IDENTITY CRITICISM: SELF-VERIFICATION PROCESSES OF FE(MALE) CHARACTERS IN *HOWARDS END* BY FORSTER

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to unearth gender identities of both female and male characters in the novel entitled *Howards End* (1910) by E. M. Forster through the lenses of identity criticism. As an author, having an intuitive sense of what his readers wanted as an author, Forster observes the relationships of the people and describes all aspects of human life genuinely in this novel. Forster narrates his characters as the representatives of real life in the Edwardian period to his readers with their own weaknesses and strengths. Thus, this paper attempts to analyse gender identities of the characters through identity criticism. Additionally, this paper also attempts to uncover how both female and male characters verify their own gender identities in the Edwardian period where gender roles are gradually blurring. Accordingly, this paper examines the self-verification processes of the characters through the lenses of identity criticism with a focus on "input", "identity standard", "comparator" and "output". This study concludes that both female and male characters search for maintaining their social relationships in contexts where their identities are verified. Also, it is concluded that the characters prefer to interact with the others who approve of their identities and avoid those who do not. It is also found that what affects identity standards most is the "comparator" and "error signal", both of which are directly dealt with the society itself.

Keywords: Forster, *Howards End*, Identity, Identity Criticism, Self-verification

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KİMLİK ELEŞTİRİSİ: FORSTER'IN *HOWARDS END* ROMANINDA KADIN VE ERKEK KARAKTERLERİN KENDİLERİNİ DOĞRULAMA SÜREÇLERİ

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı E. M. Forster tarafından kaleme alınan *Howards End* (1910) adlı romandaki kadın ve erkek karakterlerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerini kimlik eleştirisi bağlamında ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bir roman yazarı olarak okurlarının ne istediği ile ilgili güçlü bir sezgiye sahip olan Forster, bu romanında insan ilişkilerini gözlemler ve insan yaşamının tüm yönlerini gerçekçi bir biçimde tasvir eder. Forster, romanındaki karakterleri zayıf ve güçlü yönleriyle Edward döneminin gerçek hayatın temsilcileri olarak okurlarına sunar. Bu nedenle bu çalışma karakterin toplumsal kimliklerini kimlik eleştirisi bağlamında çözümlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu makale toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin giderek bulanıklaştığı Edward döneminde hem kadın hem de

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erkek karakterlerin kendi kimliklerini nasıl doğrulamaya çalıştıklarını kimlik eleştirisi bağlamında çözümlemeye çalışmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmada karakterlerin kendi kimliklerini doğrulama süreçleri "girdi", "kimlik standardı", "karşılaştırıcı" ve "çıktı" gibi unsurlara odaklanarak incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın sonucunda hem kadın hem de erkek karakterlerin, kimliklerinin doğrulandığı bağlamlarda sosyal ilişkilerini sürdürme arayışında oldukları saptanmıştır. Çalışmada, karakterlerin kimliklerini onaylayan diğer kişilerle etkileşime girmeyi tercih ettikleri ve onaylamayanlardan kaçındıkları sonucuna da varılmıştır. Ayrıca kimlik standardını en çok etkileyen unsurların başında, toplumla doğrudan ilgili olan "karşılaştırıcı" ve "hata sinyali" unsurları olduğu bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Forster, *Howards End*, Kimlik, Kimlik Eleştirisi, Kendini doğrulama

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Introduction

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970), English novelist, social and literary critic, has been remarkable for his use of humanism, liberalism, and intellectualism in his writings, which are the foremost qualities of the 20th century. Even though not all his novels were written in the Edwardian period (1901-1910), they are all considered Edwardian novels and Forster an Edwardian writer; as Hynes puts it: "Forster's novels are Edwardian, not in terms of publication dates alone, but in their atmosphere and in their values; they speak from that curious decade between the death of Victoria and the First World War […]" (1972, p. 4). Brander, like Hynes, claims that Forster's novels are Edwardian, including *A Passage to India*, saying: "Forster's novels are Edwardian, even the Indian one, and they describe a world which existed before the breaking of Europe and which has altogether gone" (1968, p. 11). Undeniably, as an Edwardian novelist, Forster articulates the real aspects of human life in all his novels, including *Howards End* (1910).

In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster is seen to have been occupied with characters' relation to actual life in novels. He asks a thought-provoking question with a focus on the real-like characters in novels: "What is the difference between people in a novel and people like the novelist or like you, or like me, or Queen Victoria?" (1927, p. 34). To him, "it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its source: to tell us more about Queen Victoria than could be known, and thus to produce a character who is not the Queen Victoria of history" (1927, p. 34). As Forster implies, the hidden aspects of life are revealed through the external signs produced by the characters in the realm of action.

Forster, as an "advocate of reason, intelligence, culture, tolerance and civilization against barbarity and provincialism", explicitly "speaks out against the manners and morals of the British middle-class in his novels" (Sugate, 2012, p. 36). However, as Edwards puts it: "[Forster] does not attempt to persuade us [readers] that they are real, merely that they might be: he suggests that they behave in ways familiar to real people" (2002, p. 93). The quote explicitly reveals that what Forster's main purpose is not to convince readers that the characters are real, but the characters can be real-like people who might be living around them. Such an implication also reveals that "stories give us [readers] versions of real-life events so that we can exercise our moral judgment, hone our skills in making ethical decisions" and that as readers "we learn to make ethical judgments by learning to sympathize with others' experiences as reflected in literature" (Caughie, 2010, p. 212). Then, it may be concluded that the characters in *Howards*

End may most probably be the representatives of real people in Edwardian society according to the perspectives of mimetic theory[2]. In other words, *Howards End* presents readers with narratives from real lives as implications of real-life events and ethical judgments, which are associated with the identity behaviour of the characters.

