. This feedback loop occurs in any interaction that individuals have across their lifetime.

Looking at Identity Theory, though, there is not necessarily an ultimate or end-goal "adult identity." The "adult identity" can be one of a plethora of identities an individual has, but there is not necessarily one set, overarching adult identity that adolescents can achieve. Despite an "adult identity" not being the ultimate, overarching goal identity, it could be considered a type of person or role identity. It could be considered either type because it is not situation-based, making it a person identity, but it can also depend on the role one takes on in a certain situation. For example, one can be considered an adult across many situations, but that role identity becomes less salient when the individual interacts with their parents or friends. The specific situation and the particular individuals in that situation would determine which type of identity manifests itself because the counter-roles in the situation help determine which role(s) will be activated.

As a more *Lunar Chronicles*-specific example, Cinder could be considered an adult in that she takes care of herself and earns money for her stepfamily. Part of Cinder's person identity is that she is a human who happens to also be a cyborg, whereas in her stepmother's eyes, she is just a cyborg. As the first example indicates, the adult identity can be activated across many situations, making it a person identity, since it is not situation-based. Therefore, we can consider that Cinder has the person identity (identity meanings specific to herself across situations) of being an adult. However, in her interactions with her stepmother, Cinder's adult person identity becomes less salient because her stepmother only sees the cyborg identity when she looks at

Cinder and reacts negatively to Cinder. In this sense, Cinder's person identity, which for Cinder herself has multiple aspects, is the singular aspect of cyborg in her stepmother's point of view.

The moral identity is one of the more salient identities in *The Lunar Chronicles*, and can be a point of contention in YAL in general. In her article "Engaging and Enchanting the Heart: Developing Moral Identity through Young Adult Fantasy Literature," Aliel Cunningham discusses the potential complications of using YAL that focuses on, or at least highly emphasizes, a specific moral stance. One of the issues with using such literature in secondary English classrooms, Cunningham states, is that "character education . . . is often conflated with indoctrination or religious education" (129). Because of this, "there is some hesitation to take character education seriously," if it is even addressed at all in the classroom (129). However, adolescence is a time when one tries to "shape an adult identity" (Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4). In this time, moral stances can be solidified, and so ideas in a text may be especially influential at this time, leading parents to be more concerned about what their adolescent child is reading. Moral identity can be one of the more fruitful identities studied from YAL, or more specifically *The Lunar Chronicles*. Examining how Meyer portrays Cinder's moral identity and its development/change through the series could shed light on some of the identity processes Meyer portrays as well as helping to analyze the series through Identity Theory.

The Lunar Chronicles

The Lunar Chronicles is a young adult science fiction novel series published between 2012 and 2015. The series is a young adult novel series because it centers on Cinder, the primary point of view readers encounter in the first novel and a major point of view in the other novels. Cinder's "actions, decisions, and struggle to resolve conflict" move the story along and have

serious and even dire consequences for some characters (Short, Tomlinson, Lynch-Brown, and Johnson 3). Not only is Cinder at the heart of the plot and has to deal with those major problems that ‘normal’ adolescents generally do not have, she is also a teenager who is dealing with some things a ‘normal’ teenager deals with, such as stabilizing an identity and navigating relationships. *The Lunar Chronicles* series “is written for . . . and marketed to a young adult audience,” adding to its definition as a young adult novel series (3). These reasons, in addition to answering the question Patty Campbell used to summarize the main theme of YAL (“Who am I and what am I going to do about it?”), define *The Lunar Chronicles* as a young adult novel series (Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4).

The Lunar Chronicles series is set in the far-distant future, 126 years after World War IV, and ultimately follows four fairy tale characters (Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, and Snow White) and their respective “princes.” *The Lunar Chronicles* consists of four novels, each named after one of the fairy tale incarnations Meyer has created: *Cinder*, *Scarlet*, *Cress*, and *Winter*. Ultimately, the series is the tale of deposing an evil tyrant (Queen Levana of Luna) and replacing her with the rightful heir (Cinder, born Princess Selene of Luna). Along the way, Cinder encounters knowledge that requires her to renegotiate her perceptions of herself as well as how those perceptions are reflected in the Earthen and Lunar societies.

Within the novel series, there are two principal races: Earthen and Lunar. The Earthens resemble human beings, much like the readers themselves. From Earthens, through either evolution or scientific advancement, come all other groups within the series: Lunars and their subgroups, cyborgs, and androids. The Lunars live in the moon colony, Luna, and are descended from Earthen colonists (Meyer, *Cinder* 43). The Lunars differ from the Earthens in their ability to control bioelectricity, which applies to Earthens and most Lunars (43). Cyborgs can be either

Earthen or Lunar, though “[i]t’s rare” for Lunars (176). The most well-known subgroup of Lunars are the “shells” (176). Shells are Lunars “born with[out] the gift [of bioelectrical manipulation]” (176). Even though both Earthens and shells cannot manipulate bioelectricity, the Earthens are still susceptible to control by Lunars; “Shells,” however, “are immune to the Lunar glamour” (179). Because of this immunity, they are looked down upon and mistrusted by Lunars who can manipulate bioelectricity (176, 179).

In addition to these aforementioned groups, two other subgroups exist within the Lunars, both of which have been created by Lunar scientists who have genetically modified male Lunar citizens to be wolf-soldiers by mixing their DNA with that of a wolf. These two final subgroups differ in their appearance; one group still looks like ‘normal’ Lunars who can easily blend in with Earthens, while the other group appears more monstrous and werewolf-like. Androids are artificial beings that can be programmed with various personalities. Androids differ from cyborgs in that androids begin and remain artificially constructed, whereas cyborgs generally begin as biological beings that need mechanical enhancements/prostheses to live ‘normal’ lives, usually after accidents.

The first book in the series, *Cinder*, begins in New Beijing, the capital of the Eastern Commonwealth, and follows Cinder (Cinderella) and her prince, Prince (and later, Emperor) Kaito (Kai). Since the initial text in the series is set in the capital of one of the six major Earthen nations, and the two characters whose points of view the reader experiences most are fully indoctrinated in the Earthen mindset (especially in regard to Lunars and cyborgs), it is safe to say that the reader, at least in the first text, really is submersed in the Earthen way of thinking. The remainder of Earth in this series is composed of “the United Kingdom, the European Federation, the African Union, the American Republic, and Australia” (Meyer, *Cinder* 247). The action

within the series moves around, beginning in the second novel (*Scarlet*). In total, the action of the series takes place in three of the six Earthen nations and on Luna (New Beijing in the Eastern Commonwealth, Paris and rural France in the European Federation, a couple smaller desert towns in the African Union, and the Lunar capital as well as at least two of the outer sectors of Luna). Throughout *Scarlet* and *Cress*, as well as in part of *Winter*, a fair amount of the action takes place aboard the Rampion, a military cargo ship stolen by one of Cinder's companions prior to the beginning of the storyline.

