It is said that image is everything to many people. According to sociologists, this could be interpreted to include self concept and identity. In the realm of human conduct and socialization, there seems to a pattern in which individuals behave in society as social groups as suggested by Social identity theory. In particular, scholars have attached considerable importance of the body in social identity. But, is the body that important in social identity? Many of the contributors to this view believe that human body is fundamental in social identity.

Indeed stemming from the concern of people against bodily abuse, it is important and true that the body is imperative in social identity. Neglect and abuse of the body has been observed to be a topic of social agenda in the past since time immemorial. This saw the contribution of great psychologists and sociologists such as Marcel Mauss. In addition, there are notable efforts to document the importance of the body in social identity through the writings of how the body constantly adjust to the changing weather patterns as dictated by adjust to poor work conditions.

Psychologists have proved that increasing disturbance in the body may result to frustration, irritability and aggression. In addition, lack of proper care to the body leads to restlessness, nervousness and agitation, this can result to impulsivity, carelessness and impatience. In adverse cases, the body will be affected causing malfunctioning, impaired disease resistance, depression or even death. As a result, individuals have taken deliberate measures to ensure that they remain healthy as a way of proving that they are “normal” in society.

Other than health concerns, positive self concept and the body will influence a
number of things. In the education setting for instance, education psychology holds that positive self concept will boost an individual’s academic behaviour, academic choices, educational aspirations, academic persistence and subsequent academic achievements. People with high and positive self esteem and self concept will exhibit self efficacy that enables them to be high achievers. They remain motivated at the tasks they do thereby increasing chances of attaining better grades than their counterparts who are not.

It is evident that body image is important to individuals in society. Depending with the nature of the body, for example obese as opposed to “normal” people, determines the levels of stress according to research. The negative attitudes especially among people who view themselves as having “bad” shapes of the body will result in chronic non-traumatic stress. This could be seen especially to female models that tend to increase in body weight or have facial disfigure.

On the other hand the individual’s sense of self is made by opposing the need to assimilation and comparison in between others and self. This is explained in the notion of optimal distinctiveness. Contrastively, assimilation is the inclusion of the self and others in social categories based on similarities, on the other hand, differentiation is the exclusion of others from based on what defines the self. Therefore, the assumption is that assimilation and differentiation are contrary processes. In this regard, individuals will go to the extremes of excessively increased individuation or they will go to the extremes of excessively increased de individuation that both affect the normal body functions.

According to psychologists, the concept of optimal distinctiveness is central in understanding individual’s and society. Optimal distinctiveness will be realized when the specific amount of integration is achieved with a suggested balancing amount of differentiation. This implies that optimal distinctiveness is realized via recognition with social categories at that rank of extensiveness
where the level of fulfilment of the necessity for differentiation and the need for assimilation is the same.

Extended to the work place, research has found out that age has the effect of moderating the effects of social identity even in work place. Similarly, there is an impact of gender as it regards to work place identity. It is evidenced that women have difficult time coping with the close control or having to work in poor work conditions. As such, studies also show that women are more susceptible to the negative impacts of work deduced from the fact that majority report higher injury rates as opposed to men. Women are also more problems in adjustment problems.

Sociology and the Holocaust

Suggestions have been made about how sociology could be useful in understanding the Holocaust. Indeed as pointed out by Helen Fein in her essential work in genocide accounting, which expounded on the contributions that sociology to such cases, it is clear that sociology can play a pivotal role in understanding of the Holocaust. Generally, the Holocaust has been viewed by many as a multifaceted concept. It draws insights and literature from such entities as literary scholars, writers, historians and psychologists, theologians and political scientists and dramatists as well as sociologists. To me just like Mauss, any work that generates the insight of this discipline to bear on the Holocaust is welcome.

As such, sociology is linked to the Holocaust because the Holocaust happens in society. It is an (bad) event that society draws insight from just like it is the case with other scenes of mass murder, Diaspora communities and immigration groups. Such cases of the Holocaust have been witnessed in
Israel, Germany and United States. In all these cases, the events of the Holocausts have seen in-depth studies about them thereby generating more insights into there nature and impacts on society and the individual. Literature from one incident of the Holocaust would be used in trying to understand the events of the other.