As suggested, identity criticism is influential in explaining identity behavior of the real like characters in relation to its "interactional", "structural" and "perceptual" aspects. Remarkably, the concept of identity behavior is explicated in the works of many scholars. Among them, the explanations made by McCall and Simmons (1978) highlight the concept of identity behaviour in conformity with its interrelation with "the others" in the society. To them, identity behavior or, in some sense, identity performances are "result of actors attempting to interrelate their identities with those of others in a situation" (cited in Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 54), where the context is either definite or indefinite. On the one hand, identity behavior is regarded as "a function of how salient an identity in one's overall hierarchy of identities" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 54). On the other hand, identity behavior is considered as "a function of the relationship between perceived meanings of the self in a situation and identity-standard meanings" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 54). Explicitly, the factors that influence the salience of an identity commonly depend on how committed one is to that identity.

As indicated previously, the purpose of this paper is to uncover how both female and male characters verify their own gender identities in the Edwardian period where gender roles are gradually blurring. In order to do this, giving a brief explanation about self-verification theory might be helpful in appreciating how the characters verify their own identities in Edwardian society. In a broader sense, self-verification theory asserts the idea that "people prefer others to see them as they see themselves, even if their self-views happen to be negative" (Swann, 2012, p. 23). According to Burke and Stets, self-verification theory argues that "people desire to confirm what they already believe about themselves and that persons will seek to maintain their self-views in the face of resistance" (2009, p. 56). Apart from Burke and Stets, William Swann and his colleagues (1990; 2005) have also contributed to the theory in a more global sense by maintaining that individuals in a society create a verification context for themselves. Moreover, Swann (1987) has also made his contributions by revealing that individuals employ numerous approaches in interacting with others. Besides, with their study, Swann, Pelham, and Krull (1989) have made an important influence on the theory itself by suggesting that individuals prefer to interact with others who approve their identities and avoid those who do not.

As briefly explained in the part above, with regard to self-verification theory, it is apparent that individuals search for maintaining their social relationships in contexts where their identities are verified. Specifically, the "individuals are dependent upon others to provide a steady supply of self-verifying feedback, and in so doing, a self-verifying environment develops" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 59). However, it does mean that self-verification is only positive. According to Burke and Harrod (2005), an individual

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[1] Mimetic theory suggests that the characters are prototypes of actual human beings in literature. Auerbach states that the most important aspect of realistic literature is its "imitation of real life and living" (2003, p. 119) and its "direct imitation of contemporary reality" (2003, p. 258). For further information about mimesis see, Auerbach, E. (2003). *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. USA: Princeton University Press.

can confirm his/her own identity even if that identity is undesirable in the eyes of any given society. Notably, context is the main factor in maintaining any social relationships. Equally, self-verifying feedback and self-verifying environments are also important in maintaining any mutual relationship. In the novel, the members of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels continually give self-verifying feedback in self-verifying environments to maintain their relationships.

Self-verification Processes of Fe(male) Characters in *Howards End*

The novel entitled *Howards End* revolves around three families, the Schlegels, the Wilcoxes and the Basts. In this work, Forster criticizes gender roles through three distinctive families in the Edwardian period. According to Hoffman and Haar, *Howards End* sums up "a Europe on the brink of a world that will forever change the fortunes of England" by unveiling the conflict between "two upper-middle-class families, one descended from English yeomanry (or the folk), the other from cultivated German burghers" (1999, p. 52). Undeniably, Forster develops the plot of the novel through English and German characters around gender issues with a focus on gender discrimination. By juxtaposing traditional Victorian stereotypes with contemporary Edwardian characters in the novel, Forster highlights gender-specific roles, all of which are unsympathetically criticized by Forster himself, in Edwardian society. At the very beginning of the novel, the German Schlegels accidentally meets with the Wilcoxes while touring in Germany. Although they do not need to develop their friendships, they do. Additionally, they willingly and mutually want to maintain their social relationships in a self-verifying context where their identities are verified. Both of the family members enjoy spending time together. So, they mutually agree on improving their relationships in England, where they think it will be a self-verifying environment as well, as suggested by William Swann and his colleagues (1990; 2005). Accordingly, the Wilcoxes believe that the Schlegels should pay a visit to England to establish another self-verification context as well as self-verification feedback. In regard to identity criticism, individuals may employ many different types of strategies in order to interact with each other. So, the invitation of the Wilcoxes, as one of those strategies employed to maintain a social relationship with Margaret and Helen Schlegel, makes suggestive remarks specifically in maintaining their friendship. This invitation is accepted by the Schlegels because they think that their identities are also self-verified by the Wilcoxes. In other words, since the Schlegel sisters continually receive self-verifying feedbacks from the Wilcoxes, they agree upon paying a visit to the Wilcoxes in England.