Earthens are taught to fear Lunars, and this fear stems mostly from the differences in abilities. As stated above, Lunars have the ability to manipulate bioelectricity, and Earthens have no natural defense against this ability. The reader's first introduction to Lunars is through Cinder:

Lunars were a society that had evolved from an Earthen moon colony centuries ago, but they weren't human anymore. People said Lunars could alter a person's brain—make you see things you shouldn't see, feel things you shouldn't feel, do things you didn't want to do. Their unnatural power made them a greedy and violent race, and Queen Levana was the worst of all of them. (Meyer, *Cinder* 43)

Indeed, the Earthens are particularly suspicious, and even afraid, of Lunars. This fear comes from the Earthens' inability to protect themselves from Lunar bioelectrical manipulation (also called glamour) and a lack of interaction between Lunars and Earthens.

Earthens not only mistrust Lunars, but they also mistrust cyborgs. Meyer explains the history of the Earthen-cyborg relationship through Emperor Kaito (Kai) in *Cress*, the third installment of the series:

[Cyborgs] weren't citizens. Or, they were, but it was more complicated than that, had been since the Cyborg Protection Act had been instated by [Kai's] grandfather decades ago. The act came after a series of devastating cyborg crimes had caused widespread hatred and led to catastrophic riots in every major city in the Commonwealth. The protests may have been prompted by the violent spree, but they were a result of generations of growing disdain. (306)

Here we see the inherited political situation in which cyborgs of the Commonwealth find themselves. However, this is not the extent of the inhumane treatment cyborgs receive.

In addition to the Cyborg Protection Act, the cyborg draft was a government program wherein “cyborgs [were “order[ed]”] to the [plague research] labs every day . . . sacrificing them in order to find an antidote [to the letumosis virus]” (*Cress* 305). The plague that is affecting Earth throughout *The Lunar Chronicles*, known as letumosis, was brought to Earth by unsuspecting Lunars who were immune and has devastated the Earthen population because “Earthen immune systems just weren't prepared” (*Cinder* 177, 178). The cyborg draft to find a cure for the disease using live subjects had been set up by Dr. Erland, who had convinced Emperor Kaito's predecessor that using cyborgs for the draft was best for the Commonwealth for the following reasons:

Cyborgs are easy to register, easy to track, and with their legal restrictions . . . Easy to convince both them and the people that they are the best candidates for the testing.

“Because they aren't human?” [asked Kai.]

. . . Because their bodies have already been aided by science. Because now it's their turn to give back—for the good of everyone. (*Cress* 308)

Despite the rather negative circumstances in which Cinder and other cyborgs find themselves at the beginning of the series, things do improve for them, if only slightly. Kai decides to dissolve the cyborg draft, saying, “the use of the cyborg draft to further our research [to find a cure for the letumosis plague] was an antiquated practice that was neither necessary nor justifiable. We [the Eastern Commonwealth] are a society that values human life—*all* human life” (312). In eliminating the cyborg draft, Kai takes a step toward redefining the political situation of cyborgs, though this step is met with significant “hostility” (314).

The fictional world of *The Lunar Chronicles* provides us with an intriguing new area to apply Identity Theory. Looking specifically at the texts using this specific theory provides an opportunity to examine contemporary creation of character identities. In the third novel, *Cress*, Kai says that he may have “liked Cinder so much in the first place . . . [because] she [“didn’t *try*” to] disguise her emotions. . . . At least that’s how it seemed” (304, emphasis in original). Taking this into consideration, this thesis will explore Cinder’s identity standards and her commitment to specific identities (especially her moral identity), as well as identity change that appears in the novels. By determining the way in which Cinder’s identity exists and transforms, we can see how this theory can be applied to fiction. By applying this theory to fiction, we can examine the way in which contemporary authors envision identity and its formation.

As identity development is a central theme in YAL, exploring that theme through the lens of Identity Theory might contribute to the literature on YAL. More specifically, adding Identity Theory to the numerous other lenses through which YAL is currently viewed might allow some more access to the literature by allowing for different viewpoints. In addition, Identity Theory, which is a more unified and established theory, would help eliminate some of the need to combine disparate theories to examine YAL. For example, Janet Alsup, in her introduction, pulls

theory from Discourse Theory, Developmental Psychology, Narrative Theory, and Reader Response Theory. In using Identity Theory, it could streamline the process of examination by removing the need to bring together disparate sources that might support a concept already identified in Identity Theory. Granted, there are still reasons to use the separate lenses already in use in YAL, but adding Identity Theory to the list of lenses could lead to some beneficial exploration of the literature, as researchers would have an established overall theory of identity that has been tested and proven and has support within the social psychological discipline, rather than having to pull together disparate parts and try to basically establish a theory of identity from YA sources. Identity Theory is one of the better tools available to examine identity processes, and using this tool would benefit the field of YA. This could also help in expanding the concept of identity as seen from a YA perspective, making it a more concrete, less nebulous term, and helping researchers to look at identity as a process. Basically, this could also help with broadening the understanding of identity and its development in YAL.

This thesis would be the first step in working toward this goal of understanding through the lens of Identity Theory how popular conceptions of identity formation and maintenance have appeared in past literature as well as contemporary literature. Applying Identity Theory to *The Lunar Chronicles* will demonstrate how the processes identified in Identity Theory can be applied to literature to broaden our understanding of the identities of characters as well as how those characters and their identities are portrayed.

CHAPTER 4: CINDER'S IDENTITIES

This chapter will analyze Cinder's most salient identities, more specifically the meanings she applies to herself when claiming each of these identities, (cyborg, Lunar, and moral) and how they appear throughout the series. This chapter will also demonstrate the application of Identity Theory to *The Lunar Chronicles*, looking specifically at commitment to an identity, the looking-glass self, roles and counter-roles, change in identity salience, and identity change.

Cinder's Identities

In *The Lunar Chronicles*, Cinder has numerous identities that are activated at various times throughout the series. These identities include: cyborg, mechanic, Earthen, Lunar, princess/queen, and revolutionary. This chapter examines three of the most salient identities, cyborg and Lunar, as well as Cinder's moral identity.

At the beginning of the series, Cinder's cyborg identity is one of her more salient identities because of the constant negative reflected appraisals she receives from her stepmother, her older stepsister, and the New Beijing weekly market's baker. These three individuals in particular attach the inherited negative identity meanings associated with cyborgs to Cinder simply because they know she is cyborg. The more common negative identity meanings include their being "too smart . . . too skilled . . . too strong . . . And [w]hen one small group of cyborgs had gone on a spree of violence and theft and destruction, [they] demonstrat[ed] just how dangerous they could be" (*Cress* 306). The fact of Earthens' inferiority in some aspects made them label cyborgs as something to be feared. This is the global political situation in which Cinder and other cyborgs find themselves. Cinder does not want to be perceived by these negative identity meanings, and this leads her to hide her cyborg identity from those who do not know she is cyborg. As the series progresses, however, Cinder's companions do not react

negatively to her cyborg-ness, thereby reducing Cinder's need to hide that specific identity.

Since hiding the identity is no longer as important, and she and her companions do not highlight the cyborg identity, the identity is less present in Cinder's mind and thus becomes less salient as the series goes on.

