Relating Mead's Model of Self and Phenomenology: An Empirical Analysis

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The purpose of this paper is to reassess Mead's concept of self in the light of data collected from college students between 1970 and 1975. It was found that the data can be better explained if certain phenomenological concepts are used. Traditionally, phenomenology is viewed as antithetical to pragmatism. (For example, see Miller, 1973:7-8.) Such interpretations do credit neither to pragmatism nor phenomenology. They typically are based on aspects of the work of the thinkers discussed rather than on their work as a whole. Such comparisons are usually divorced from any attempt to bring the explanatory power of the diverging schools of thought to bear on the data. It is axiomatic that the concepts of any two theoretical systems cannot be equated. This is as simple to realize as that concepts often may not be adequately rendered in another language than that in which they were written. Thus we speak in English of "geist," "verstehen," and "anomy," rather than "spirit," "understanding," and "normlessness." In any attempt to explain empirical data, however, concepts from supposedly diverse systems of thought may show themselves to be variously adequate to the task. There is little need to reiterate in detail the components of Mead's theory of self. (See Coser, 1971; Blumer, 1969; Miller, 1973; and Malhotra-Hammond, 1975b.) Background will be given to provide the basis for understanding the Meadian model of self and its application. (See diagram 1.)

For the sake of clarity in relating the "other" concept to the subjects, and in order to provide a basis for specific self-other analysis on their part, the "other" was divided in the present study into two categories: "significant others," and "generalized other."* Mead himself does not use the term "significant others." However he does speak of the formative effects which certain others will have on the organization of the self. Coser, in his fine summary of Mead's concept of self, speaks of "others who are significant to him in the process of role taking," as well as of "significant others" (1971, 335-338). It is thus in keeping with Mead's conceptual framework to make this analytic distinction between significant and generalized others.

The significant and generalized others together provide the material upon which the "me" of the self is based. The "me" represents the person's conception of the **attributions** and **expectations*** of others in regard to oneself. Mead does not write in detail about the effect of significant others on the self but spends most of his exposition on the more general social influence on the self.

The "generalized other" side of social influence on the self is treated by Mead specifically at the level of "society" and at the level of social institutions, which represent the identical response of the whole community to certain conditions (Mead, 1934:167). Society is an abstract concept, involving in part a series of rules or expectations of the behavior of the self, should the person wish to be acceptable to this society.

According to Mead, one only genuinely belongs to a community when one can "respond to himself as the community responds to him." One's "organized other" or generalized other may be narrow:

> He may belong to a small community, as the small boy belongs to a gang rather than to a society in which he lives. We all belong to small cliques, and one may remain simply inside of them (Mead, 1934:265).

Through the process of universalization the "community" becomes larger. Mead's own "generalized other" consisted of all of mankind in relation to the evolution of life on planet earth. This gives us a clue to Mead's ethical perspective, for he defines the criminal as:

> The individual who lives in a very small group, and then makes depredations upon the larger community of which he is not a member (Mead, 1934:265).

In this sense, a criminal could be anyone who acts in the interest of him/herself or his/her own clique or even society at the expense of humanity in general. The corporation that pollutes, the makers of the tax laws which favor one group over another, those who encourage war policies for the sake of sales and profits, (for an example see the Kenosha News, January 13, 1975:1) would all be criminal, given Mead's definition of crime, and given the universalized scope of his own

*Blumer uses three categories in his description of the "other": the influence of "discrete individuals," "organized groups," and the "abstract community" (1969:13). Our concept "significant other" is coterminous with Blumer's "discrete individuals." Our concept of "generalized other" used by Mead, includes Blumer's "organized groups," and the abstract community. It also includes categories, collectivities, and informal groups insofar as these are points of reference.

***Attributions** here are personal qualities and characteristics which the "other" sees in the subject, or that subject imagines "other" would see. Attributions are in effect any response of the subject to the question: "Who does other X think you are?" or "What kind of a person do you think you are, in other X's eyes?" **Expectations** are things that the other assumes the subject will do, or that subject imagines would be expected. Expectations are an answer to the question: "What does or would other X expect of you?"

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generalized other. It is through education that one's generalized other becomes broadened, according to Mead.

