

## CONTESTING IGNORANCE AND REMEMBRANCE: THE IDENTITY (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF TURKISH CHARACTERS IN *THE BASTARD OF ISTANBUL*

*Moh Zaimil Alivin, Miftahul Huda*

Universitas Indonesia, University of Antwerp Belgium

Email: [moh.zaimil@ui.ac.id](mailto:moh.zaimil@ui.ac.id)

**Abstract:** The issue of identity (re)construction and its relation to social memory has been raised in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, written by one of the most prolific novelists Elif Shafak. The novel narrates how Turkey attempts to blot out people's collective remembrance upon the violent history of the Armenian Genocide. The story depicts the issue by showing individuals with contradictory identities of Turks and Armenian Americans who live in a dilemmatic intersection of ignoring and keeping such a memory. This article describes the identity (re)construction among Istanbulites, including Turks and Armenians, as two competing (id)entities, as depicted in *The Bastard of Istanbul*. The study is a literary criticism that focuses on the social issue of identity (re)construction. It applies Castells' (2010) theory of identity construction and Misztal's idea of social memory (2003). This study reveals that Turkish-ness identity (re)construction of the Istanbulites characters comprises three significant components of legitimation, resistance, and projection that interfere with the competing identities of Turks and Armenians.

**Keywords:** *Identity, identity construction; social memory; Turks; Armenians;*

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of identity has become increasingly complex and sophisticated because of modernity. It happens as the complexity of identity is profoundly influenced by several major changes in social, cultural, technological, and economic aspects, which give rise to the creation of a new form of society. Thus, defining the term identity is as tricky as establishing identity itself (Mahoney, 2007) because identity definition and establishment may shift continually due to social and cultural contexts. Moreover, the changing nature of identity undermines the stability of identity itself, especially in today's era of contemporary technology, migration, urbanization, and globalization (Rutherford, 1990).

Identity is no longer regarded as a fixed entity in this context, as it is constantly evolving and is continuously (re)constructed. Instead, identity seems to be self-knowledge, ongoing construction that follows any discovery or quest (Calhoun, 1994). As a result, all identities are socially and culturally formed identifications that may employ elements from geography, culture, traditions, history to collective memory (Castells, 2010a). It is in line with the concept put forth by Idrus, Hashim, and Mydin (2020), which state that theorizing identity depends on various elements, including but not limited to knowledge, personal experience, and societal norms.

Castells (2010a) argues that power dynamics and power relations frame the identity (re)construction. This process serves as the foundation for his notion on the three types of identity (re)construction: legitimation, resistance, and projection. Legitimizing identity is concerned with the origins of identity as presented by authorized institutions to prolong and legitimize their dominance. When performed by actors in a more devalued or stigmatized level, the identity is related to the so-called resistance identity, which tends to confront and encounter the impacts of the dominant one. When social actors have access to cultural resources such as memory, knowledge, religion, or traditions, they might create a project identity (Castells, 2010a). Such views frequently lead to marginalization, in which the legitimate identity has authority over the resistant one. Marginalization is viewed in this context as a problematic connection between the one who marginalizes and the one who is marginalized (Almutairi et al., 2017).

The process of identity construction is often strongly influenced by social memory. Memory becomes social since it does not occur in a social vacuum, yet in connection to sharing with others, most notably society (Misztal, 2003). Misztal (2003) conceptualizes social memory into at least three kinds: flashbulb, generational, and traditional memory. Flashbulb memory is a type of remembering that relies heavily on emotions. Emotions play an important role in remembering since emotions are constantly about the past, and memories that are not linked with such social emotions tend to fade out. Misztal (2003) argues that there is a living link between generations. As a result, generational continuity is viewed as a source of legitimacy and stability. It is consistent with the assertion that each obtains its heritage from the preceding generation as generations pass. This transmission which is often framed as memory, is somehow considered as the cornerstone of society continuity. The last type of memory is often being connected to traditions. Tradition is a source of support for the existence of a legitimate place in the social hierarchy (Misztal, 2003).

Traditions appear to be a means of generating a sense of belonging and reinforcing group identities. Traditional memory is likely to be a means for people to develop such a collective memory through the existing traditions in the form of a collection of assumptions, norms, and patterns of behavior handed down from the past that serve as a normative guide for acts and beliefs in the present (Misztal, 2003).