As has already been revealed, after the prerequisite conditions are fulfilled, namely the self-verifying feedback and self-verifying environments are provided, the individuals decide with whom to contact and with whom to avoid any interaction. Explicitly, the preferences of the individuals are the indicators in maintaining their social relationships because of the fact that the individuals interact with those who confirm their identities and avoid those who do not in the society (Swann, Pelham & Krull, 1989). With regard to the self-verification identities of the two sisters, it can be revealed that whereas Margaret interacts with the Wilcoxes as her identity is confirmed by them, Helen does not prefer to interact with them as her identity is not verified. In other words, between the two sisters, whereas Helen refrains from the Wilcoxes firstly, by disengaging herself from Paul Wilcox and then, by resisting to Margaret's marriage with Henry Wilcox, Margaret prefers to have a close connection with firstly, Mrs.

Ruth Wilcox and then, with Mr. Henry Wilcox. In this case, in line with the explanations by Swann, Pelham and Krull (1989), Helen avoids any interactions with the Wilcoxes as her identity is not confirmed. Conversely, Margaret feels free to get in touch with them as her identity is confirmed when she interacts with the Wilcoxes.

The self-verification process of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels can be exemplified by their initial interactions. Remarkably, the initial social interactions of the two families suggest that they prefer to interact with each other as they believe that their identities are confirmed. For instance, the closeness between Mrs. Ruth Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel reveals that they interact with each other as they confirm their identities mutually. On the other hand, the closeness between Helen and Paul Wilcox results in difficult situations. To put it simply, at the very beginning of the novel, Helen verbalizes in her letter that "Paul and I are in love – the younger son who only came here Wednesday" (Forster, 1910, p. 3). But in a short time, Helen understands that "Paul disliked me [her] more and more" (Forster, 1910, p. 18) and then, "I [she] felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud…" (Forster, 1910, p. 18). Both of the quotations imply that neither Helen nor Paul prefer to interact with each other anymore. Helen realizes that she should refrain from Paul who never confirms her identity. However, in the course of the novel, it is seen that Helen searches for someone else with whom she is able to maintain a meaningful social relationship to verify her own identity. Thus, she accidentally meets Leonard Bast namely, a working-class man who has always been there for verifying her own identity. Because to Leonard, Helen, as an intellectual woman from the higher class, is an inaccessible entity. Yet, it is clear that Leonard would have accepted anyone from the upper-middle class as he has always had a keen interest in interacting with the people who are higher than himself. If it were not Helen, Leonard might have found someone else from the upper-middle class and, he would have ultimately verified the identity of a woman from the upper class as well.

In their work, Burke and Stets state that identities, which have cognitive and emotional processes, function at both conscious level and unconscious level (2009, p. 61). According to their explanation, the identity of Leonard Bast seems to have performed at both conscious and unconscious levels. Through a dynamic cognitive and emotional processes, the identity of Leonard is formed in relation to the society in which he lives. For instance, the way his identity functions at conscious level is presented through Jacky. Namely, he consciously wants to marry Jacky, a fallen woman, to save her from the injustices of the society. Leonard's identity, whose cognitive and emotional processes are activated, reveals his conscious level in his relationship with Jacky. Conversely, the way his identity functions at unconscious level is presented through Helen. Specifically, another proof which indicates that his identity functions at unconscious level is that Leonard does not familiarize himself with his own class and that he starts a love affair with Helen. Even if he knows that it is impossible for him to be like the Schlegels, in his unconscious level, he assumes to be someone from the upper-middle class. Unambiguously, his being incompetent in appreciating economic, cultural and social capital of the upper-middle class has prevented him from reaching the collective consciousness of the Schlegels in the Edwardian society, as revealed by Oppenheimer, "His class status prevents him from acquiring culture because he is shut out specifically from a key part of the process that simply cannot be mentored: heritage" (2011, p. 124). Yet,

in his conscious level, Leonard prefers to be with Jacky while in his unconscious level he desires to be with Helen.

Burke and Stets focus more on the behaviours conducted and the words used with conscious awareness rather than those of the unconscious level. Thus, they articulate that "It is clear that much of what we do, we do so deliberately and with conscious awareness. We choose our words carefully to reflect the meanings we intend, and we attend carefully to the words and symbols used by others" (2009, p. 61). In this regard, Leonard's reactions to Jacky can be considered as an exemplification of how unkindly he behaves her and what pejorative words he chooses in his conscious mind while reflecting his intended meaning:

"When's your birthday, Len [used as a diminutive word for Leonard]?"
"I've told you again and again, the eleventh of November next. Now get off my knee a bit; someone must get supper, I suppose" (Forster, 1910, p. 37).

Jacky Bast, "a massive woman of thirty-three" who turns out to be Henry Wilcox's ex-mistress in the later parts of the novel, is occasionally despised by Leonard, "a man of twenty-one" as she lacks literary and aesthetic taste. In the later parts of the novel, it is also shown that how arrogantly Leonard speaks with Jacky:

I'll tell you another thing too. I care a good deal about improving myself by means of Literature and Art, and so getting a wider outlook. For instance, when you came in I was reading Ruskin's Stones of Venice. I don't say this to boast, but just to show you the kind of man I am. I can tell you, I enjoyed that classical concert this afternoon (Forster, 1910, p. 37).