Cinder's moral identity is one of her more salient identities apparent throughout the series. Throughout, Cinder tries to behave in accordance with her moral identity standards. In the beginning of the series, Cinder believes that being Lunar precludes one from being a good person. As Meyer notes in *Cinder*, Lunars are, according to the Earthen viewpoint, "a greedy and violent race" (43). Once Cinder learns that she is Lunar, not Earthen like she had always believed, her moral identity becomes much more salient because she is now part of a group she had never considered could be moral. Because her moral and Lunar identity meanings are at odds, Cinder spends a lot of time trying to reconcile the two.

In the series, Cinder considers the Lunar queen, Levana, as her major counter-role, and that is who she most fears she will become. As Meyer writes in *Cinder*, Lunars are "a greedy and violent race, and Queen Levana was the worst of all of them," after which Meyer describes how Levana was believed to be involved in murders and mutilation of others in order to gain and maintain her status as queen (43). This involvement with murder and disfigurement designates Levana as a bad person, the opposite of what Cinder strives to be. At several points throughout the series, such as the Rieux Tavern incident and the escape from Farafrah (both discussed in detail below), Cinder begins to question her moral identity meanings because her behavior and the reflected appraisals she perceives are at odds with those meanings. In order to reduce the distress she feels from her identity meanings and the reflected appraisals not lining up, Cinder attempts to use her glamour differently than Levana uses hers. In this way, Cinder could still use

her glamour, the ability that makes her Lunar, while still behaving in ways that align the reflected appraisals with her moral identity meanings.

Cinder's identity meanings can be gleaned from different interactions throughout the series, though two specific interactions really stand out as defining her moral identity. In *Cinder*, Kai asks Cinder, "Imagine there was a cure [for the plague], but finding it would cost you everything. It would completely ruin your life. What would you do?" to which Cinder responds, "Ruin *my* life to save a million others? It's not much of a choice" (229, emphasis in original). Here we can see a very specific example of Cinder valuing others' lives above her own, a trait typically associated with 'good' people. We see this particular trait appearing again in *Winter*, the final book in the series, when Cinder surrenders to Levana's new head thaumaturge, Aimery.

In this particular situation, Aimery came to the sector where Cinder and her companions were hiding while in the initial stages of their rebellion against Levana. Aimery begins killing the citizens, hoping to force Cinder out (*Winter* 352). After the first execution by Aimery, Cinder thought, "She would kill Aimery. She would *destroy* him" (352, emphasis in original). After the second death, Cinder "found herself wishing someone would betray her just so it would end. Just so the choice would no longer be hers" (353). While Cinder wants to remove the threat and protect the citizens, she is unable to act because of both indecision and the interference of her companions. However, after Aimery begins torturing Wolf's mother, Cinder decides to take action (355). With this, we see Cinder ultimately choosing to act as a selfless person, as exemplified in her explanation when she surrenders to Aimery,

I'm *surrendering* to you . . . And if that means I have to lose so these people can go free, so be it. What *you* don't seem to realize is that this isn't about me. It's about the people

who have lived in oppression for far too long. Levana's rule is coming to an end. (357, emphasis in original)

Here Cinder keeps the welfare of others above her own. Based on her actions throughout the series, one of the core identity meanings Cinder holds is that the welfare of others is more important than her own, and this feeds into her moral identity standard.

Cinder's Cyborg Identity

The reader first sees the cyborg and mechanic identities shortly after the first novel, *Cinder*, begins. *Cinder* begins with Cinder removing her cyborg foot, waiting for the replacement to arrive (3). Meyer also states, "Cinder was the only full-service mechanic at New Beijing's weekly market" (3-4). In fact, Cinder is "the best mechanic in New Beijing" (10). With these clues from Meyer, the reader understands that Cinder is a cyborg and a mechanic, arguably Cinder's two most-salient identities at this point in the series.

Within the first few pages, Meyer ensures that the reader knows where cyborgs stand in New Beijing society through the figure of Chang Sacha, the market's baker. When Sacha notices her son playing near Cinder's booth, she

push[es] through the crowd in her flour-coated apron. "Sunto, come here! I told you not to play so close to—"

Sacha met Cinder's gaze, knotted her lips, then grabbed her son by the arm and spun away. The boy whined, dragging his feet as Sacha ordered him to stay closer to their booth. (*Cinder* 5)

In this scene, the reader sees how cyborgs can be treated within Earthen society. As the reader learns a few pages later, this is how cyborgs tend to be treated in New Beijing and elsewhere on Earth; "The fewer people who knew [Cinder] was cyborg, the better. She was sure she'd go mad

if *all* the market shopkeepers looked at her with the same disdain as Chang Sacha did” (10). Cinder’s cyborg identity is possibly the most salient identity in the first novel because she is constantly aware of how those who know she is cyborg treat her, and to mitigate this negative treatment, she needs to behave in ways that do not meet the identity meanings that most Earthens have for cyborgs.

Cinder not only receives this sort of treatment from the market’s baker, but also at home. This is due not only to Cinder’s cyborg-ness, but is also in keeping with the Cinderella folktale on which *Cinder* is based. Cinder’s stepmother and older stepsister also despise her for being cyborg. Near the end of the first novel, Pearl, Cinder’s older stepsister, says she would describe Cinder as “a disgusting creature” (*Cinder* 304). After Cinder’s younger stepsister, Peony, gets taken to the plague quarantines, Cinder tells Adri, her stepmother, “I’m so sorry [. . .] I love her too” (63). Adri then displays the Earthen mindset toward cyborgs, saying “Don’t insult me [. . .] Do your kind even know what love is? Can you feel anything at all, or is it just . . . programmed?” (63). Here also, we see Cinder being defined by one aspect of her identity, the fact that she is a cyborg. Adri furthers this dehumanization of Cinder when she tells Cinder, “Don’t just stand there, pretending to understand what I can be going through. You are not part of this family. You aren’t even *human* anymore” (279). When Cinder tries to defend herself, saying, “I am human,” Adri denies this because of one alteration Cinder’s surgeons made, “No, Cinder. Humans cry” (279). This particular trait Cinder lacks is mentioned multiple times throughout the series, and is a constant reminder of how Cinder is cyborg.

Adri’s, Pearl’s, and Sacha’s constant dehumanization of Cinder, their labeling of her as simply a cyborg, greatly influences Cinder’s interactions with others, particularly Kai. Cinder constantly tries to hide the fact that she is cyborg from people who do not already know.

Throughout the series, the reader sees Cinder change in this regard. When Cinder first meets Kai, she has removed her cyborg foot, but stands up because she recognizes Kai as the prince (*Cinder* 7). As such, she is balancing on her human foot and leaning on the worktable in front of her. At one point in the conversation, “Cinder dared to lift one stabilizing hand from the table, using it to tug the hem of her glove higher on her wrist” (8). This shows Cinder trying to keep her cyborg identity secret even though she may fall in doing so, which demonstrates how the constant dehumanization has led to Cinder being afraid of anyone finding out she is cyborg. This is particularly telling of how salient her cyborg identity is; it is constantly on her mind because she fears poor treatment when others find out, and so she tries to keep the identity hidden as much as possible.