Particularly, the details about the Holocausts have been significant in learning about the respective communities affected. For example, in understanding the multi-ethnic Jewish distinctiveness, many sociologists who wrote on Jewish identity considered Holocaust’s ethnic, narrow-minded aspects and religious. Such works include Zygmunt Bauman’s *Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas* and *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust*. These texts have been viewed by many as greatest contribution for the invitation and offers to sociologists to aggressively tackle the Holocaust.

**Sociology and Violence**

Just like the ethnic segregation and racism, sociological aspects of other and self identity have been applied in the concept of violence, in particular, violence against women. Zygmunt Bauman’s argument about the subject of violence is that violence meted against pregnant women has been associated with a lot of negative implications. The implications are not limited to physical health and wellbeing but also psychological and behavioural consequences in regard to the concept of self and other. The identified the physical results such as broken bones and pregnancy complications like low birth weight babies.

The psychological effects on the other hand will include dejection, suicidal behaviours and fear related disorders. Behavioural disorders may include such practices as high risk sexual behaviours and substance use and/or abuse.
Complications associated with abuse during pregnancy have been seen to be a cause of giving birth to low weight babies. In contrast, men are genetically capable of withstanding incidences of violence because they are stronger and apt is comparison to women. This implies that there are very minimal or no consequences of domestic violence meted against men.

A number of issues have been linked to violence meted against women. The sociological issues underlying the violence include: issues of power and control, environmental factors, types of institutions that exist within the society, economic factors, isolation and personality of the abuser. This way, the theory of power over the “other” provides the connection for sexual abuse against women by their male counterparts. The fact that the “other” is regarded as “less than” in its definition within this theory translates to one sad fact that women have remained the “other” and the theory has reinforced control and power of men over women.

I concur with most sociological explanations that the characteristics that are portrayed by both the abuser and the victim are from the societal and cultural values that define how these two parties interrelate. Many women are taught to take what the society offers and remain passive. This deprives them of the power over their own lives and critical decisions that are important in their well-being. The social, cultural and economic institutions of the society therefore impart the characteristic of passive members of the society.

It is evident that most men on the other hand possess the characteristics of aggressors who are modelled by the cultural values to wield power and control. The dominant behaviour that is approved by most societies makes them more valuable and is likely to increase incidences of violence. In conclusion, it can be discerned from the above discussions that domestic violence is a behavioural choice. The reasons given as its major causes are within the control of the society. This inappropriate behaviour that the society pays a very high price for
can be controlled only if the interventions are initiated from the roots causes that draw their origins from the cultural and societal values.

**Weaknesses of the Social Identity Theory**

Even with its great success and support, the Social Identity Theory has been criticized for a number of things. Critics cite Ethics Generalisability as a major weakness. Whereas it is a single individual acting in respect to social identity, critics point out that in the theory, groups are considered as individuals. This has an insinuation that the individual is assumed to be responding to the group and not the person carrying out the research. Additionally, the theory can not be wholly depended upon in giving a clear picture of what happens in society since the circumstances of the events could be different.

For example, political orientation and systems could be blamed for the Holocausts and not the idea of self-other contrasts. Similarly, violence against women (or men) could be associated to factors like irresponsibility, hatred, drunkenness and not necessarily the explanation offered by the social identity theory. Lastly, critics point out that social identity theory could be challenged on the basis of its inability to deal effectively with complex social practices in everyday life. As it stands, the theory makes the whole scenario in society appear so simple when in real case, it is a complicated process.

**Conclusion**

Social Identity Theory is important in explaining how individuals within society relate to each other and the self. This has been seen to play an important role in fostering tranquillity or chaos both to the individual or society. Sociologists
such as Mauss have argued that “a positive self-concept is valued as a desirable outcome in many disciplines such as social psychology, physical exercise, health, education, development, and clinical and social psychology.” This paper gave an argumentative approach to the concept of identity. The paper sort to argue whether or not, the body is important in social identity. One way, the importance of body in social identity has been observed in the efforts by people to reduce bodily harm and at the same time try to avoid body neglect and abuse. In addition, the idea of optimal distinctiveness has been used to explain the self concept in regard to achievement.

The paper attests that sociology is important in understanding the events and implications of the Holocausts as well as helping in understanding the people or communities implicated in them. Lastly, the paper looked at the sociological aspect of self and other in relation to domestic violence (mostly against women). On the whole, although social identity theory and the idea of self and the other have been criticized for a number of weaknesses, they offer an explanation as to how individuals interact in society. On the other hand, the concept of social identity has been faulted of its Ethics Generalisability. Personally, I think the theory is important in understanding individuals and society.