Literature has a remarkable role in presenting the phenomena of identity construction and the remembering and denial process. Literature is an activity that frequently positions itself to depict social phenomena that occur in actual life. In terms of identity, literature is thought to be an essential endeavor in revealing the identity (re)construction process. Although mainly implicit, literature may portray some 'models' on how identity is (re)constructed (Culler, 2000). The proliferation of identity theories in literary tradition, whether linked to such issues as racism, sexism, and classism, is to a lesser or greater degree because literature itself provides a diverse variety of resources in the identity-building process (Culler, 2000). When it comes to social memory, literature frequently describes and expresses collective social memory over the past. It is reinforced by Bakhtin (1981) that social memory presents more in-depth and perceptive knowledge of creative literature, particularly novels, which may give 'objective' details of the past.

*The Bastard of Istanbul* by Elif Shafak raises identity (re)construction and its relation to the collective memory of a heterogeneous society. It narrates the story of two families with their distinctive ties to Istanbul. The first family is of Turkish, Kazancis, who lives in Istanbul. The second family is Armenian-American, Tchakmakhchians, refugee survivors of the Armenian Genocide who live in San Francisco, the United States. The Tchakmakhchians are depicted as a family group who opposed the Turkish people over the Armenian Genocide during the last dynasty of the Ottoman Empire. *The Bastard of Istanbul* also reveals how Turkey has tried to erase the societal memory over the Armenian Genocide. It is seen as a violent part of Turkey's history by portraying Turks and Armenian Americans who deny the memory to one extent and remember it in the other.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have already been carried out on the novel and the issue. The first study is of Waniek (2014), who concentrates on the quest for the

novel's characters, Asya and Armanoush, who are of Turkish and Armenian origin. Her study focuses on Elif Shafak's cultural background and the novel's two key themes: identity crisis and Armenian Genocide. The second study is Simon's (2014) *Mythology, Taboo, and Cultural Identity in Elif Shafak's "The Bastard of Istanbul."* His study examines the mythologies and identities that appeared in the novel viewed from a cultural standpoint. The mythologies are discussed through Barthes' concept of myth. The other study is of Radu (2015). His research covers a variety of themes, including diversity, identity, and familial relations. He focuses his study on the author Elif Shafak's background and the descriptions of various characters and their roles concerning the novel's core subject. While the studies mentioned earlier raise identity issues in a broad sense, this article appears to specifically capture how identity is (re)constructed and how social memory. It encompasses the process of ignorance and remembrance and plays a critical part in affecting characters' identities through personal and collective memory.

## METHOD

This study applies the literary criticism approach, which concerns interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating literary works (Gillaspie, 2010). Literary criticism encompasses four ways of analyzing works of art: mimetic, pragmatic, expressive, and objective (Abrams, 1953). This research seeks to analyze a literary work through a mimetic approach, which views the creation of any literary works as influenced by the universe rather than as an autonomous production. This study employs sociological criticism to criticize the relationship of social phenomena and their depiction in a literary work, which deals with social issues in literature and reflects social phenomena in literary works (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). This study uses Castells' (2010a) theory of identity formation to identify and observe the process of identity reconstruction, which is strongly associated with power relations. While Misztal's theory of social memory (2003) is utilized to highlight the remarkable role of social memory in shaping the characters' identity in the novel. The data is analyzed using these theories to reveal the identity (re)construction process in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, with a part of Istanbulites' history that Armenians think exists but denied by Turks.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section addresses the findings of the research objective, viz discussing how Istanbulites' identities in *The Bastard of Istanbul* are (re)constructed. It discusses Turkish characters' identity (re)formation by contesting ignorance and remembrance over collective memory towards the Armenian Genocide by using Castells' (2010a) concepts of legitimizing, resistance, and project identity. This study identifies Turkish as the legitimizing identity, Armenian as the resistance identity, and Asya and Zeliha's ambition to be autonomous subjects as the project identity. Each aspect is supported by a description of Misztal's remembering and forgetting process to cope with the contesting identities (2003).