It is rather discernible that the behaviour conducted, and the words selected by Leonard clearly unveil his conscious awareness. Unquestionably, he behaves Jacky unkindly as she is a fallen woman. Moreover, his cruel acts towards her uncover his conscious awareness. For instance, when Jacky asks about the date of his birthday, Leonard scolds her for asking the same question over and over again. His reaction to Jacky is to tell simply to get off his knee a bit. The pejorative words that Leonard uses indicate his conscious mind. Leonard consciously humiliates Jacky whose attention is on common things rather than literature and art. Whereas the former quotation overtly reveals that Leonard humiliates her over something so trivial deliberately, the latter one indicates that what Leonard does is a result of his conscious awareness. In other words, he chooses the words intentionally and he behaves condescendingly towards Jacky.

In the novel, the identity of Mr. Henry Wilcox also reveals his conscious awareness on the society in which he is living. As known, he is the one who strongly supports the necessity of the class distinction. So, the identity of Henry, which functions with cognitive processes rather than emotional ones, is distinctive in identifying the differences between the classes. As known, he is presented as an inconsiderate man paying no attention to the troubles of the lower class. Yet, as the philanthropists of the novel, both Margaret and Helen display altruistic behaviour for Leonard. In other words, they are deeply concerned about how Leonard will survive in his job. Thus, they await Henry's advice over Leonard's unstable employment at a Fire Insurance Company. Regrettably, Henry utters his own Edwardian upper-

class views which clearly show his conscious awareness between the rich and the poor: "Don't take up that sentimental attitude over the poor [...]. The poor are poor, and one's sorry for them, but there it is. As civilization moves forward, the shoe is bound to pinch in places, and it's absurd to pretend that anyone is responsible personally" (Forster, 1910, p. 137). In another part of the novel, Mr. Wilcox plainly reasserts the idea that men have never been equal in the world, which also indicates his conscious awareness to the world itself:

There are just rich and poor, as there always have been and always will be. Point me out a time when men have been equal […]. Point me out a time when desire for equality has made them happier. No, no. You can't. There always have been rich and poor. I'm no fatalist (Forster, 1910, p. 203).

With regard to the conscious awareness of Mr. Henry Wilcox, the quotes individually illustrate to what extent his cognitive process outweighs his emotional process. In relation to self-verification theory, it can be revealed that Mr. Wilcox is a man who seems to be capable of making rational decisions and judgments. Moreover, when Mr. Wilcox's identity is analysed in terms of cognitive and emotional processes, Mr. Wilcox can be said to be an outspoken man who displays high level consciousness, which is related to mind rather than emotions. As a rich and powerful man in the Edwardian period, Mr. Wilcox consciously underestimates the people lower than himself.

In the identity-verification process, one of the most important subjects is what makes an identity and what the basic components of identity are. Burke and Stets (2009) denote that identity is composed of four basic components: "an input", "an identity standard", "a comparator", and "an output". They think that identity and thermostat resemble each other. According to them, "Just as a thermometer operates to control the temperature it 'perceives', an identity controls the meanings it perceives" (2009, pp. 62-63). Precisely, an identity is in interaction with the others in the society where s/he is exposed to many meanings from different sources such as friends, managers, relatives, parents, and so on. Besides, an identity continually tries to verify the meanings s/he perceives whether it is negative, positive, or neutral. Thus, each identity contains "a set of meanings", which defines identity of a character. So, all these sets of meanings determine the identity standard. For instance, people may be considered as more masculine or more feminine with respect to their gender identity. To put the matter another way, the attributes of femininity and/or masculinity can be said to have been changing from one society to another, and even within the same society, it shows considerable deviations. Accordingly, in the identity process, what makes sense is the perceptions, which "tell us about our environment" and which are also "our only source of information about what is happening around us" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 64). In some sense, perceptions are commonly the inputs for identities.

As for *Howards End*, each identity in the novel is donated with "a set of meanings", which explicitly or implicitly expose the identity of the characters. For instance, according to some characters like Helen, Mr. Wilcox can be a man who ignores people from the lower class whereas to some others like Margaret, he is an industrious, powerful and outspoken man. However, Mr. Wilcox believes that he has his own meanings which define his identity standard, that is mostly under the strong influence of the societal norms and cultural codes in the Edwardian period. In the novel, Mr. Wilcox continually tries to verify

the meanings he perceives whether he is powerful, authoritative and wealthy. Only if his self-meanings are continually verified by the others in the society, he becomes the man as he likes to be.

In the identity-verification process, firstly, "the inputs" can be said to be commonly related to the perceptions. Unambiguously, the perceptions of individuals, which are the main sources of information, give clear clues about what is happening around. Subsequently, the individuals control their environments through manipulating physical and social objects and interacting with the others. Manipulation and interaction can only be created through perceptions such as seeing, feeling and hearing. Through perception an individual can perceive, know, understand, reach and grasp the meaning. More explicitly, "[b]y identity-relevant meanings", the stimuli in the situation "might be characterized as having been 'tagged' or 'marked' as implying something about the identity of the perceiver" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 65) in general sense.