Mead's concept of the "I" makes it apparent that Mead's concept of self expressed a dialectical relationship between the individual and society.* The "I" represents the individual's construction of society. (Peter Berger refers to this as the "externalization" of individuals.)

Mead speaks of the self changing its environment by relating to it in a selective way, in terms of its needs and interests: "The character of the organism is a determinant of its environment" (1934:215). Individuals will try to remold social conditions, especially if they find in them a kind of "suicide of the self" (1934:214). The "I" is thus potentially creative and reconstructive.

> Just as there could not be individual consciousness except in a social group, so the individual in a certain sense is not willing to live under certain conditions which would involve a sort of suicide of the self in its process of realization. Over against that situation we referred to those values which the artist, the inventor, the scientist in his discovery, in general in the action of the "I" which cannot be calculated and which involves a reconstruction of the society, and so of the "me" which belongs to that society. It is that phase of experience which is found in the "I" and the values that attach to it are the values belonging to this type of experience as such. These values are not popular to the artists, the inventor, and the scientific discoverer, but belong to the experience of all selves where there is an "I" that answers to the me (1934:214).

The "I" looks upon the image of self which it sees in the mirror of others. It accepts, rejects or reorganizes the images entering the "me". This process does not always occur, nor does it always occur consciously. For various reasons one may not believe that one has anything to do with one's own identity construction. If this is the case, one greatly diminishes or even annihilates one's own "I". The values which one has internalized via one's generalized "other" are crucial in this regard. Whether or not one exercises the powers of the "I" depends largely upon what theory of self the person has internalized. The content of the generalized other affects, but does not determine, the nature of the "I".

In order that the conduct of the "I" be meaningful, it must put itself to some extent under the control of the "me". Purely impulsive conduct, such as some forms of insanity, as for example the sociopathic personality, are examples of a split of the "I" away from the control of the "me".

The genius, on the other hand, expresses himself or herself as an "I" with a high level of integration by enlarging the scope of the community which creates the

*Mead's concept of the "I" is both potentially more creative and more rational than the concept as used and applied by most sociologists. By their delimitation or neglect of the "I", sociologists are understandably reflecting their sociological orientation. Yet, social psychology must establish the limits of the impact of socialization as well as its extent. (Maslow speaks of this as the "resistance to being rubricized" on the part of persons. 1968:126)

"me".

A feeling of satisfaction occurs when the "I" can express itself freely in the current structure of the "me". The impulsive individual gains this kind of satisfaction in the mob situation. Some individuals gain it in war (Mead, 1934:213). To gain this kind of satisfaction in a constructive rather than destructive manner, there must exist a social mileau which fosters and allows for creativity:

> Until we have such a special structure in which an individual can express himself as the artist and the scientist does, we are thrown back on the sort of structure found in the mob, in which everybody is free to express himself against some hated object or group (Mead, 1934:221).

Were sociology to correct its understanding of Mead's concept of the self to include an accurate understanding of the "I" concept, its similarity to the phenomenological as well as the existentialist position regarding choice in action would be more fully apparent. (For a discussion of the congruency here between existentialism and phenomenology see Natanson, 1973, chapter eight.) To Mead, as well as to Husserl, Schutz, and Sartre, because of reflective rationality and the self-constitutive nature of action, persons have a choice, and hence **act**.

An indispensable aspect of the self, which in a sense pervades the entire self, yet may be analyzed as a component of the self, Mead referred to as "reflective intelligence." (This aspect of the self is hardly touched upon in discussions by sociologists who discuss Mead's concept of self.) Miller, a philosopher, in his comprehensive book on Mead, treats it as definitive of the highest and most characteristic level of human conduct in Mead's conceptual framework (1973:299f). The reflective intelligence aspect of the self has been diagrammed as an arrow, with the "I" reflecting upon the contents of the "me". The plus and minus signs refer to the capacity of the reflective intelligence to accept (+) or reject (-) the **attributions** and **expectations** of others. (See diagram 1.) Conduct becomes meaningful only through the operation of the reflective intelligence. Schutz would agree when he says: "Only from the point of view of the retrospective glance do there exist discrete experiences" (1970:63).