### The Construction of Legitimizing Identity

Legitimizing identity refers to a type of identity (re)construction process established and delivered through authority by dominating institutions. Until recently, to be a Turkish is considered as a legitimizing identity. The prominent institutions in Turkey use a variety of construction materials to establish this identity. For example, they might be in the form of social norms or something seen as must-obey rules. On the other hand, it may be expressed in a more straightforward manner, such as ordinary people's views of whether particular conduct is suitable or not for Turks.

Turkey is portrayed as a modern secular nation that was formerly a monarchy or an empire. In Castells' (2006) notion, the country's system is one of the effective instruments in regulating societies and their problems. Thus, Turkey's legitimacy as a new nation that needs to build and develop its people's identity is inextricably linked to its function as the most fundamental social institution.

*"There aren't monarchs anymore, we are a modern nation." (p. 28)*

Auntie Cevriye, one of Kazancis family members, made such a proclamation. Being a Turkish national history teacher, she demonstrates her insights into Turkey's past and current state. She added that Turkey is now a modern nation that allows its citizens to restructure their values, meanings, and identities, accommodating the transition from a monarchy to a modern state. The concept of nation-state bears a significant ideal to offer its people diverse sources of identity formation. The state plays a vital role in molding its people's identities since it frequently encourages individuals to develop their

collective characters through apparatus and institutions under its authority. The state's failure to preserve people's identities or to ensure their comfortable feeling in their own country might lead the people to (re)construct their values, meanings, and identities that deviate from the existing identity suppressed by the state (Castells, 2006).

The domination of 'authorized' institutions and apparatus, such as the state, government, politics, laws, norms, and beliefs, may threaten powerless institutions. It can manifest as concern and dread felt by the inferior oppressed groups when the powerful seek to isolate and stigmatize the opposing powerless. This circumstance is described in several narratives in the novel's plot; one of which is as follows:

*"Turk Street! Aren't they everywhere?" (p. 93)*

Recognizing that the power of the Turkish government is getting stronger and more enormous, Armenians are filled with fear and inconvenience. The above comment made by Armanoush's friend exemplifies the oppressed group's anxiety as an opponent of legitimizing identity in accepting Turkey's supremacy. It is said in the extract that the girl was despised and concerned about learning Turk street names since Turks may allude to something linked to threatening Turkey, even though it pertains to something different. It is conceivable that this is due to the dominating group's ability to discourage the existence of the resistant ones.

Concerning the domination of powerful institutions owned by the legitimizing identity, a justification is frequently sought to make its opponent feel undervalued and lack historical proof. As a result, the identity created by the legitimate identity reinforces the fact that the legitimizing identity has already handled everything properly and is likely to give arguments in any dispute addressed to them.

*"The claims of the Armenians are based on exaggeration and distortion.*

*Come on. Some go as far as claiming that we killed two million Armenians. No historian in his right mind would take that seriously." (p. 210)*

The above excerpt is from a Turk character's remarks at Café Kundera in response to Armanoush's query on the Armenian Genocide. The Non-nationalist Scenarist of Ultranationalist Movies claimed to have done extensive study, scenario writing, and historical filming about 1915. However, he discovered that the Armenians were exaggerating the situation. This argument is a by-product of the dominant institution's efforts to offer individuals such a source of meaning. Furthermore, he claims that no historian in Turkey would

accept such a claim. This passage demonstrates how the legitimate identity has already taken efforts to last and increase its dominance. As a result, the powerful impact of legitimizing identity could not be disputed.

Furthermore, the narrative depicts how Turks' true identity persuades Armenians to assume a distinctive role in comprehending the past and embracing another impact of Turkish dominant social institutions.

*Since they won't join us in our recognition of the past, we are expected to join them in their ignorance of the past. (p. 184)*

The above excerpt indicates that Turks seek to have Armenians join their historical interpretation instead of recognizing the Armenians' claims. The power relations are a kind of dominance expansion facilitated by legitimate Turkish identity. It is carried out by welcoming and expecting resistant parties, such as Armenians who attempt to fight against Turkish organizations, to settle down and accept the reality created by legitimate Turkish institutions. It is also expected to extend the dominance and elevate the legitimate Turkish identity to such a position so that the power of the legitimating Turkish identity continues being more robust and more challenging to counter.