On the aspects of the inputs in *Howards End*, the distinctions between female and male characters can be said to have been wisely drawn by Forster. In the Edwardian period (1901-1910), a set of societal norms still dictated what types of behaviour were generally considered appropriate and acceptable for a particular gender identity in the society. Thus, the role of women in the Edwardian period was still restricted to childbearing and child nursing. Women were still regarded as angels in the houses as was the case in the Victorian period. In other words, "women were expected to serve; this was seen as 'natural', and 'femininity' was socially defined in terms of dependency, self-sacrifice and service" (Dyhouse, 2013, p. 30). Additionally, they still regulated domestic life as submissive daughters, wives and mothers. However, according to Nancy F. Cott, "Women had learned that gender prescribed their talents, needs, outlooks, inclinations; their best chance to escape their stated inferiority in the world of men was on a raft of gender 'difference'" (1997, p. 190). As stated, women realized that their so-called inferiority asserted by men was the result of huge gender differences in society. "Although increasingly challenged, particularly from the 1870s, the notion of profound sexual difference was still dominant in the Edwardian period" (Bruley, 1999, p. 13). Thus, in creating the distinctive aspects of his characters, Forster pays great attention to "the set of meanings" in the Edwardian society as it has an absolute impact on the formation of "identity standard". In other words, Forster draws clear lines of demarcation between feminine and masculine attributes in the Edwardian society in his novel. For instance, the women are associated with foreigners, natives and servants through the eyes of the Wilcoxes. The remarks of Charles on servants, "Why be so polite to servants? They don't understand it" (Forster, 1910, p. 16) and his comments about the women in a letter to Margaret, "the words were underlined, as is necessary when dealing with women" (Forster, 1910, p. 112) explicitly exemplify embarrassing attributes of males to females, whether be them servants or women in general. According to Harrington, "Both women and servants, like the poor and the criminal classes, are unknowable, inferior, potentially threatening to the imperialist western upper-middle class male. Womanhood, as understood by the Wilcox men, is represented by Ruth Wilcox and Jacky Bast" (2007, p. 284). The women, in essence, are presented as the inferior beings, who are humiliated by the men due to their sex or gender roles.

In the novel, particularly the Wilcox men give valuable insights about the inputs which are related to the perceptions of the Schlegels women. The Wilcox men are commonly under the strong influence of

Edwardian mores while establishing their identity-relevant meanings, partly because of the fact that the public spheres of men and women are separated from each other. More explicitly, the public spheres in the societies function as places in social life where individuals interact with each other and liberally discuss the issues at hand and then, identify the societal problems. However, this is not the case for the women in the novel; let alone public spheres, they are not permitted to take any initiatives in their own home. Furthermore, the women are not allowed to take important decisions as such things are generally regarded as the main concerns of men. For instance, when Margaret asks Henry where they will live when they get married, Henry replies "I have not yet decided" (Forster, 1910, p. 186), which clearly indicates that the woman has no voice to say her own preference. Henry ignores that it should be a mutual decision. Even if he adds, "What about Norfolk?" (Forster, 1910, p. 186) to his latter statement, his suggestion does not mean that he will respect Margaret's preference. According to Langland (1990), unlike Helen, Margaret remains constantly alert to social expectations of feminine attributes by decoding those expectations. Conversely, Helen is presented as the only extrovert woman who explicitly articulates her discontent of being treated as an inferior female.

Secondly, each identity, which includes in itself a set of meanings, has "identity standard". For instance, in terms of gender identity, people are generally characterized as masculine or feminine. However, the characteristic features of being more masculine and of being more feminine differentiate one culture from another and one society from another. Thus, in understanding an individual's gender identity, it is important to explore what it means to that individual to be a male or a female in his or her own culture. According to Burke and Cast (1997), with respect to gender identity, each individual is characterized by a fairly stable, or even unchanging set of meanings which clearly shows who s/he is. This notion also suggests that these meanings define the identity standard, which is accessible to the comparator.

In the novel, Mr. Wilcox has changed greatly throughout the novel, particularly when his son is sentenced to three years imprisonment. On the identity change of the individuals, Burke and Stets make an explanation about under which conditions the identity changes. According to them, firstly, identity "changes in the situation that alter meanings of the self in the situation out of congruence with the identity standard", secondly identity changes when there becomes "conflicts between two identities (or more) held by an individual", and lastly it changes when there is a "conflict between the meanings of an individual's behavior and the meanings in their identity standard" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 173). In line with the explanations by (Burke & Stets, 2009), the change in Mr. Wilcox seems to have begun with Margaret. As far as identity standard is concerned, Margaret, as the second wife of Mr. Wilcox, is completely different from Mrs. Ruth Wilcox, namely Mr. Wilcox's ex-wife. Margaret as an intellectual continually questions the things not only around her but also about the world. Moreover, she is so inquisitive that she asks many questions about social problems. Besides, as a representative of new woman in her own times, Margaret resists any kinds of social injustices particularly, towards women. Thanks to his marriage with Margaret, Mr. Wilcox changes considerably because of the fact that the new situation at home with Margaret is out of congruence with his identity standard. So, he has had to alter meanings of the self. Apart from his marriage, the second incident which makes him more tolerable and humane is his son's imprisonment. Because since that time, Mr. Wilcox has always thought of the

significance of money, commodity and economic capital. After his son's imprisonment, he has realized that money is a means, not an end. In her work, Jeane N. Olson explicitly discloses Mr. Wilcox's changing identity with these words:

His unexamined adherence to the accepted social mores inexorably leads to his collapse and his son's imprisonment and might have resulted in the destruction of his marriage to Margaret Schlegel but for her determination to nurture new family relationships based on autonomy and trust (1993, p. 348).