Mead distinguishes three levels of conduct. The lowest level, shared with other animals, is that of conditioned response. This is the level where behavioral psychology leaves off its investigation. The next level, which captivates the concerns of most sociologists, is the level of sociocultural conditioning. This level includes all of the habitualized expected behaviors in a given culture, and involves no inner struggle. Most behavior falls at level two, according to Mead.* Level

*Goffman treats behavior mostly at this level, yet is caught in a double bind via his position that the self lacks an essential core. For in order for a person to be as conscious of societal forms and expectations as are con-artists, professional performers, and actors in everyday life, one would have to possess an internal core of reasoning and a certain self-concept beyond what would constitute the essentially hollow man. Even to be a self-conscious manager of one's own "real" impression in everyday life one would have to have a significant level of rationality and

three involves moral struggle and is the most inclusive and creative human experience. It involves taking a scientific attitude toward the consequences of one's alternative action possibilities in relation to others (Mead, 1964:90-91). The moral quest involved here is not "moralistic" in the sense that behaviors are to be deemed good or bad according to predetermined standards.

> The first implication that flows from this position is that the fundamental necessity of moral action is simply the necessity of action at all; or stated in other terms, that the motive does not arise from the relations of antecedently given ends of activities, but rather that the motive is the recognition of the end as it arises in consciousness. The other implication of this is that the moral interpretation of our experience must be found within the experience itself (Mead, 1964b:85).

Mead's position on the ethics inherently involved in human conduct at the level of reflective intelligence flows from his naturalistic (evolutionary) position:

> But if we admit that the evolutionary process consists in a mutual determination of the individual and his environment — not the determination of the individual by his environment — moral necessity in conduct is found in the very evolutionary situation (1964b:86-87).

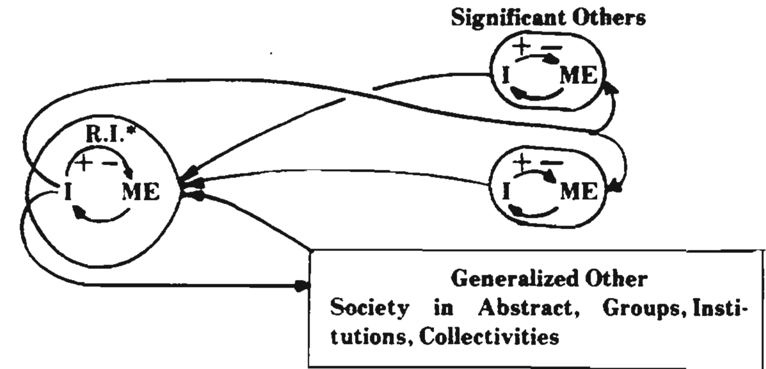
Moral conduct, according to Mead, cannot be determined by abstract ideals, but only in terms of the consequences of one's acts (1964b:91-93). (See Miller, 1973:229-240.) Mead sets up no boundaries between mind and matter. Yet mind may act in relation to others on the basis of reflective choice rather than fixed laws or preexisting norms.

In summary, the essential parts of the self to Mead are the other (significant and generalized), the "me" and "I", and the reflective intelligence. One must keep in mind that the "me", the "I", and the reflective intelligence are not structures which are triggered into action by some stimulus. Rather they are merely identifiable parts in an ever-changing social process. Mead's model of self may thus be diagrammed as follows on Diagram 1 (see following page).

The model was applied by asking some 400 students at a state university and at a small church-related college, between 1970 and 1975, to draw such a diagram of their own self-concepts and specify in an accompanying narrative the nature of the **attributions** and/or **expectations** of their significant others and generalized others on themselves. They were also asked their reasons for accepting or rejecting the **attributions** and **expectations** of others. The students had selected a socialization course, and social science students and education students were over-represented. In the process of working with the model, certain

self-awareness. One would by implication have to have an inner self which wanted to protect from rejection or other negative sanction by others. Otherwise all is chaos, for the actor would have no reason to perform. (See Goffman, 1974:298-301.)

Diagram 1. A Model of Self Based on Geroge Herbert Mead's Theory of Self



***R.I. = Reflective Intelligence**

amplifications of Mead's initial concepts became evident.

This paper is not intended to be a tabulation or statistical summary of the nature of the 400 self-system narratives which were gathered. The primary purpose for gathering data was not to gather specific information about the content of specific self-concepts but to assess the applicability of the Meadian model to the structure of actual selves.