In relation to legitimizing Turkish identity, collective memory is critical in realizing identity (re)construction. Dominant institutions frequently use memory to normalize identity as an assembling material in forming people's identities. The powerful institutions socially organize, mediate, and conventionalize the collective memory. As a result, Turkey frequently employs social memory supplied by the aide-mémoire groups such as nations and families to regulate people's identity development as a 'valid' identity.

As an influential mnemonic group in disseminating memory, Turkish culture preserves the memory through the family. The Turkish family has a history of passing down the past from generation to generation to influence the present. This functions as a source of legitimacy and stability in any family as members of society in general. According to Misztal (2003), collective memory is a basis of social stability, enabling society to put themselves in a balanced position to create a firm identity. The remembering process is described in the passage below.

*"Of course, I do," Asya said. "How can I not know the end of a story I must have listened to at least a hundred times? (p. 132)*

Asya, a Kazanci family member, is portrayed as a girl who is frequently told the same stories repeatedly. The narratives recounted to Asya demonstrate the significance of the remembering process in valuing people's identities from generation to generation. It is illustrated that family is a part of the community

that can trigger memory recall. The excerpt emphasizes the process of recalling collective memory on the bright history of the Ottoman empire to individuals brought by family as a vital mnemonic community in (re)constructing people's identity across generations. It is carried out to maintain and legitimize a powerful society's dominance. It is even narrated that Asya, a family member, listened to the same stories a hundred times. As a result, the powerful social institution purposefully utilizes the social memory accessible to them on what to forget and what to remember.

Furthermore, legitimizing Turkish identity tends to forget rather than remember. In general, the process of forgetting accomplished through legitimizing Turkish identity aims to demolish and disappear memory associated with Turkey's turbulent and violent history. The story described the forgetting process as more like a photo flash memory, which heavily incorporates such sentiments as an essential identity (re)construction. The past, which is supposed to be forgotten, is seen as a danger to society's legitimate Turkish identity. It is said several times that Turkish culture has forgotten the milieu of their terrible past connected to the bitter experience of the Armenian Genocide. As a result, the Armenians, as the resistant group, believe that there is a brainwash committed to the Turks, a persistent, organized memory erasure done by the dominating social institutions in Turkey. Several portions of the story depict the naivety of Turks who are unaware of the 1915 tragedy. The following is an extract that supports such a situation:

*I myself have been brainwashed to deny the Genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa! What kind of a joke is that? (p. 53)*

The statement above is made by an Armenian character who is irritated that a Turkish man would raise one of his relatives as a stepfather. What is important to note here is the process of massive ignorance to reject the memory over the Genocide. The term 'brainwash' depicts the tangible form of the amnesia process that Turkish social institutions actively engage in. The novel also depicts comparable difficulties with Turks' forgetting process, which explains the effect of wrecking their past from their history. It is connected to the evil side of a lawful group in fighting the resistant one in the past.

*"My family is a bunch of clean freaks. Brushing away the dirt and dust of the memories! They always talk about the past, but it is a cleansed version of the past. That's the Kazancis' technique of coping with problems; if something's nagging you, well, close your eyes, count to ten, wish it never*

*happened, and the next thing you know, it has never happened, hurray!  
Every day we swallow yet another capsule of mendacity...." (p. 147)*

The excerpt above reveals how the Turkish family, as members of legitimate Turkish society, devastate their unpleasant memories to construct a new, cleaned historical interpretation, ensuring their long-term dominance. It demonstrates how a genuine Turkish group politicizes memory to be propagated throughout society by incorporating memory groups such as nation and family. The use of such a memory in making sense of people's identities should never be taken for granted. There is always a political move to accelerate the powerful domination of social institutions, which may also be introduced in a contradictory manner, such as the extermination of some ancient landmarks, which may spark off an intense debate on the history of the resisting groups, as follows:

*It's gone. No traces left behind...*

*There are no traces, no records, no reminiscences of the Armenian family who lived in that building at the beginning of the century. (p. 182)*

Overall, Turkey's powerful institutions play a significant role in the construction of legitimizing identity. Legitimation is accomplished through the construction of norms, beliefs, traditions, customs, laws, and political controls, as well as through the use of social memory by ignoring a specific incident in the past that might hamper their domination or remembering the history that might prolong it. As a result, the dominance of legitimizing identity will continue to spread by suppressing its society and -at the same time- oppressing its opponent.