As the series progresses, though, Cinder begins to feel less and less as though she needs to hide her cyborg identity. One reason for this is likely that she was exposed as a cyborg internationally through the net following the fiasco at the ball at the end of *Cinder*. Since the entirety of Earth with access to media was able to see that she was, in fact, a cyborg, Cinder attempting to hide that fact would be silly. Also, during and after her prison escape, it was probably one of the lower priorities on her list. As Cinder’s situation changed, her identity meanings changed because her priorities changed. In this way, her situation determines the salience of her identities, even though they may be person identities that follow her through situations, like her cyborg identity. Though the cyborg identity is treated as a person identity in this thesis, it is also a social identity. However, this thesis limits its analysis of the cyborg identity to its person identity aspects in order to maintain a focus on Cinder’s specific identities.

After Cinder and her group successfully kidnap Kai, Kai seeks Cinder out when he awakens and when he begins the confrontation about her kidnapping him, “She rubbed her wrist,

tempted to call up a glamour to disguise her cyborg hand. Which was also stupid, of course. And besides, it was something Levana would have done” (*Cress* 531). This demonstrates Cinder’s desire to continue hiding her cyborg identity from Kai, even though he already knew she was a cyborg. After this particular confrontation deescalates into a conversation, Cinder answers questions Kai has about her being cyborg. At one point, when Cinder is about to show Kai her retina display, she was “hating herself a little bit for what she was about to do. But what did it matter now? He would never again be fooled into thinking she was human” (543). This further demonstrates Cinder’s continued desire to keep her cyborg identity secret in spite of the secret already being revealed. Though the identity meanings and the salience of the identity have shifted since she was revealed as a cyborg at the ball, the long-held meanings and the habits she developed to hide that identity persist.

Near the beginning of the fourth novel, *Winter*, Cinder was just finishing some mechanical maintenance when Kai came to talk with her. As Cinder removes the gloves she had been wearing when she and Kai begin their conversation,

There was still a tinge of panic at the action—her brain reminding her, out of habit, that she wasn’t supposed to remove the gloves in front of anyone, especially Kai—but she ignored it. Kai didn’t blink at the unveiling of her cyborg hand, like he didn’t even notice anymore.

She knew *she* was thinking about it less and less. Sometimes she was even surprised upon seeing a flash of metal in the corner of her eye when she went to pick something up. It was strange. She’d always been aware of it before, mortified that someone might see it.

(92)

This particular situation demonstrates that Cinder's identity is somewhat changing. She has always considered herself a cyborg, but her meanings for that identity have changed in that she now no longer feels "mortified" or ashamed of being a cyborg (*Winter* 92). Not only is this a change in identity meanings, but it is also a change in the identity salience of her cyborg identity. The cyborg identity becomes less salient across situations, meaning that, while it is still a person identity (one that follows the person across situations and roles), it is not as frequently called up as the identity to be displayed, or protected/hidden. In fact, later in *Winter*, Cinder thinks,

Putting [the 'heavy gloves'] on had dredged up a number of memories. There had been a time when she wore gloves everywhere, when she'd been so ashamed of being cyborg she refused to let her prostheses show. She couldn't recall when that had changed, but now the gloves felt like a lie. (167)

Here, again, we see how Cinder's identity meanings have changed; no longer is being cyborg something to be "mortified" or "ashamed of", something to be hidden. Now, being cyborg is a lower-salience part of her overall identity, and Cinder becomes less conscious of it over time.

As the series progresses, Cinder meets more and more people, most of whom do not react either positively or negatively to the fact that she is cyborg. Because the reflected appraisals Cinder perceives do not highlight her cyborg identity, and because she herself does not highlight it, it becomes a less salient identity. The decrease in the need to hide her cyborg identity comes from this decrease in her cyborg identity's salience. As Cinder gains companions, increasing the quantity of relationships, and their friendships deepen, increasing the quality of the relationships, Cinder's commitment to the cyborg identity decreases as well. Because Cinder has more quality relationships that do not involve her cyborg identity, or the need to hide it, she becomes less committed to the identity, which also helps with the decreased salience of that identity.

Although Cinder's cyborg identity salience does decrease throughout the series, she does still occasionally recognize her cyborg identity and become uneasy about it, usually when Kai is around. For example, when Cinder wakes up after being stabbed by Levana, a doctor is working on her cyborg hand. Cinder's sudden awakening startled the doctor, and when the doctor asked if she could finish working on Cinder's hand, "An awkwardness started to creep up Cinder's spine—her palm open and vulnerable, right in front of Kai./But then she felt silly and vain, so she nodded" (*Winter* 768). This shows that, while Cinder's cyborg identity meanings have changed and mostly the identity exists subconsciously (being less salient than previously), it does on occasion become more salient. This lessened salience can especially be seen in both the video calling for revolution as well as Cinder's coronation. When the video starts playing, Cinder notes, "When they had recorded the video aboard the Rampion, she . . . preferr[ed] the people to see her as she was. [. . . and had] her cyborg hand on full display" (*Winter* 313). She further notes that "She looked nothing at all like her regal, glamorous, powerful aunt" (313). When Cinder describes her coronation dress, she reflects, "She had expected the seamstresses to also make gloves to cover her cyborg hand, but they didn't. 'No gloves,' one of the seamstresses said when she asked. 'And no veil'" (811), the veil reminiscent of Levana. Indeed, Cinder and a number of the individuals around her seem to not notice and not care that she is cyborg. Cinder no longer feels the need to hide her cyborg hand as strongly because those around her do not dehumanize her because of it; it is an aspect of her identity, but not one they need to fear.

Cinder's Lunar Identity

Though Cinder's cyborg identity is a major factor throughout, it does become less salient of an identity as the series progresses. As the cyborg identity decreases in salience, two other major identities that Cinder holds throughout the series increase in salience. These two identities,

being Lunar and being a good person (moral identity), are at odds throughout the series, especially since Cinder often compares herself to the Lunar Queen Levana, her aunt.

In the beginning of the series, the reader learns about the Earthen perspective of Lunars from Cinder's perspective before she found out she was actually Lunar. Cinder thinks,

Lunars were a society that had evolved from an Earthen moon colony centuries ago, but they weren't human anymore. People said Lunars could alter a person's brain—make you see things you shouldn't see, feel things you shouldn't feel, do things you didn't want to do. Their unnatural power had made them a greedy and violent race, and Queen Levana was the worst of all of them. (*Cinder* 43)

From this Earthen description of Lunars, we see the types of identity meanings Earthens assign to Lunars. We see obvious fear and distrust for Lunars from the Earthens because of an unfair balance of power. Lunars have the ability to manipulate Earthens, but Earthens do not have that ability, or a defense against it, and so they feel insecure and afraid.

Cinder further demonstrates the identity meanings Earthens as a culture apply to Lunars in interactions with Dr. Erland, specifically when he tells her that she is Lunar. At first, Cinder denies being Lunar, saying, "I am not one of *them!*" and then thinking,

To be cyborg *and* Lunar. One was enough to make her a mutant, an outcast, but to be *both*? She shuddered. Lunars were a cruel, savage people. They murdered their shell children. They lied and scammed and brainwashed each other because they *could*. They didn't care who they hurt, so long as it benefitted themselves. She was not one of them. (*Cinder* 178)

Here Cinder is demonstrating how Earthens view Lunars as well as cyborgs. She echoes this later in the novel, as well, when contemplating telling Kai that she is cyborg and Lunar;

She drew back, knowing she should tell him. He thought she was a mere mechanic, and he was, perhaps, willing to cross *that* social divide. But to be both cyborg and Lunar? To be hated and despised by every culture in the galaxy? He would understand in a moment why he needed to forget her. (*Cinder* 292)

This, again, demonstrates how Cinder and others like her are seen by Earthens. It also shows Cinder early in the series, before her identity meanings for her cyborg identity changed.

