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Mentality and Mentality-Driven Behavior Stereotypes: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Research*



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Abstract. The paper summarizes and systematizes theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the concept of “mentality”. The authors review historical-philosophical, cultural-anthropological, psychological, ethnographic, socio-cultural and sociological, socio-economic and interdisciplinary approaches. Special attention is paid to the system approach that considers how mental characteristics are manifested. The paper presents the structural approach that focuses on individual continents of mentality and an approach to the study from the standpoint of the “level of the nature of mentality” (conceptual-semantic, values-and-target, and behavioral levels). The authors substantiate the necessity of using an interdisciplinary approach to the determination of mentality. This is due to the fact that this scientific category is widely used in different sciences (sociology, psychology, the humanities), which requires unified conceptual analytical methods. The authors reveal distinctive features according to which mentality can be classified; they include: 1) the level of analysis (individual, professional, social mentality); 2) territorial feature (urban/rural (provincial)); 3) the level of historical development (primitive/modern (civilized)). The following features are also highlighted as the criteria: the nature of manifestation (preliterate, literate and media-mentality); the degree of relationship to the world (sensuous/ideational); focus on the structural elements of mentality: on psychological characteristics (conscious/unconscious), normative characteristics, etc. It is shown that when mentality is considered through the prism of various traditions (research schools), then the attention is focused on its various components: thinking (American school), historical traditions (German school), sensuous component, social aspects of interaction between people (French school). The authors reveal the relation between mentality and the resulting behavior of people. This relationship can be characterized in terms of “whole—part” and “object—manifestation of the object”. In the former case there are “behavioral components” of mentality such as: 1) consumption patterns (prestige, demonstrative behavior, on the one hand, or the psychology of the subsistence minimum on the other); 2) the norms of interaction between economic entities (equality/inequality in the interaction); 3) generally accepted stereotypes of relations between society and the individual (self-sufficiency or collective nature of dealing with problems).

Key words: mentality, structure of mentality, stages of evolution of mentality, behavior.

The study of mentality of the society and separate social groups, as well as the study of its influence on the behavior and modernization process is an important practical and scientific issue. Regarding the practical significance of the issue, it should be noted that mentality forms the foundations of national and cultural identity and contributes to the formation of life strategies and ways of self-realization, predetermines cultural differences and acts as a factor in intercultural misunderstanding. Deformation of the “mental basis” may be accompanied by the global identity crisis, different kinds of deviations (de-individualization and de-personalization), that is why the processes associated with the formation of the “mental field” require regulation [14, pp. 23–24]. It is no coincidence that these issues are given special attention at the federal level. Thus, at the meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club (September 19th, 2013), Vladimir Putin marked the ideological paradigm of Russia’s development: “Russia’s further development is impossible without spiritual, cultural and national self-determination, otherwise we will not be able to withstand external and internal challenges and succeed in global competition” [9].

The evolution of the concept of “mentality” has passed a number of stages which were different in terms of its utility and substantial fullness. There are three summarized stages.

At the *first* stage, the concept “mentality” is rarely used in the scientific literature as a whole. It is most widely used in philosophy (concepts such as “people’s psyche”, “national character”, “ethnic awareness”). In scholastic philosophy the term “mentality” was first mentioned in the 14th century as a derivative from the adjective “mental” (“mens” and “mentis” – “mind” and “thinking” respectively) [27, pp. 99–110].

The *second* stage is characterized by the popularization of the study of mentality, active introduction of this term into scientific circulation due to the formation and development of the French historical school “Annals” and its application in social sciences. In the 1920–30-s mentality acted as an independent research subject and is used as a highly historical (L. Febvre [46] and M. Bloch [7]) and cultural and anthropological term (L. Lévy-Bruhl [30]) [20, pp. 55–78]. Later this concept becomes generally accepted and is applied in the studies of the non-material, spiritual sphere of human activity (T. Radbil’, 2012 [38]).