### **The Construction of Resistance Identity**

Resistance identity is created by those who are undervalued in terms of their existence and role in society. As part of the Istanbulites, the Armenian community adheres to such an identity. In this example, Armenians are depicted as survivors striving to dig trenches to protect their rights based on historical facts. The Armenian population, portrayed as a disadvantaged ethnic minority, is frequently ostracized and driven outside. As a result, they frequently attempt to oppose any systems that oppress them as a minority group. To break the limits of resistance, they use their historical background and self-identity to struggle against tyranny. It subsequently leads them to gain more supporting power from the Armenian survivors. Its purpose is to highlight the reality of oppression suffered by the group members and the

typical feeling of being worried, intimidated, and pushed to the annihilated periphery.

*"What will that innocent lamb tell her friends when she grows up? My father is Barsam Tchakhmakhchian, my great-uncle is Dikran Stamboulian, his father is Varvant Istanbulian, my name is Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian, all my family tree has been Something Somethingian, and I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the Genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa! What kind of a joke is that? (p. 53)*

The passage is expressed by an Armenian character, Dikran Stamboulian, who is concerned about her niece, Armanoush, reared by a Turkish stepfather, Mustafa. The passage clearly shows that Dikran's anxiety reflects oppression from the legitimate identity to the resistant one. Dikran, as an Armenian, expresses humiliation for having familial ties with the Armenians' common enemy, viz Turks. Dikran's action highlights the oppression perpetrated by the dominant social institution that continuously threatens the Armenian resistant group. It also emphasizes Turkish influence as introduced by Mustafa, a Turk, which may impact Armanoush's Armenianness.

In addition to underlining Armenians' undervalued status in its control, the story frequently depicts how Armenians suffer from oppression and feel burdened by the 'authorized' social institutions run by the Turks. The urge for resistance is presented to demonstrate how Armenians deal with their survival in such a stigmatized situation because their numbers, as the story reveals, are unsurprisingly diminished.

*Her face faded from determination to resignation as she slowly bobbed her head and added: "Only an Armenian can understand what it means to be so drastically reduced in numbers. We've shrunk like a pruned tree.... Rose can date and even marry whomever she wants, but her daughter is Armenian and she should be raised as an Armenian." (p. 59)*

The above remark illustrates the cause of Armenians' survival needs being significantly decreased. It is linked to the preceding excerpt, which discusses the need of Armenians to survive by developing their collectivist mentality to dig trenches and manage surviving tyranny directed at them. Furthermore, the above quote suggests that only an Armenian can comprehend the sense of being excluded, stressing the significance of Armenian identity as a resistance identity.

By contesting historical experiences to understand the bounds of resistance, resistance identity creates collective resistance against oppression.

*I'm okay, wrote Madame My-Exiled-Soul. But I've not been able to find grandma's house. In its place, there is an ugly modern building. It's gone. No traces left behind...*

*There are no traces, no records, no reminiscences of the Armenian family who lived in that building at the beginning of the century. (p. 182)*

The resistance groups need to collect and preserve memory as a building material for making sense of their history. Such a concept is manifested in the novel on how Armenians maintain their memory and history to oppose the Turkish legitimizing group's tyranny. The excerpt above depicts the stigmatized position of Armenians as a resistant community that had lost the materials needed to create their identity. Armanoush's trip to Istanbul was likewise in vain because everything linked to Armenia in Istanbul had already been dismantled.

The trauma and anxiety experienced by Armenians due to the 1915 tragedy had not been wholly forgotten. Varsenig's dread of Armanoush, who enjoys reading, is explained in the extract below. Armanoush's frequent reading habit endangered Varsenigh when it leads Armanoush to be an intellectual and would be first gotten rid of by the legitimate identity.

*"The thing is, the Armenian intelligentsia were the first to be executed so that the community would be left without its leading brains." (p. 209)*

The sense of dread and menace is caused by the legitimizing group's subjugation of the resistant group to expand their dominance. In this example, the excerpt above reveals the impact of oppression on a group of individuals opposing it. Furthermore, the suggested idea is backed by another extract from the narrative, such as the one below.