We further see the distrust that Earthens feel for Lunars when Cinder finds out that Dr. Erland, the head royal researcher who is in regular contact with Prince Kai and his father, Emperor Rikan, is Lunar. When she says Dr. Erland's being Lunar is a potential danger to Kai and his father, Dr. Erland responds saying that Cinder is also Lunar and asking "Should I consider the prince's safety threatened because he asked you to the ball?" (*Cinder* 242). When Cinder says, "That's different!", Dr. Erland says, "Don't be dense, Miss Linh. I understand the prejudices. In many ways, they're understandable, even justified, given Earth's history with Luna. But it does not mean we are all greedy, self-serving devils" (242). With this interaction between Cinder and Dr. Erland, we see that Lunars are just like Earthens in that they have good people and "devils" among them (242).

When Cinder first learns she is Lunar, her commitment to that identity is zero, since she has no quantity or quality of relationships directly tied to it, and the relationships she does have would likely suffer because of the knowledge that she is Lunar. For example, when Kai learns that she is Lunar, he turns his back on her (*Cinder* 368). Despite not having any commitment to her Lunar identity, Cinder begins to accept that she is Lunar relatively shortly after Dr. Erland tells her she is; as Meyer writes,

Denial had run its course until it had nowhere else to go. She was Lunar.

But she was not afraid of the mirrored surface, not afraid of her own reflection. She couldn't understand what Levana and her kind, *their* kind, found so disturbing about it. Her mechanical parts were the only disturbing thing in Cinder's reflection, and that had been done to her on Earth. (*Cinder* 190)

With this quote, we see that Cinder accepts, at least outwardly, that she is Lunar, but still considers herself different from Lunars, particularly in regard to the mirrors and how the Lunars dislike them because they, as well as digital recording equipment and androids and shells, can see through Lunar glammers. Peter J. Burke's feedback loop within Identity Theory represents the Symbolic Interactionism concept of the looking-glass self. With the concept of the looking-glass self, one measures themselves against others to see where they fit within society. They also measure themselves against their own identity standards. Cinder appreciates the ability of mirrors to see through to reality, which allows her to see herself as she is and also allows her to separate herself from this new identity she has, her Lunar identity. As she comes to embrace her Lunar identity more, she eventually understands "[w]hy [Levana] hates [mirrors] so much" (*Cress* 548); however, in the first novel and through most of the third novel, Cinder appreciates this separation from Lunars and reaffirmation of her moral identity, since not being Lunar allows her to be a moral person, in her mind.

Interestingly, the looking-glass self concept from Symbolic Interactionism would seem to act as a mirror; however, it is different from a mirror. The mirror itself can show reality; however, the looking-glass self is based off perception of others' perceptions. A Lunar can manipulate this looking-glass self through the use of their glamour. A mirror, though, cuts through this manipulation and shows the Lunar as they are. In terms of symbols, then, the mirror might symbolize the fact that, despite how we portray ourselves, there is a true self, or at least a

base self, that we all have buried beneath all of the effort to meet these identity meanings we hold for ourselves. Even though the mirror has the ability to show this base self, there is still the possibility of interpreting it to fit our perceptions or identity meanings. However, the farther from this base self we view ourselves, the more disquieting the show of reality becomes, as we see with Cinder as she becomes more committed to her Lunar identity.

Though Cinder seems to conditionally accept her Lunar identity, she does not seem to change her meanings of the Lunar identity, or if she does, it is only slightly. Because her identity meanings for what it means to be Lunar do not change, and she does not consider that she possesses any of the identity meanings for Lunars, her commitment to that identity is minimal, if it does exist. At this point in the series, since Cinder still has no relationships that are positively or negatively affected by her Lunar identity, she still has no commitment to that identity. Later in the series, Cinder appreciates the ability of mirrors to cut through the glamour, allowing her to see herself as she is, rather than through her own glamour, which differs from Levana's thoughts on mirrors (*Cress* 227).

As the series progresses, though, Cinder's acceptance of her Lunar identity increases. During the battle with Levana at the ball, Cinder

could see electricity sizzling across the steel surface [of 'her white-hot metal hand'], but she couldn't tell if it was her human or cyborg eyes detecting it. Or maybe, not human. Not cyborg.

Lunar." (*Cinder* 364)

With that small thought, Cinder seems to accept that she is Lunar, even more so than when "Denial had run its course," quite possibly because she was able to at least see bioelectricity, and

being able to see and manipulate bioelectricity is part of what defines a ‘normal’ Lunar; it is one of the meanings associated with that identity (190).

Cinder seems to more fully accept that she is Lunar after her discussion with Dr. Erland in her prison cell. As Cinder prepares to escape prison, she notes,

A tingle passed down her spine. A strange new electricity was thrumming beneath her skin, telling her she wasn’t just a cyborg anymore. She was Lunar now. She could make people see things that weren’t there. Feel things they shouldn’t feel. Do things they didn’t mean to do. /

She could be anyone. *Become* anyone.

The thought both sickened and frightened her, but the resolve made her calm again.

When the guard returned, she would be ready. (*Cinder* 386-387, emphasis in original)

Here we see Cinder fully accepting her Lunar-ness, particularly in that she is willing and ready to use her glamour on the guard to aid in her escape. This willingness shows an increased commitment to her Lunar identity because it is accepting that she has this particular ability, which is one of the identity meanings associated with being Lunar.

Cinder’s Moral Identity

Cinder’s moral identity is arguably the most salient of her identities throughout the series. The reader sees Cinder’s moral identity and how she tries to maintain it throughout the novels, especially after she learns of her Lunar-ness and begins using her glamour, the ability that makes her Lunar. Throughout the series, Cinder tries not to be manipulative or controlling of people, a way that she maintains her moral identity as well as her difference from Levana, who is known for being manipulative and controlling others against their will.

After Cinder sees the newsfeed about Farafrah, the small town in northern Africa where she and her friends hid while Wolf recovered, being attacked and its citizens and the Commonwealth military there being slaughtered,

Her entire body was burning up with fury.

At Levana.

But mostly at herself. At her own decisions.