In applying Mead's concept, it was found that persons could usually pinpoint three to ten "significant others" throughout the course of their lives. Frequently, persons felt that truly significant others were those who were no longer, or never were, in their immediate behavioral realm. In one instance, a deceased grandparent that the subject had never met, but whose attitudes and opinions were frequently used by his mother in relation to his personality and doings, was treated as a significant other.*

Significant others may also be persons or characters that the subject has never actually known but only read about. In one instance, a student wrote of Adolph Hitler as having a profound impact on him at the age of twelve. He had read **Mein Kampf**, and since he was at a stage in his life during which he felt his surroundings to be particularly oppressive, he admired and identified with Hitler's determination, iron will, and meglomania. (This exemplifies the very human tendency to confuse levels of self-evaluation, and to assume that because one is

*For a study of the pervasive impact of prior generations on the development of identity, see R. D. Laing, **Politics of the Family**. A similar point on the cultural level is made by Alfred Schutz in relation to the world of predecessors (Schutz, 1967).

seemingly different from those in one's surroundings one is necessarily "better" or "worse.") This student resolved his dilemma by opting for "superiority" as an explanation. In this instance the reading of a book resulted in the mental construction of a significant other.

In another instance, a significant other was constructed out of the combined imagery and information about a political figure who was heavily exposed in the mass media — i.e., T.V., newspapers, magazines. In this case, dislike of Richard Nixon's policies and activities became so pervasive as to make Nixon a significant other. This example also illustrates that signifigant others are not just persons that one admires, or with whom one agrees. Negative role models are also frequently entangled in one's self-concept.

In numerous examples it was discovered that a significant other may be one for whom no empirical existence can be demonstrated. I am here considering those persons who listed "God," "Jesus," or "Christ" as significant others. Having "God" as a significant other is a socially approved construction of a non-empirical significant other. Persons who, equally unempirically, construct totally non-existent significant others to the extent of believing in their reality, are usually diagnosed "schizophrenic" or "hallucinatory" should they become persistently and obnoxiously public about it.

Writers may create personnae, who may function as significant others for them. In this type of constructed significant other the person is conscious of the fictional nature of the other. For Charles Dickens, David Copperfield was such a one. As Dickens said: "Like many fond parents, I have in heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is David Copperfield" (from the preface included in the 1950 edition).

As a variant on this, in some instances a character created by a writer became a significant other for a subject. One example was a young woman who held Nancy Carr in "The Edge of Night" up as an ideal friend. She followed her "life" closer than that of anyone else, and judged her own activities in terms of whether she thought Nancy Carr would approve or disapprove.

Another example was a young man who saw the character "Demian" in Hesse's novel, **Demian** as a significant other. In this conception, Hesse created his character Harry Haller, in **Der Steppenwolf**, among other reasons, as a general significant other, allowing many of the public to identify themselves with this Faustian image. Actors and actresses report of the danger (particularly those who work the Stanislavsky method) of becoming too identified with the character they are playing.

To illustrate the extent to which a significant other may be a mental construct, one student did a self-analysis in which her own concept of self became a significant other:

> At this point in time, I myself am my own significant other. These important significant others have all encouraged my independence and have rewarded this behavior. Therefore, as a result, it appears to me that it is my own attitude about my attributes and my own expectations for myself that I use to form and reform myself.

This student was a mature woman in her late thirties who knew that those actions please her which were in keeping with her own concept of what she should be. Her "self" no longer reflected the direct influence of anyone but herself:

> It appears to me that it is my own attitude about my attributes and my own expectations for myself that I use to form a functioning though imaginary significant other. For example, one of the attributes that significant other Mary (herself as significant other) sees Mary as possessing is intelligence, this is also an expectation. Mary accepts this attribute and expectation. On a functioning level, my resultant actions are the result of this phenomena. Much of what I think, feel and do is dependent on significant other Mary.

In terms of the generalized other the subjects were asked to name groups (formal or informal), institutions, etc. which they felt were important in their lives. They were told that they could also write about their concept of society in general if they had such an abstract notion which they felt to be formative. What was startling about the responses to this part of the study was the extreme narrowness of scope of the generalized others of all but a few of the subjects. Few persons who applied the model have a "generalized other" which goes beyond their own immediate interests or clique — the interests of **their** family, **their** job, **their** company, and **their** country. The vast majority of subjects in this investigation did not reach beyond the "clique" level in specifying aspects of their generalized other. The generalized other was only realized in Mead's universalistic sense in a few of the instances.