*All we Armenians ask for is the recognition of our loss and pain, which is the most fundamental requirement for genuine human relationships to flourish. This is what we say to the Turks: Look, we are mourning, we have been mourning for almost a century now because we lost our loved ones, we were driven out of our homes, banished from our land; we were treated like animals and butchered like sheep. We have been denied even a decent death. Even the pain inflicted on our grandparents is not as agonizing as the systematic denial that followed. (p. 184)*

The recognition of the Armenian Genocide is critical for them since it is a component of their identity-building material that should be remembered or

not be forgotten by the Turkish as the oppressing group. It is also to demonstrate that Armenians, as the oppressed groups with such an inferior status, should be acknowledged and permitted to exercise their rights and privileges as Armenians rather than as a complementary component of a tiny Turkish group. As a result, Armenians who oppose the group's principles to forge their own identity can come to a realization.

Under the framework of resistance identity concerning social memory and the process of ignorance and remembrance in identity (re)construction, the novel frequently depicts how Armenian characters and the Armenian community firmly uphold their collective memory to survive across the times. It also adheres to the Armenian group's philosophy of valuing the past and the history while defining who they are and to which (id)entity they genuinely belong.

*If you have no appreciation of history and ancestry, no memory and responsibility, and if you live solely in the present, you certainly can claim that. But the past lives within the present, and our ancestors breathe through our children, and you know that.... (p. 55)*

*"You have to understand, despite all the grief that it embodies, history is what keeps us alive and united." (p. 179)*

The Armenian resisting group generally tends to remember rather than forget their social memory since they regard it as a significant resource for making sense of their history. The majority of the Armenians' social memory is flashbulb memory, closely associated with invoking emotive events such as the Armenian Genocide or prominent figure assassination. This idea is in line with Chang's (2017) contention that painful history steeped in such conflicts and struggles is crucial to acknowledge.

All in all, the resistance identity entails many crucial points: the stigmatized position, the desire to contest, endure, and even struggle against the dominating group, and the realization of their projected objective. It is shown from the above description that the Armenians are inclined to preserve their historical background as one of the most vital elements in the formation of their identity brought by the ethnic group as its mnemonic community. In this context, Armenian identity can be defined as a resistance identity since it is extended to fight against the seemingly legitimizing one.

### **The Construction of Project Identity**

The other mode of identity (re)construction occurs when individuals have access to many resources to construct a new identity, allowing them to reposition themselves among the existing societal groups. This type of identity, commonly founded upon self-identification, is noticeable in people who seek to free themselves from the conflicting interests brought about by the 'legitimate' and the 'opponent' groups. Some Istanbulite characters in the novel may be categorized as carrying project identities. Asya and Zeliha, for example, are characters who choose to be themselves, redefine who they are and to which (id)entity they belong.

According to Touraine (1995), project identity places a subject as an outcome, which indicates the desire to be an independent self in establishing their history and giving attention to the realms of human experience. Asya and Zeliha are good examples of characters with project identity because they decide to be independent in positioning themselves between the legitimizing and rejecting identities.

*She being none of these, it was hard to make sense of this indifference, even if it was such a flickering one. (p. 3)*

Zeliha struggles to find her place while attempting to make sense of her identity. She was born in Istanbul and is a native of the city. Nonetheless, her features are compared to those of her family and the broader Istanbul population. It eventually drives Zeliha to establish her own identity and liberate herself, rather than aligning herself to the legitimate or resistant identity. The novel also portrays how Zeliha is different from anybody in her family, who deemed themselves genuine Istanbulites adhering to the beliefs and traditions of the legitimizing Turkish identity.

*She was the only woman in the whole family and one of the few among all Turkish women who used such foul language so unreservedly, vociferously, and knowledgeably; (p. 4)*

The preceding excerpt illustrates Zeliha's peculiarities from other women in Turkey, as she occasionally chooses to use harsh language vociferously to anybody. It demonstrates Zeliha's ambition to build her history and give significance to the world of her life experience. Following this point of view, Zeliha positions herself as an individual with project identity rather than as a part of the Turkish community with its legitimizing identity. Zeliha is presented as a wholly distinct individual from any other Turks. As a country formerly ruled by an Islamic empire, Turkey still maintains religion, but not as firmly as it once did. Zeliha, with her spirit of being an independent individual, tends to take a distance from such a norm.