Because she'd known this would happen. She'd made the choice anyway. (*Cress* 546)

As Kai tries to calm Cinder down, she admits she is afraid of a number of things, including that she is “afraid that . . . the more [she] fight[s] [Levana] and the stronger [she] become[s], the more [she's] turning into her” (547). When Kai assures her that she is “not turning into Levana”, she questions, asking

“Are you sure about that? Because I manipulated your adviser today, and countless guards. I manipulated Wolf. I . . . I killed a police officer, in France, and I would have killed more people if I'd had to, people in your own military, and I don't even know if I / would feel bad about it, because there are always ways to justify it. It's for the good of everyone, isn't it? Sacrifices have to be made. And then there are the mirrors, such a stupid, stupid thing, but they—I'm beginning to get it. Why she hates them so much. And then—” She shuddered. “Today, I tortured her thaumaturge. I didn't just manipulate her. I *tortured* her. And I almost *enjoyed* it.” (*Cress* 547-548, emphasis in original)

Cinder is afraid that her identity is changing because her behavior seems to indicate such. As Burke's feedback loop indicates, feedback (reflected appraisals) are what indicate whether an individual is meeting their identity standards or meanings. This fear Cinder has that she is becoming more like Levana comes from the accumulated reflected appraisals she has received

from various individuals she has interacted with, especially Kai, Wolf, and Émilie (Scarlet's friend). Cinder perceived that Kai feared her when she went to kidnap him because she was using her glamour rather openly and his previous interactions with Lunars, such as Levana, as well as his internalized Earthen identity meanings for Lunars made him wary; that Wolf hated her for making him escape Farafrah; and that Émilie was terrified that Cinder, a Lunar cyborg, would kill her. These three major interactions (all of which are discussed in detail below), as well as others, built up and caused Cinder to fear that she was becoming Levana. Repeated inability over a significant period of time to bring meanings and behavior/reflected appraisals into alignment leads to distress and, should this continue, eventually to a change in meanings so that meanings and behavior are more in alignment with each other, which will reduce the distress the individual feels. At this point in the series, Cinder is becoming distressed because her identity meanings are not reflected by her behavior, and this has been going on for weeks. Therefore, she may be close to changing her meanings so that her behavior and identity meanings align better with each other.

Focusing on Cinder's moral identity, in particular its manifestation in regard to her Lunar glamour, we see it begin to manifest itself early in *Scarlet*, during the prison escape. When Cinder first meets Carswell Thorne (Thorne), who becomes one of her companions, she glammers him so he would leave her alone because he was annoying her. When Cinder glammers Thorne in his cell, she feels guilty because, not only was she unsure about Lunar glamour's "effect" on people, but "more than that, she didn't want to be one of those Lunars who took advantage of her powers just because she could. She didn't want to be Lunar at all" (*Scarlet* 53). This demonstrates that Cinder, while she had accepted her Lunar identity, was still figuring out where her ability to glamour people fit into that identity. The ability to use glamour is one of the

defining features of most Lunars, and so one of the identity meanings of being Lunar. However, it is easy to take advantage of others with that ability, something that would directly clash with Cinder's identity meanings of being a good person. As such, the negotiation of her Lunar and moral identities is somewhat tricky. Later during the escape, Cinder is tempted to glamour Thorne into going back to his cell, however, she decided, "No. She wouldn't take advantage of him, or anyone. She'd gotten on just fine without any Lunar gift before, she would get on just fine now" (57). Here again, Cinder is refusing to fit into the Earthen understanding of a Lunar identity.

During their escape, Cinder glamourised three people. When Thorne asked Cinder "What are they doing?", Cinder answered, "'Obeying,' she said heavily, hating herself for making the command. Hating the hums that filled her ears. Hating this gift that was too unnatural, too powerful, too unfair./But the thought to release her control over them never crossed her mind" (*Scarlet* 61). Cinder's usage of glamour gnaws at her, since manipulating others is considered something 'bad.' However, she seems to think that if it is for the greater good, and, in this particular case, to keep Levana from getting what she wants, it is not the ideal solution, but it works. In this way, she justifies her usage of glamour, though it still clashes with her moral identity.

Further development of Cinder's Lunar and moral identities occurs when Cinder and Thorne venture to Rieux, France, specifically Scarlet Benoit's farm. When Cinder and Thorne run into Scarlet's friend Émilie at Scarlet's farm, Émilie recognizes them as the fugitives on the news. Émilie is more terrified of Cinder than of Thorne, who is able to get some answers to his questions. When Cinder draws Émilie's attention away from Thorne, "Émilie broke into hysterical crying, her focus latched on to Cinder's metal hand", and she pleaded with them not to

kill her (*Scarlet* 332). After a minute of “star[ing] at the offensive limb”, Cinder realizes that “it wasn’t her cyborg half that the girl was afraid of. It was the Lunar in her” (332). Here we see a reflected appraisal that reinforces the Earthen mindset of Lunars. Because of Émilie’s reaction, Cinder leaves Thorne to get information from Émilie, who was terrified to tears. When Cinder thinks that glamouring Émilie would hasten their ability to get information on Michele Benoit, “Guilt flooded her veins a moment later, but it didn’t quite dispel the temptation” (333). After further contemplation, Cinder determines,

She was not like Queen Levana and her thaumaturges and all the other Lunars who abused this gift—brainwashed and cajoled and controlled others for their own selfish gains.

But if controlling someone were for the greater good . . . and only for a short time . . .
(334)

With this justification in mind, Cinder finally decides to glamour Émilie to hasten her and Thorne’s information gathering so they can be on their way and not get caught. This situation demonstrates a sort of shift in the Lunar glamouring identity meaning that Cinder holds. Rather than being a purely evil ability, if done for the right reasons, Cinder believes that the glamour can be useful and she is willing to use it. This shift in identity meaning for her Lunar glamour demonstrates how Cinder is decreasing the distress she feels at having the ability to glamour people while also maintaining her moral identity standards. The shift in Cinder’s identity meanings decreases the distress she feels at the initial clash between her Lunar and moral identities.

When Cinder and Thorne go into Rieux to get parts for the ship, Cinder contemplates using her Lunar gift (glamour) on Émilie;

Oddly enough, once she'd made the decision to glamour the girl into trusting them, all the doubt and guilt she'd felt about it had faded away. It had seemed so natural, so easy, so clearly the right thing to do.

The ease of it frightened her more than the lack of guilt. If it was so natural for *her*, after only a few days of practicing her / new gift, how could she ever survive against a thaumaturge? Or the queen herself? (*Scarlet* 343-344)

Indeed, Cinder has come to fully embrace the necessity of using her glamour in service of her goals. She feels no guilt or doubt, and this shows how the meanings Cinder associates with her Lunar identity are somewhat shifted to fit with her moral identity. In the case of Émilie, Cinder uses her glamour on someone without their permission, but nothing bad comes of it, and so it falls within the moral identity meanings, since she did not intentionally exercise her power over Émilie just to use it; there was a purpose behind it that served a larger goal. However, later in that section, Cinder questions how her Lunar gift may be affecting her behavior and her moral identity. She fears that using her glamour may turn her into the type of Lunar she most fears becoming, someone like Levana.

After Cinder and Thorne escape from both Commonwealth and Lunar soldiers in the Rieux Tavern, Cinder reflects on her guilt about using her glamour instinctively in the situation, particularly how it clashes with the moral identity meanings she holds. She asks how Thorne is feeling after she bandages up his shoulder, and he comments about his jacket being ruined. Cinder responds with, "It could have been a lot worse. . . . I could have used you as a human shield, like that officer" (*Scarlet* 366). When Thorne asks what happened, Cinder dodges the question, but then explains after Thorne presses her;

“I didn’t mean to. [. . .] I just panicked, and the next thing I knew, she was there, in front of me. I didn’t even think—I didn’t try—it just happened. [. . ./] This is exactly what I was talking about! Having this gift. It’s turning me into a monster! Just like those men. Just like Levana.”