Empirically, the generalized other is subjective, varying from person to person, thus one cannot assume similarity of social world from person A to person B, but must in fact assume dissimilarity. Each person will designate different aspects of the social world as constituting the "generalized other" for him or her. Thus in 400 self-analysis papers based on Mead's concept of self, no two persons designated the same kind of societal influence, no two broke down their "society" in the same way. For several subjects, society included three institutions — their professors, their sorority, and the church. Another dichotomized "society" into the "brothers" and the "pigs", and these were in fact his operating concepts for relating to others. Others designated differing "groups" within the generalized other, such as "those who hang-out at Elmer's bar on Friday night" or "those who study late in the lounge." The manner of breaking down the generalized other varied from dealing with formal organizations and institutions to free floating, informal gatherings, to simple collectivities or social stereotypes as seen by students.

The data suggest that the majority of persons who applied Mead's model did not merely accept or reject the attributions and expectations of others, but used some form of reflective thought to determine which they would accept, which they would reject, and on what basis. One subject, for example, rejected the

following expectations entering his "me" from significant and generalized others: the masculine stereotype forced on him by his girlfriend, the expectation by his church that their dogma be accepted without question, the societal expectation (also reinforced by a friend) that one's first concern must be oneself and "to hell with the world." Another subject rejected the church, although it was an important factor in his family background.

One young man based his generalized other on a rejection of educational and military values. Speaking of himself in the third person, he writes:

> Shaken by the training instructor's words, he slowly followed the others off the field. The anger which had been trickling into his blood stream was beginning to take effect. "What arrogance," he thought. Who gave him authority over me, and by what right? In his mind's eye a vision of the next four years was forming. He saw a struggle ahead. The military represented the last great effort of society to impose its values on him. What the schools had not accomplished through indoctrination, the military would attempt through coercion.
>
> Indeed, the next four years were difficult ones. He did not have to fight any wars. His was an ordeal of loneliness, boredom, and, sometimes, despair. Nevertheless, he survived. He credits the preservation of his identity to an inner strength.

The young man later credits music, especially that of Mozart, Beethoven and Bach with providing a source of inner strength. In this sense, an important part of his generalized other would be this music, which in turn provides a basis for reflection.

A large majority of students rejected the educational institution and its "brainwashing." (This was true only of those who attended the large state institution.) One particularly brilliant subject rejected the educational institution's treatment of him as a mere "storehouse of information."

Many subjects expressed essentially ambivalent attitudes toward societal expectations. For example, one young woman was accepting of the value placed on luxuries which here friends expounded. She really thought that the values of the "back to earth" people were superior; however she usually followed her whims when it came to action. She expressed an ideal of "liking everyone" yet also a petulant "don't let anyone put you down" and "look out for yourself first" attitude. There was, in sum, a vast amount of divergence in description of the exercise of reflective intelligence; however most subjects rejected some aspects of societal influence.

Interpretations and Explanations — Meadian and Phenomenological

In our investigation of the nature of the self, following an essentially Meadian framework, it became clear that phenomenological concepts are of value in both the interpretations and explanation of the data. Far from there being an irreconcilable difference between the perspectives, there is an essential

congruency. This is especially true when one does not render an interpretation of Mead as found in typical sociological attempts to apply Mead. However, Mead's framework is essentially behavioristic, and this has caused him to focus primarily on those aspects of the self and social life which relate to immediate action. Mead's goal was to demonstrate that the mind and the self were better explained as resultants of the interactive process, rather than independent entities in the idealistic sense. This task he accomplished with great brilliance.

Mead dealt primarily in his examples with the generation of self in early childhood, or with the early evolutionary stages of human mentality growing out of the simple responses of one organism to another. Phenomenology, on the other hand, assumes this basis, and works from the perspective of an already existing self in a historically and socially complex civilization overloaded with stimuli and symbols. Merleau-Ponty speaks of the fact that once literature entered civilization language is no longer merely a tool of communication used to indicate what lies outside of language (1964:232).