Table 1. Examples of definitions of “mentality”

Author	Definition of mentality
Gershunskii B.S., Groshev I.V., Dubov I.G., Sonin V.A., Stefanenko T.G.	Mentality is something common for all people a specific group, which connects them and distinguishing them from the representatives of other groups.
Ivanova T.V.	Mentality is the expression of group consciousness in historical time and geographical space.
Duby G.	Mentality is a system of images and ideas different for various social groups and strata, which guides their behavior and expresses their vision of the world in general and their own place in this world.
Metelev A.V.	Mentality is a system of supra-individual, stable, sustainable and unconscious assumptions, beliefs, images and patterns of thinking which are behind many cultural phenomena and facts and are manifested in the patterns of thinking and behavior.
Mikeshina L.A.	Mentality includes unconscious views, beliefs, values, traditions, behavior and activities of different ethnic and social groups and strata with theoretical and ideological systems built over them.
Alefrenko N.F.	Mentality is a set of typical manifestations of specific (conscious and unconscious) perception of external and internal world in the categories of a native language; a specific manifestation of the national character, intellectual, moral and volitional qualities of a particular cultural and linguistic community.
Kalina N.F., Chernyi E.V., Shorkin A.D.	Mentality is a process of “secondary conversion” of the worldview through semiotic systems; the way a world model is manifested in different semiotic incarnations which form a universal system.
Gurevich A.Ya., Oborina D.V.	Mentality includes particular ways of reacting to the surrounding reality adopted in a particular community, or “group behavioral stereotypes”.
Sources: compiled from [4; 10; 12, pp. 25–46; 13, pp. 75–89; 18, pp. 20–29; 19, pp. 48–59; 21, pp. 168–177; 24; 34, pp. 145–148; 35; 42, pp. 183–191].	

At the *third* stage (1990–s) associated with radical political and economic changes the concept of mentality is actively used in psychological, sociological and other human sciences [17], and is also regarded as an object of both research and management [39, pp. 89–102].

The scientific importance of studying mentality lies is the fact that this term has completely different interpretations and contains a significant resources for studying

the influence of this phenomenon on social development [27, pp. 99–110; 49, pp. 251–262].

Analysis of scientific literature helps present some examples for illustrating the differences in the interpretation of mentality. In *Table 1*, they are arranged according to the principle “from abstract to specific”: the first ones present more general characteristics (manifestation of group consciousness in historical time and space), then come more

Table 2. Approaches to studying mentality

Approach (authors)	The content of the approach
<i>From the standpoint of various scientific disciplines</i>	
<i>Historical-philosophical and cultural-anthropological</i> (Lévy-Bruhl L., Dashkovskii P.K., Berdyaev N.A. et al)	The emphasis is on common, typical features in human spiritual life based on national and ethnic aspects and historical eras. The study of mentality is due to the necessity of understanding historical events.
<i>Socio-cultural and sociological</i> (Panarin A.S., Yadov V.A. et al)	Study of the correlation between the consciousness of an individual and their belonging to a particular social group, between personality traits and their place in the society. Emphasis on specific features of mentality as a phenomenon of social groups, on analysis of socio-cultural features and values in different social communities. Study of changes in motivation-value sphere of a personality influenced by socio-cultural factors. Focus on the influence of the external environment on the individual's interior.
<i>Socio-economic</i> (Auzan A.A., Latov Yu.V., Novikov A.V., Kozhevnikov V.P. et al)	The study of economic values and behavioral standards characteristic of the representatives of certain social groups. The study of mentality in the framework of this approach implies analysis of attitude to work, participation in various forms of economic activity, study of consumption patterns. In the framework of this approach, mentality reflects economic consciousness. The change in population's mentality is considered as one of the factors in economic modernization.
<i>From the standpoint of traditions (schools)</i>	
<i>Anglo-saxon</i> (Mackinder H., Mahan A., Spykman N. et al)	The emphasis is on the thinking component. Mentality is characterized as mind, thinking, mindset, a cultural code connecting people. It is emphasized that mentality is "an individual's personal asset".
<i>American</i> (Kardiner A., Benedict R., Mead M., Lipton R. et al)	The emphasis is on the thinking which predetermines different types of behavior. Specific features of the national character manifested in behavior are taken into account. The model of a national-ethnic group which connects the features of the national culture common to its representatives is considered.
<i>German</i> (Wundt W., Lazarus M., Steinthal H., Burston A. et al)	Emphasis is on historical traditions determining character traits. When characterizing mentality attention is drawn to social behavior patterns in historical traditions. Every nation's way of life is driven by the customs prevailing in a country, which are determined by character traits.
<i>French</i> (Bloch M., Febvre J., Le Goff J., Duby G., Vovelle M. et al)	In addition to the mental and sensual components, a significant role belongs to the social aspect (social relations between people). Under this approach, mentality is placed between the Conscious, structured (forms of social consciousness represented by morality, ideology, religion) and the Nonconscious (people's individual psyche).
<i>From the standpoint of structural components</i>	
<i>Psychological</i> (Ivanov V.N., Semigin G.Yu., Davydov A.P. et al)	Mentality is defined through psychological categories (needs, emotions, inclinations, motives, stereotypes, etc.), conscious and unconscious level of psychology of ethnic groups are distinguished.
<i>Regulatory</i> (Adrianov V.M., Pushkarev L., Pushkareva N. et al)	The emphasis is on the regulatory function of mentality associated with formation of social and cultural standards which help individuals or groups adapt to the world and contribute to the specific features of reacting to the phenomena of reality.
<i>Descriptive</i> (Vizgin V.P., Gurevich P.S., Shulman O.I. et al)	When describing mentality the authors distinguish mindsets and inclinations of individuals or social groups to particular perception of the world, attitudes, and patterns of behavior.
<i>Genetic</i> (Bekh V.P., Dodonov R.A. et al)	The authors consider the aspects revealing the origin of the phenomenon of "mentality". Attention is drawn to the genetic inheritance of information. Mentality is characterized as historical, ancestral memory.
Sources: compiled from [1, pp. 25–26; 2, pp. 47–55; 5; 6, pp. 3–10; 7; 8, pp. 201–231; 16, pp. 205–214; 17; 29; 32, pp. 25–30; 40, pp. 26–32; 45; 50; 52].	