She rubbed her temples, biting back her next confession.

Maybe it wasn’t just being Lunar. Maybe it ran in her blood. Maybe she was just like her aunt . . . just like her mother, who had been no better. (*Scarlet* 366-367)

This incident shows the reader the extent of Cinder’s fear of becoming like Levana, “a monster” (367). Here we see the struggle between accepting her Lunar identity and maintaining the moral identity she holds. This situation with the officer differed from the situation with Émilie. In glamouring Émilie, Cinder gained access to necessary information faster without anyone being hurt. In the tavern when Cinder glamoured the officer out of instinct, the officer acted as “a human shield” and actually died because of it (366). With these two contrasting scenarios and outcomes, Cinder is forced to question her moral and Lunar identity meanings. She needs to realign them to decrease the distress she feels, and so she needs to adjust her actions and try to fit both sets of meanings in the least distressful way possible.

Cinder’s moral identity, while it emerged early in *Scarlet*, really becomes prominent beginning in *Cress*, when Cinder takes control of Wolf, another of her companions, as they attempt to escape Farafrah. Wolf is in the midst of a breakdown, mourning the kidnapping of Scarlet, when the Eastern Commonwealth military shows up and tries to arrest Cinder and her companions. Cinder tries to convince Wolf to escape with them, but he refuses. At that point, Cinder says, “Fine. You leave me no choice.” Standing, she forced her shoulders to relax. The world shifted around her as she flipped off the panic and desperation and reached out instead for

the energy crackling around Wolf” (*Cress* 363). She led Wolf to the door of the hotel, “feeding [him] lies . . . like medicine from a drip” (363). While she was controlling Wolf like this, “From the corner of her eye, she saw his fingers twitch, but she didn’t know whether he was acknowledging that there was still hope out there, or whether he was just ticked at her for using him like this” (363). At this point, it occurred to Cinder that she was

[t]urning [Wolf] into a puppet, just like the thaumaturge that had turned him into a monster [. . . and she thought] she was no better than that thaumaturge. This really was war, and she really was in the middle of it.

If she had to make sacrifices, she would. /

What did that make her, anyway? A real criminal? A real threat?

A real Lunar? (*Cress* 363-364)

At the height of the confrontation with the Eastern Commonwealth military, the citizens of Farafrah step in and help Cinder and her companions escape. When the citizens began helping them, one of the older citizens talked about “what it’s like to not be given a choice” (368). As they escaped, Wolf said, “That woman was right . . . / There’s nothing worse than your own body being used against you” (369-370). After this comment, Cinder does apologize to Wolf for making him escape with them when he obviously did not want to, saying she could not abandon him. Here she tries to keep her behavior in line with her moral identity through apologizing for using her ability on Wolf and manipulating him into doing something he did not want to do.

Probably the most striking incident that calls Cinder’s moral identity into question is when she goes to steal the royal wedding invitations from Adri. After she has the invitations, but before she leaves, Cinder asks Adri about herself while remaining in her glamour. Adri says that

she “did all [she] could to help the girl, but she was unredeemable from the start” (*Cress* 402).

Adri’s comment angered Cinder, and

She ached to toss off her glamour, to yell and scream, to force Adri to *see* her, the real her, just once. . . . But even as she thought this, a darker yearning climbed up her spine. She wanted Adri to be sorry. . . . / She found herself reaching out with her mind, detecting the waves of bioelectricity that shimmered off the surface of Adri’s skin. Before she could rein in the anger that roiled through her, Cinder pressed every ounce of guilt and remorse and shame into her stepmother’s thick skull—twisting her emotions so rashly that Adri gasped and stumbled, her side slamming into the wall. (402-403)

In this scene, Cinder glours Adri, making her feel “guilt and remorse and shame” about how she had treated Cinder (403). The sudden shift in Adri’s consciousness affected her physically, causing her to fall into the wall. After glouring Adri, Cinder asked her if she could have ever accepted her, and Adri says, maybe, “if only she had been normal” (403). This response leads Cinder to think, “It made no difference. Adri could be filled with all the guilt in the world, but in her own mind the blame would always be with Cinder. Because Cinder couldn’t have just been *normal*” (403, emphasis in original). Here, Cinder uses her glamour on a whim, and a dark one at that. This starkly contrasts with her moral identity, since glouring Adri in this way in this situation did not serve any larger purpose. Cinder is also reminded that her cyborg identity is still an issue for some people.

Following this little incident, Cinder leaves the apartment,

manag[ing] to maintain a flimsy grip on the glamour [. . .] until she’d stepped into the elevator at the end of the corridor [where] She froze.

On the back wall of the elevator was a mirror.

She stared back at her own reflection as the doors slipped shut behind her. Her heart started to pound. Thankfully no one else was in the elevator to witness her, because she lost her hold on the glamour immediately, gaping into her own brown eyes and, for the first time, felt horrified of who she saw in that reflection.

Because what she'd done to Adri, twisting her emotions against her, forcing her to feel guilt and shame, for no other reason than Cinder's own terrible curiosity, her own burning desire for retaliation . . .

It was something Levana would have done. (*Cress* 404)

Indeed, Cinder just committed an act that violates her moral code, manipulating someone just because, and so seeing her own reflection with the knowledge that she had just acted as Levana might "horri[e] her (404). This is where Cinder's moral identity and Lunar identity clash most and cause her distress because her behavior does not reflect her identity standard for her moral identity. In order to meet her moral identity standard later in the series, Cinder adjusts her behavior, no longer glamouring others without at least warning them beforehand. In this way, Cinder hopes to meet her moral identity standard in a way that still allows her to use her glamour to reach her larger goals.

As the series continues, Cinder works harder to prevent herself from becoming like Levana, asking for permission before controlling others, or at least warning them that she is/will be controlling them. We especially see Cinder trying to behave in a way that reflects her moral identity when she and her companions are ambushed by Levana's military when Kai smuggles them onto Luna. Cinder asks Thorne and Wolf for permission to control them so the thaumaturge will not be able to use them as weapons against the group (*Winter* 169). We do see Cinder switch tactics in the middle of the battle, deciding to take over Wolf's thoughts, rather than his body, so

he could fight naturally (173). While this was a change in what she had originally asked Wolf permission for, it seemed the better alternative, since Wolf was a more skilled fighter than Cinder, and Cinder's trying to control his body and make him fight would only hamper his fighting and possibly cause him injury because Cinder's reflexes are not quite as fast, etc. Therefore, Cinder is still trying to respect others' wills, but also to protect them as well as she can.