It is the behavioristic emphasis in Mead which misleads social theorists to interpret Meadian concepts as strictly behavioral referents. (For an example of such behavioristic interpretation, see Merton, 1968:293.)

Mead does not discuss the typical situation in the data, which was that significant others are often not those with whom one immediately interacts. The examples from these data do not contradict Mead's model, they merely demand that it be extended. Mead allowed for the situation in which one's self becomes a significant other to oneself:

> After a self has arisen, it in a certain sense provides for itself its social experiences, and so we can conceive of an absolutely solitary self (Mead, 1964a:204).

Another way of explaining this would be to say that the "I" of the past takes the role of a significant other and becomes in this instance a part of the "me". In describing this, Mead uses the example of talking to oneself:

> So that the "I" in memory is there as a spokesman of the self of the second, or minute, or day ago. As given, it is a "me", but it is a "me" which was the "I" at the earlier time (Mead, 1964a:229).

Here the "I" relates to the "me" through the process of reflective intelligence. It indicates that once established through social interaction, the self may become solitary, and a barrier to further social inputs.

Phenomenology, however, provides additional insights into the data. Greater clarity into the different forms of relationships with discrete individuals can be made if one follows Schutz's distinction between the world of predecessors, contemporaries, consociates and successors (Schutz: 1970,218f). A significant other may be found in any one of these categories. Subjects in our sample cited significant others from all four categories, and indeed it does make a difference

which type of significant other is being discussed. Mead's analytical focus centered exclusively on consociates, who of course are those significant others with whom one can physically interact and who can respond to one and initiate action directed at one. For most subjects, however, consociates were only part of their entourage of significant others. For many subjects, predecessors, contemporaries, and successors were those significant others perceived as most important. This is directly in keeping with Schutz's description:

> ...even in the natural standpoint, a man experiences his neighbors even when the latter are not at all present in the bodily sense. He has knowledge not only of his directly experienced consociates but also about his more distant contemporaries. He has, in addition, empirical information about his historical predecessors. He finds himself surrounded by objects which tell him plainly that they were produced by other people; these are not only material objects but all kinds of linguistic and other sign systems, in short, artifacts in the broadest sense. He interprets these first of all by arranging them within his own contexts of experience. However, he can at any time ask further questions about the lived experiences and meaning-contexts of their creators, that is, about why they were made (1970:170).

"Direct social relationships" (Schutz's terminology) are crucial to the young child's learning of a language, and developing a mind and a self. However once a mind and self exist, a person's indirect social relationships may take on the greatest importance in the continuing process which constitutes the self. Mead and the other pragmatists, in their attempt to ground thought in action, tend to imprison it there. However, once a human mind is established, its true home, its most real others, may be fifteenth century England, Einstein's theories of matter, or even the political events in Ecuador.*

Schutz's discussion of worlds of phantasy allows for further elucidation of non-empirical significant others (Schutz, 1970:256f). The world of fiction, for example, has shown itself in our data to be an important source of significant others. Another example would be action geared towards real economic gain through the production of phantasy: films, television, fiction. More real cash is made each year from the sale of phantasied sex than from the sale of real sex. Habitualized phantasy may in fact make it difficult for persons to view even immediately present significant others except insofar as they have some kind of fantastic image of another person.

In relation to the generalized other habitualized phantasy on television may make news broadcasts of important political events also take on the quality, the focus, and the form of a remotely perceived imagined performance.

It was found that persons in the study tended to view society in a specific rather than abstract manner. The groups that they perceived as having influenced them

*Addressing this issue Hannah Arendt quotes Cato: "Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself" (Arendt, 1958:297).