As indicated, the conflicting aspects of Mr. Wilcox's identity, that is, one is powerful and respectable, and the other is powerless and helpless, are revealed through his set of meanings, which plainly shows who he actually is. Additionally, there have been many examples about how Mr. Wilcox behaves contemptuously to his wife Margaret to reveal his identity standard till the end of the novel. For instance, in one incident, Mr. Wilcox asks plain questions to Margaret and expects plain answers from her. From his statements, it is inferred that he treats Margaret in a rather demeaning way to satisfy his manly superiority:

"Henry shrugged his shoulders. 'Margaret! Margaret!' he groaned. 'No education can teach a woman logic. Now, my dear, my time is valuable. Do you want me to help you or not?'
'Not in that way.'
'Answer my question. Plain question, plain answer. Do-'" (Forster, 1910, p. 203).

As implied, the identity standard of the men in the Edwardian period is presented through the character Henry Wilcox in general sense. Under the guise of a man who behaves in conformity with the identity standard of a common man, Mr. Wilcox becomes the best example of the average men in the Edwardian period. As an impudent man, he judges that the women can never learn logic even if they are educated in many aspects. Moreover, he disrespectfully informs Margaret that how valuable his time is. Furthermore, he asks whether to help her or not irritatingly. Through the character of Henry Wilcox, the husband identity standard of its own time, overtly reveals clear distinctions between a man and a woman in terms of their status quo in the society. Whereas the identity standard of the man denotes that he acts freely, commandingly and inconsiderately, the identity standard of the woman indicates that she behaves submissively, passively and tolerantly.

Thirdly, "the comparator", as its name suggests, only compares the input perceptions of meanings pertinent to the identity with the memory meanings of the identity standard. The comparator produces an "error signal", which is considered as the difference between the input and the standard. Remarkably, identity standard is a ruler for measuring input perceptions of the characters. Furthermore, identity standard is related to "the norms of the society" as well. According to Butler "the norm is a measurement and a means of producing a common standard, to become an instance of the norm, but, rather, to be subjected to an abstraction of commonality" (2004, p. 50). Yet, in order to define any kinds of norm in the society, there has to be something which can be compared. With regard to this, François Ewald (1986) attempts to find close connection between "norm" and "comparability". He states that "A principle of comparison, of comparability, is a common measure, which is instituted in the pure reference of one group to itself, when the group has no relationship other than to itself, without external reference and without verticality" (1986, p. 173). Understandably, the comparator compares the input perceptions of

meanings, which include "norms", related to the identities of both Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret with the memory meanings of the identity standard. As known, Margaret, as an intellectual, shows her interest on women's right in one of her visits to the Howards End in order to deepen her friendship and to have a conversation on a wide variety of subjects from politics to women issues with Ruth Wilcox. Moreover, as "her [Margaret Schlegel's] character is in many ways an alter ego of Forster's" (Sidorsky, 2007, p. 254), Margaret witnesses a number of incidents in her own age related to a wide range of social, political and economic problems, as revealed by Olson in the following part:

The later years of Victoria's reign saw the beginnings of public awareness of social issues in urgent need of reform. Among those then struggling to effect changes in the social, political, and economic life of England were Beatrice and Sidney Webb; the suffragettes Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters; Henry Fawcett, M.P., and his wife Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett, campaigning for equal education opportunities for women; and Josephine Butler, whose battle for women's rights was loyally supported by her husband and sons to their professional detriment (1993, p. 349).

In the novel, Mrs. Wilcox shows no concern neither on the women issues nor the other issues, which she herself considered as "man's issue", of her own age. Moreover, it is thought-provoking to see that Mrs. Wilcox is apolitical and indifferent to the advancement of women's status in the Edwardian society. Furthermore, Mrs. Wilcox's non-positioning herself, particularly in the democratization process of gender and social equality becomes rather arcane for a financially independent woman, namely for Margaret. "I sometimes think that it is wise to leave action and discussion to men […] I never follow any arguments. I am only too thankful not to have a vote myself" (Forster, 1910, p. 55). And as a response, Margaret says to her: "We didn't mean the vote, though, did we? […] Aren't we differing on something much wider, Mrs. Wilcox?" (Forster, 1910, p. 55). Ruth Wilcox responds, "I don't know, I don't know'" (Forster, 1910, p. 55). Hence, the Wilcox men also reject the female intellectual as they think women are sentimental and unstable. So, to them, "Equality was nonsense; Votes for women nonsense" (Forster, 1910, p. 16).