When Cinder was on trial, she used her glamour to prevent Kai from doing or saying something that may have angered Levana enough to kill him right there; however, she did use the signal word they had agreed upon beforehand (*Winter* 447-448). Here we see Cinder still respecting others' wills, but also protecting them, just as she had when she and her companions had to flee Levana's ambush. During the storming of the castle, Cinder warned her allies that she would take control of them and told others to do the same to prevent people from being turned against them, similar to what she had done during Levana's ambush (683). Here again we see Cinder respecting others' wills, but also protecting them. In this way, Cinder seems able to bring her moral and Lunar identities into alignment, thereby reducing the distress she feels from those identities and behaviors being at odds with one another.

While Cinder's cyborg identity solely defined her at the beginning of the series, by the end Cinder's identity has shifted. She no longer defines herself as just a cyborg, cyborg is now one of the many identities she holds meanings for. As the series progresses, Cinder's identity shifts from the most salient identity being cyborg to the most salient identity being Lunar. She struggles with new information and has to incorporate that into her understanding of herself. As she comes to terms with her Lunar identity, she also has to renegotiate her moral identity, which is very much tied to her Lunar identity.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In applying Identity Theory, one of the social psychological theories of identity, to the young adult novel series *The Lunar Chronicles*, this thesis explored the identity processes apparent in the series. Specifically, it examined the character Cinder and analyzed three of her most salient identities and how they changed or emerged, as seen throughout the series. This analysis (chapter 4) demonstrates how pieces from Identity Theory can be applied to literature, specifically YAL. As we examined in chapter 4, Cinder's cyborg identity becomes less salient (less present/important) throughout the series. Though there are still times when Cinder's habits of hiding her cyborg identity, or feeling the need to hide it, resurface, she dismisses these, demonstrating that her meanings for her cyborg identity have changed. Her cyborg identity is no longer something to be ashamed of; it is just a part of her overall identity, and it alone does not define her, nor how she should be treated.

Chapter 4 also examined how Cinder had to renegotiate her identity standards for what it means to be a Lunar. At the beginning, Cinder thought of Lunars as "greedy and violent," words that she did not hold as part of her identity (*Cinder* 43). When she found out that she was of Lunar descent, Cinder had to reevaluate the identity meanings that she held for what it meant to be Lunar, because the meanings she previously held about Lunars did not match up with her identity meanings for herself. Cinder's Lunar identity clashed with her moral identity, initially resulting in denial of the fact, and ultimately affecting the way in which she uses her glamour, the ability that makes her Lunar. She reduced the distress she felt at controlling people, which she saw as bad, by being open and asking permission before glamouring (controlling) people, so, she was not manipulating them without their knowledge, which allowed her to still consider herself a moral person, but also to use the ability that makes her Lunar, her glamour.

In examining Cinder's identity processes as Meyer has portrayed them, the teen reader can see that identity is, in fact, a continuous process and they need not accept negative identity meanings others place on them. Indeed, Meyer utilizing the figure of the cyborg to question standard identity meanings presented in traditional fairy tales can serve as a guide, and perhaps stimulus, to help young adults also question societal standards of identity. By rewriting popular fairy tales in this way, Meyer has opened up the question of accepting societal standards of identity that are negative and detrimental to the self to a wider audience. What Meyer has done here demonstrates that others agree with Alsup's suggestion that "adolescence [is] the perfect time to read and explore literary narratives that encourage critical reflection" (4), as *The Lunar Chronicles* is specifically written and marketed toward an adolescent audience.

As the application of Identity Theory in chapter 4 demonstrates, identity is a process, or series of processes. Adding Identity Theory to the lenses through which YAL is already studied would allow for a broader understanding of identity in the field of YAL. Using Identity Theory would allow researchers to view identity as a process rather than a specific state. For example, a teen does not suddenly wake up as an adult or magically become one at the end of a novel; rather, it is a gradual renegotiation of various identity meanings that eventually leads the teen to one of their many potential adult identities. Because it is a process, we should look at it as such, and that would be made easier by using Identity Theory, which describes identity processes. Applying Identity Theory will also help us in understanding past and present popular conceptions of identity formation and maintenance. In addition, Identity Theory is one of the best tools for identity analysis available at present because it is well-established, meaning that it has been tested and proven and refined over the course of its existence. Adding an established theory

like this to the field of YAL will deepen the pool of knowledge and the ability to analyze identity as portrayed by YA authors.

As Patty Campbell has put it, “[t]he central theme of most YA fiction is becoming an adult, finding the answer to the question ‘Who am I and what am I going to do about it?’” (quoted in Nilsen, Blasingame, Donelson, and Nilsen 4). Answering this question involves going through the processes of identity formation; there are many different identities that one can have, and those identities interrelate to others. A person needs to sort through all of the identities they can and do have in order to answer that question. Specifically in *The Lunar Chronicles*, as Cinder goes through the process of answering this question, she finds that cyborg is not the only identity she has or that she can expect others to accept. At the end of the series, she finds that she is a moral Lunar, a friend, and a queen, among other identities.

The answer to Campbell’s question is multifaceted. Part of this multifaceted identity comes from the current world in which we live. As other YA scholars have argued, some YA books use specific characters to question dichotomies; for example, in the article “‘A girl. A machine. A freak’: A Consideration of Contemporary Queer Composites,” Jennifer Mitchell examines how Cinder, as well as a YA character from another book series, blur the lines of dichotomies, Cinder specifically blurring the line of human and machine, which is Haraway’s definition of a cyborg. In this sense, Marissa Meyer may be using Cinder to question long-standing dichotomies, such as that of human-machine and suggesting hybridity as an alternative, and she questions these long-standing dichotomies by using identity processes. We can apply the identity processes studied by Identity Theory to *The Lunar Chronicles* series, as demonstrated in this thesis, and this can help us see what Meyer is saying about identity.

As mentioned above, this may help teens to more actively question societal standards of identity (the meanings applied to certain individuals based on their position within society) as well as the process of categorizing oneself or others. From this analysis, teen readers can hopefully see that they do not have to be defined by others. They can define themselves. Applying this specific type of analysis to the secondary classroom can help students to understand identity more in-depth and teaching specifically to identity processes and meanings as seen in YA texts can hopefully help students to understand their own identity processes and meanings better. Unfortunately, *The Lunar Chronicles* series itself is too long to use in a secondary classroom, but applying Identity Theory in the same fashion to a smaller text or set of texts would certainly yield similar results.

By applying Identity Theory to YAL, it will help us see how the processes that social psychologists have identified in their studies are present in literature as well. This will help us to broaden our view of identity as seen in current literature on YAL, allowing us to see past and present popular conceptions of identity formation and maintenance, as applied by authors. For example, in applying these processes from Identity Theory to *The Lunar Chronicles*, we can see how Meyer has portrayed the process of identity formation in the particular character of Cinder. Doing so has allowed us to see that Identity Theory processes can be applied to literature in addition to their normal application within Social Psychology. Moving forward, we can apply this type of analysis to more texts, allowing us to see a bigger picture of how identity has been conceptualized by authors in the present. Taking the current theory and applying it not only to contemporary young adult fiction, but also to past fiction could help us to gain a better understanding of how our societal views on identity (both meanings and processes) and its creation and maintenance have changed over time. This thesis would be the first step in working

toward this goal of understanding through the lens of Identity Theory the general trend in popular conceptions of identity formation and maintenance as they have been portrayed in past literature as well as contemporary literature.

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