were narrow in scope. Few possessed a generalized other which could be called universalized in Mead's sense, in spite of the general broad exposure to world issues present through the mass media, and especially to university students. May this data be explained without falling outside of Mead's framework? One may argue that the most generalized attitude in America toward social good is the idea that a social system based on self-interest is viable, democratic and just. Or, in yet another Meadian context, one may contend that the process of universalization is a slowly evolving one, reaching towards an ideal state of human consciousness that may never be ultimately attained. (For such an interpretation of Mead see Van Meter Ames in Corti, 1973.) Diversity of individual perspectives in regard to society is also allowable within Mead's framework, for no two persons will interact with the same others and be exposed to the same groups in the same way. Yet the question remains as to why so much of the world was not recognized, given the exposure of the mass media and the university. According to phenomenologists, a person may "bracket" and thus in effect ignore aspects of physical and social reality. A person may bracket history, and the objective reality of widening social horizons in the world (Natanson, 1973:12f and 84f). Aspects of social reality may be ignored, not recognized, or treated as irrelevant for one's own social world. Once an other is internalized, i.e., some symbolic processes are taken into the self so they may be used in internal dialogue, the self may act as a kind of "solitary ego" (to borrow a phenomenological term) to the self, and construct phenomena on the basis of this solitary ego. One of Alfred Schutz's contributions was in fact to bring the findings of phenomenologists to bear on this question of the individual's assimilation of social knowledge.

The concept of **"attention a la vie"**, that is the degree of intensity with which one views one's social world, is an important concept in understanding divergent perspectives on the social world, given similar exposure. Schutz refers to this as cognitive style which ranges from the state of wide-awakeness, the paramount reality, to the non-paramount realities of dreams, imagination and phantasy. Indeed, the perspectives of the artist, the scientist, and the playworld of the child are also non-paramount realities reflecting a different kind of **attention a la vie** (Schutz, 1970:253f). The kind of attitude towards oneself in relation to society most typically described by Mead is in fact more like the specific, non-paramount attitude of the social scientist rather than the attitude of most persons as they understand everyday life. This interpretation is clear when one realizes that Mead's model of social action, and his model of scientific method are the same. (See Malhotra-Hammond, 1975:89f. Refer to Mead, 1964:p.250f and p.3f.)

Schutz distinguishes between the scientific perspective and the world as perceived by the actor in everyday life. This distinction is important in correcting our model in keeping with the data, for it allows for persons to be affected by, and effective upon aspects of the social world which they may not recognize or acknowledge. The paramount reality for the majority of subjects was nothing more physically distant from them than their place of employment or church. The scientific reality of their situation is that they are integrally related with economic

and political issues of a global scope.

The phenomenological perspective also allows for myths, or essentially non-scientific concepts of the generalized other to effect action and the outcome of history. Broderson gives an excellent example of precisely this kind of occurrence. He writes of the profoundly devastating and ironically predictive role of the "Kulturpessimist" in bringing about Germany's self-destructive acts during the Nazi period. The "Kulturpessimist" believes in the myth of the inevitable decline of western culture. Because they saw no future in their society they embraced the Nazis who offered something new and strong to be built up from the ashes of the present civilization. Thus destructiveness became a justifiable end in itself. The non-paramount reality of such a myth became a determinant of the paramount reality of their present. (See Broderson in Natanson, 1970:183f.)

The phenomenological concept of **selectivity of perception*** is also important in explaining the data. Referring to that part of our respondent group (about 280 of 400 respondents) who were queried during 1970-1973, there was a war going on in Southeast Asia that directly affected the lives of most of them. There was also a presidential election during that time period, and the controversy over Watergate related matters. Yet only about 3% of the respondents even mentioned these as part of their concerns in their description of a generalized other, nor in their description of the way their reflective intelligence evaluated the impact of social institutions. Consciousness is intentional, thus these subjects bracketed the Vietnam war and the American presidential election of 1972 out of their realm of relevant reality. (See Natanson, 1973:13 and 84f for a discussion of intentionality in Husserl.)