The conversation between Mrs. Ruth Wilcox and Margaret above is given for the purpose of explaining the function of a comparator as far as identity verification process is concerned. In order to define the function of a comparator, it is vital to refer to the historical references on the woman voting. A number of historical accounts on the reformation acts have already been given as a source of information. Hereafter, some brief information on the subject is to be given in order to explain one of the constituents of identity, namely, the comparator itself. In England, with the Third Reform Act in 1884, urban-male-working class were able to vote in the elections for the first time and yet, all women and 40 % of adult males were still without vote at that time. In 1918, with the Representation of the People Act, only the woman over the age of 30 who owned minimum property qualifications were able to vote in the United Kingdom. In 1928, with the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, all the people over the age 21 were allowed to vote in their system (Frawley, 2008, pp. 408-416). Comparing the publication date of *Howards End* in 1910 with the information given above, it is quite comprehensible that the publication date coincides with the fierce debate of the society on equal rights of man and woman on voting in the Edwardian period. As the date indicates, that is, only eight years later, the women over 30 with

identifiable qualifications are given the right to vote. When two views are compared through the comparator, it is seen that the notion of Mrs. Wilcox, which is deeply rooted in the conventional beliefs and mores of the Victorian society, is the result of a male-oriented society due to the lenses of patriarchy. On the other hand, Margaret's views are rather individualistic, idealistic and humanistic. In this sense, comparator, as one of the other factors of identity component, reveals how both of the women's identities function differently. Moreover, the error signal, which indicates Mrs. Wilcox's perceptions are not in accord with the standard in the society as a female who is from the upper-middle class, "ultimately affects the patterns and sequences" of her "verbal and nonverbal behavior" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 66), as is the case in *Howards End*.

Fourthly, "the outputs", as the last constituent of the identity system, are considered as the behavior in a particular situation. However, the behavior is mostly based on "the error signal" from the comparator. Just as input comes from the environment, output is also produced in the environment. In their work, Burke and Stets reveal the significance of the outputs in relation to the environment with the statements below:

… effect of the output behavior is to alter the environment from what it was. Specifically, it alters the symbolic character of the environment. With the symbols changed, everyone in the environment, oneself included, will have changed perceptions, which perceptions feed back up into the identity in a continuing cycle. The meanings are altered (2009, pp. 66-67).

The outputs, as the constituents of the identity, are the behaviours that are exhibited in general sense. As far as the outputs of the characters in *Howards End* are concerned, Jacky Bast can be the best exemplification whose behaviours are typically based on the error signal from the comparator. Explicitly, Jacky is the one who attracts attention with her "unthinkable" (Forster, 1910, p. 31) and indescribable qualities when she is introduced. The outputs of Jacky are visibly presented as a woman of working-class whose feminine attributes not only suggest her cultural but also her economic background:

A woman entered, of whom it is simplest to say that she was not respectable. Her appearance was awesome. She seemed all strings and bell-pulls-ribbons, chains, bead necklaces that clinked and caught - and a boa of azure feathers hung around her neck… As for her hair, or rather hairs, they are too complicated to describe, but one system went down her back, lying in a thick pad there, while another, created for a lighter destiny, rippled round her forehead. The face - the face does not signify (Forster, 1910, p. 35).

Jacky is presented firstly as a woman who is not respectable in the eyes of the society not only because of her outward appearance but also due to her immoral past. Sometimes an individual prefers to confirm her own identity even if that identity is undesirable as is the case in Jacky, as indicated by Burke and Harrod (2005). For instance, Jacky as a fallen woman verifies her identity as a mistress of Mr. Wilcox even if she knows that having a mistress identity is a negative or an undesirable one, particularly in the eyes of the society. In this quote, she is described with her outward appearance first. However, it is evident that the people judge her in conformity with her outward appearance at first glance. The narrator deliberately describes her with her outward appearance, particularly by detailing the ornaments such as ribbons, chains and necklaces rather than her face which gives an individual a meaning. Because,

according to Harrington, "Like colonised, foreign women, she [Jacky] is nothing but an exotic, exoticised body" (2007, p. 290). Moreover, she is presented as an indecent woman who had sexual intercourse with Mr. Wilcox ten years ago among many others, and whose body is commercialized in the social system. That is the reason that why her body is emphasized rather than her face, which characterizes an individual.

The following conversation between Leonard and Jacky is used in order to examine the relationship among the inputs, identity standard, comparator and the outputs, all of which are the basic components of identity, in one single conversation. Through the analysis of these components, self-verification processes of the characters are to be unearthed and thus, their identities are examined in terms of identity criticism.

> *"Len -"*
> *"What is it?" he asked, a little wearily, for she only had one topic of conversation when she sat upon his knee.*
> *"You do love me?"*
> *"Jacky, you know that I do. How can you ask such questions!" "But you do love me, Len, don't you?"*
> *"Of course I do."*
> *A pause. The other remark was still due.*
> *"Len -"*
> *"Well? What is it?"*
> *"Len, you will make it all right?"*
> *"I can't have you ask me that again," said the boy, flaring up into a sudden passion. "I've promised to marry you when I'm of age, and that's enough. My word's my word. I've promised to marry you as soon as ever I'm twenty-one, and I can't keep on being worried. I've worries enough. It isn't likely I'd throw you over, let alone my word, when I've spent all this money. Besides, I'm an Englishman, and I never go back on my word. Jacky, do be reasonable. Of course I'll marry you. Only do stop badgering me"* (Forster, 1910, pp. 36-37).