Another character named Asya resembles Zeliha in terms of her freedom and independence. As Zeliha's daughter, Asya is portrayed as a young lady who wishes to be free from the influence of her surroundings. She takes neither the genuine Turkish identity introduced by her family nor the Armenian resistance identity carried by her friend, Armanoush. Her choice to be an independent character capable of (re)constructing her own identity is recounted throughout the novel, including in the following excerpt.

*"Well, I do not demolish anyone, do I?" Asya felt the need to defend herself. "All I want is to be free and to be myself and all that shit.... If only I could be left on my own. ..."* (p. 146)

Asya has emphasized her decision to be free rather than identify and incorporate herself in a particular group of individuals with attached identities. Her remark demonstrates that she is creating her personal history based on the significance she gets from her own life experience. Asya sees the achievement of such an individual projected identity, apart from collectivity, as something that must be accomplished.

*This kind of "national responsibility" was utterly foreign to Asya Kazanci. Never before had she felt part of a collectivity, and she had no intention of being so now or in the future. Yet here she was accomplishing a pretty good impersonation of someone else, someone who had gotten patriotic overnight. How could she now step outside her national identity and be her pure, sinning self?* (p. 199)

Asya, a character who liberates herself from any social influence, prefers to become a past-less person instead of a person heavily impacted by the past since project identity concerns the use of memory in identity meaning-making. She expresses a desire to forget much of her history and all that occurred. She even expects to be free of the past if at all feasible. She declares that she does not need any prior identity because she wishes to be autonomous and free, not affected by the history in establishing her distinct identity.

*"What's the use of it?" was Asya's curt answer. "Why should I know anything about the past? Memories are too much of a burden." (p. 179)*  
*Yours is a crusade for remembrance, whereas if it were me, I'd rather be just like Petite-Ma, with no capacity for reminiscence whatsoever." (p. 179)*

The inclusion of Asya and Zeliha in a project identity is noticeable in the above excerpt. It portrays their yearning for independence and liberation from the legitimizing impact. However, Castells (2010c) stated that another critical

element of project identity must always be fleshed out with historical resources. In this case, Zeliha and Asya do not use such historical materials. Consequently, Zeliha and Asya's project identities are subjective and thus unlikely for society to adopt. People seem to be more concerned about either legitimizing or resistant identity rather than a project identity created by Zeliha and Asya.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of Istanbulites' identity (re)construction in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* reveals that Turkishness has been legitimized. It is heavily affected by constructed norms, customs, laws, traditions, beliefs, and even the state's authoritative power. The identity is introduced through powerful social institutions projecting to legitimize Turks' power and suppress the other group(s). In managing the society, the dominant group primarily utilizes the technique of forgetting collective memories that threaten their domination and creating a new recall of memory that supports their authority. The country and family typically introduce remembering and forgetting the selected memories in maintaining the legitimacy of Turks as the society's significant mnemonic groups.

The Armenian identity, on the other hand, as an inferior group in Turkey, is positioned as a group carrying resistance who intends to dig trenches to survive and fight against the legitimizing control. It leads to a strong relationship of Armenian communities globally, represented in the novel as centered in San Francisco. The community serves as a new home comfortable for Armenian immigrants. The Armenian community tends to recollect memories while rejecting their identity because they see history as a vital element of their resistance identity. The remaining type of identity construction is found in Zeliha and Asya, who prefer to be free, self-liberating from societal influence or repression rather than identifying with any groups. Their withdrawal from the legitimate identity has a beneficial impact on their positioning as autonomous subjects with a distinctive identity since they frequently found themselves unsuited to most Turks' established norms and traditions.

Identity, as a result of meaning (re)construction based on society's cultural and social qualities, may be reinforced in various ways, confirming the notion that identity is a social (re)construct(ion). Moreover, according to

Castells (2010a), identity (re)construction frequently employs supporting elements from social institutions such as state apparatuses, history, religions, beliefs, norms, and social memory. Thus, what is critical to examine in understanding identity (re)construction is how, from what, by whom, and for what it is produced.

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