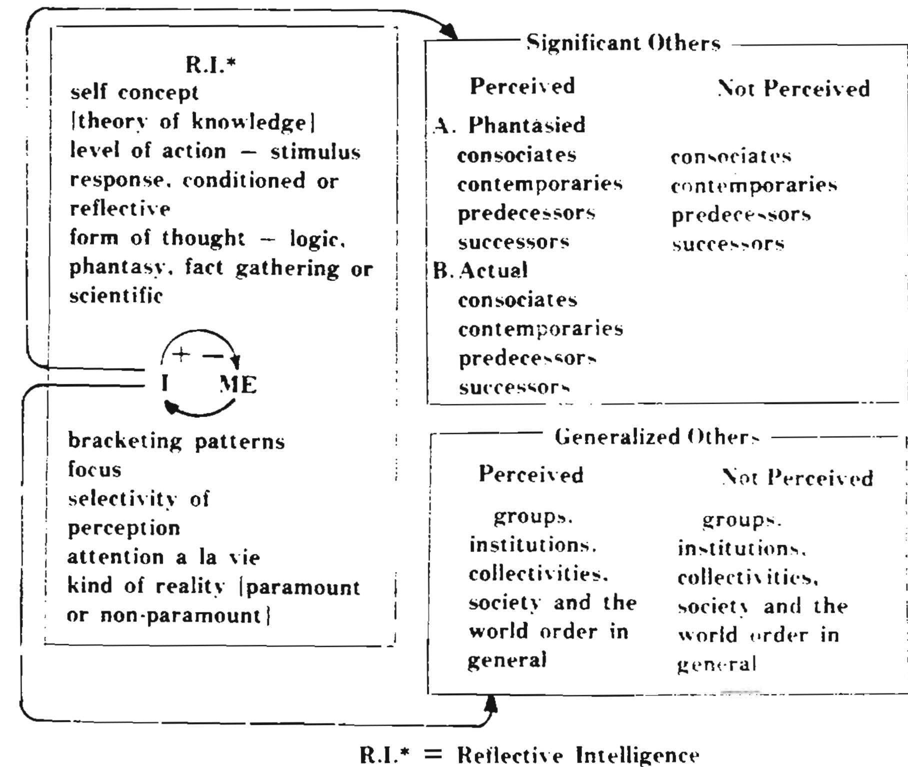
Conclusions

In our attempt to apply a model of self based on Mead's concept of self it became clear that phenomenology aided in explaining the empirical results. There is no inherent contradiction between the phenomenological perspective and the Meadian perspective as applied to this data. Mead's work centered primarily on an analysis of overt interaction as it provides for the social genesis of mind and self. Phenomenological concepts give additional insights into the functioning of the person once the mind and the self are already developed. Schutz's conception of the other as predecessor, contemporary, consociate, or successor helps

*As further support for the applicability in this context of the concept of selectivity of perception, Deegan writes of the world view of students at a Midwestern State University. Due to the limitations of their cultural background they do not perceive poverty, unemployment, racism or pollution as problems. People who suffer from such problems do so either because they are "lazy" or because they "think wrong," according to the majority of these students. Sociological explanations, along with television and movies that present information and analyses of such problems are "stories" and are thus bracketed as unreal. (Mary Jo Deegan, "Comment on Selective Perception in World Views", attached to private correspondence to the author, June 15, 1976.)

understand the specific nature of self-other relationships. Other phenomenological concepts which help in explaining the data were the following: the nature of the world of phantasy, paramount vs. non-paramount realities, bracketing, **attention a la vie**, the world of everyday life vs. the scientific world view, and the selectivity of perception. These concepts provide content for Mead's idea of the process of reflective intelligence.

Diagram 2. Revised Model of Self Based on Mead and Phenomenology.



R.I.* = Reflective Intelligence

Diagram 2 is a corrected model of self, in keeping with the Meadian model, but better able to accommodate and explain the data by using phenomenological concepts. It is hoped that this model will be used for further empirical research into the social nature of the self.

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A Research Note on Sociological Variables Related to Belief in Psychic Phenomena

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Despite the recent groundswell of public interest in psychic phenomena, sociological research in this area has been virtually non-existent. Perhaps this lack of interest by sociologists can be explained by the fact that there is not currently, at least — a highly visible psychic "movement" comparable to the more widely-publicized Jesus People, the Hare Krishna cult or the Satanists. Or perhaps sociologists have assumed that they have nothing to contribute to what they perceive to be the proper domain of parapsychologists. It is evident from an examination of the literature on psychic phenomena that parapsychologists have been so busily engaged in trying to establish the empirical validity of certain psychic phenomena that they have left untouched many questions of sociological interest. For example, how do believers in psychic phenomena differ from non-believers? Does belief in the validity of psychic phenomena tend to be associated with any configuration of social background characteristics or attitudinal patterns? These, and related issues, are the concerns of this paper.

American society has long rejected belief in such psychic events as telepathy, OOBE's (out-of-the-body-experiences), telekinesis, and others. This is in sharp contrast to interest in the psychic found in many European societies. In fact,