Jacky's main conversation with Leonard generally revolves around the theme of marriage because of the fact that "she only had one topic of conversation when she sat upon his knee", as a semiotic indicator. As seen, sitting upon a man's knee, as is the case in Jacky, seems to be a sign of subjugation of woman in general sense. The act of Jacky is regarded as an *input*. For Leonard, such an input by Jacky suggests that she is about to open a cycling discussion on their imminent marriage. Additionally, her endless questions whether Leonard loves her or not imply that as a woman of thirty-three, she neither trusts herself nor her lover, who is only twenty-one. As far as the identity standard is concerned, any women in the society who are in the shoes of Jacky most probably would do the same thing as Jacky does. Undoubtedly, asking endless "when questions" about marriage may commonly be related to the identity standard of females, particularly who are losing their beauty because of their ages in any given society. Considered among one of the female identity standards, being impatient is a remarkable attribute of Jacky as well. Indeed, what she wants is only to feel self-assured on her love as her past is gloomy about men. Thus, she acts impatiently for changing her social status by marrying a man. Explicitly, Jacky, as a victim of sexual exploitation, has already been subjected to the sexual abuse of the other rich men including Mr. Henry Wilcox himself. However, Leonard's intention on marrying her is noteworthy as he believes that he is going to prevent her from more exploitative acts of those men.

Remarkably, the identity standard of Leonard is relatively different than that of the other men in the society. Because no men in the Edwardian period most probably would want to marry a depraved woman who is older. Furthermore, Leonard's decision on marrying someone whose class is nearly the same simply signifies his revolt to the social order of the society. Besides, it may also indicate his desire to save the life of a young woman. He also thinks that he will never fail to keep his promise because of the fact that he is an Englishman. As inferred in the statements of Leonard, his identity standard has to do with his perspectives on morality rather than societal norms and cultural codes of the Edwardian period. Contrariwise, it is evident that Leonard's dedication has never been appreciated by Jacky herself. Because the rest of the conversation shows that Leonard has already been getting used to these questions on marriage, but with a slight implication, he seems to get tired of hearing the same things over and over again as he has complained of being harassed by Jacky.

As for the outputs, Jacky's behavior towards Leonard in a particular situation, in this case marriage, indicates that her behavior is mostly based on the error signal from the comparator. Namely, the outputs produced in the socio-cultural environment highlight the importance of marriage in the Edwardian period rather than having an illicit love affair. According to Lucy Bland, "unchastity for men was understandable and necessary for health, but for women it was unforgivable" (cited in Bruley, 1999, p. 13). Therefore, leading an illegitimate life is considered as an error signal, which signifies that the perceptions and acts of the individuals are not in accord with the standard in the society (Burke & Stets, 2009). Precisely, the fact that both Jacky and Leonard lead their lives illegitimately implies an error signal as neither their perceptions nor their acts are in conformity with the standard in the society. Moreover, even if they agree on marrying, there stands another problem. Because Leonard's family resists the idea that Leonard is to marry a corrupt woman. Yet, Leonard articulates, "I'm going against the whole world, Jacky" (Forster, 1910, p. 37). Furthermore, the relationship between Helen and Leonard is also an error signal as they have had a son born out of wedlock. In these two incidents, the society plays a major role as a comparator. For example, in the first one, both Leonard and Jacky think of marrying sooner in order not to be judged. In the second one, Helen thinks of going abroad to raise her fatherless son in order not to be condemned. As indicated, these two incidents are error signals, and the comparators act accordingly. Thus, the doers have had to change their acts in line with the standards in the Edwardian society.

In sum, gender roles in the Edwardian period were destabilized due to the growing effects of New Woman and modernism. It was asserted at this time that "women were different from but not lesser than – perhaps better than – men" (Cott, 1997, p. 190). Besides, the twentieth century feminism that "equates the Edwardian period with suffragism and a 'liberal feminist' struggle for equality" also engages itself with "self-consciously 'modern' explorations of the self" (Delap, 2004, p. 103). Shortly, gender roles were challenged, reinterpreted, and dislocated in the Edwardian period even though the gender inequalities that pervaded every stratum of society, the root of which dated back to Victorian cultural codes and societal norms, were not commonly seen as a major problem by the traditionalists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper attempts to uncover the female and male characters' identities through the lenses of identity criticism with a focus on input, identity standard, comparator, and output. In this study, both female and male characters search for maintaining their social relationships in contexts where their identities are verified. Moreover, they commonly communicate with the characters who approve of their identities and avoid those who do not. For instance, the relationship between Mr. Wilcox and Helen Schlegel can be given as an example as they both avoid being in contact with each other. The illustrations above unquestionably reveal that the factors which influence the salience of an identity commonly depend on how committed one is to that identity, whether the commitment is positive, negative or neutral. For instance, Jacky as a fallen woman realizes that her identity is not an accepted one in the eyes of the society, but she does nothing. She still prefers being the mistress of Leonard Bast as he promises that he will marry him. As far as the identity-verification process is concerned, it is apparent that Forster purposefully creates his characters with the basic components of identity. In other words, each character is remarkably donated with the inputs, identity standards and the outputs in relation to their self-verification processes. However, it is important to note that what affects identity standards most is the comparator and error signal, both of which are commonly dealt with the society. The characters tend to act in conformity with the cultural codes and societal norms of the Edwardian period. Correspondingly, it is concluded that some of the characters such as Mrs. Ruth and Mr. Wilcox, as the representatives of Victorian stereotypes, generally attempt at self-verifying their identities in conformity with the Edwardian social standards, whereas some others such as Margaret, Jacky, Leonard Bast and Helen Schlegel do not.

Ethics Committee Permission

Ethics committee approval is not needed for this study.

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