meaningful, specifying the manifestation of this phenomenon in the behavior of various social groups: group behavior patterns, etc.

Based on analysis of the definitions of mentality, the authors make a conclusion about the breadth of its interpretation – from social thinking and value attitudes of population groups to the national character. Common features which the authors attribute to the essence of mentality are: way of thinking (mindset), worldview, system of values, peculiarities of mental life, national character, controller of normative attitude to the world, behavioral pattern, belonging to a particular social or national community. The common features help group the approaches to studying mentality: 1) from the standpoint of various scientific disciplines, 2) from the standpoint of traditions (schools), 3) from the standpoint of structural components (*Tab. 2*).

The described approaches to studying mentality confirm the inconsistency and diversity of this category [6, pp. 3–10], the impossibility of expressing the depth of emerging fundamental social ideological and research views by means and methods of any scientific area or school. With the evolution of this concept people understood the need for an interdisciplinary approach to studying this phenomenon because “we

are dealing with a multi-dimensional, multi-stage reflexive transition of mentality content to culture content and vice versa, which results in the fact that the figurative mentality content becomes complicated” [43, p. 40]. Interdisciplinary research help get a real idea about the transformation of mentality, its objectification, of human impact on social dynamics [28]. For example, E.Ya. Tarshis highlights several scientific disciplines which are connected with the study of mentality such as history and historical anthropology, sociology, philosophy, linguistics, social psychology, etc.

The authors’ purpose in the “interdisciplinary field” of mentality research lies, on the one hand, in determining the influence of mentality of the population in modernization process of socio-economic territory’s development. Therefore, the research will be based on the socio-economic approach which attaches particular importance to studying the population’s economic consciousness and mental barriers of inclusion of its socially vulnerable groups [51, pp. 29–47] for assessing their potential opportunities of inclusion in modernization processes of a regional community. This approach is justified by the growing awareness of the important historic role of

Table 3. Types of mentality depending on specific behavioral patterns

Type	Main characteristics	Behavioral patterns
Inbred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of in-depth perception of abstract forms – “Vague ideological beliefs”, variability of attitudes and perceptions – Undervaluation of human life (no fear of death) – Perception of a threat to the near environment (connection with personal danger) – Prevalence of collective interests over individual ones – Concept of power based on physical and military capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High vitality – Determination – Willingness to take risks – Fears, complexes and dissatisfaction due to contradictions without a unique solution
Noble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Predominance of sensory ways of learning the world – Subtle perception and sublime view of the world – Idealism, desire for personal independence – Isolation from others, solitude – Fear of seeming weak – Contradiction between duties towards different people – Focus on monarchical form of government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrative actions – Sophisticated manners and style of dress
Intel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of scientific ways of learning the world – Desire to abstract, serious attitude to concepts – High importance of accumulation of information and generalization – High value of knowledge – Desire to participate in scientific communities, political alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No ostentation – Disregard for comfort – High performance
Burgher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preference to materialized forms of world view – Desire for functionality – predominance of traditional values (family, health) – Fear of loss of social status – Focus on demographic forms of government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High degree of efficiency – Rationality and thrift in all spheres of life

Source: compiled from [11, pp. 802–819].

ways of people’s perception and thinking. On the other hand, the variety of definitions of mentality, lack of uniform measurement techniques has led to the necessity of using sociological analysis, the methodological techniques of which [31] help identify respondents with mental characteristics of the Russian people, identify their socio-cultural values, etc.

The study of mentality is not limited by analysis of its structural components; it is also

important to study its influence on human behavior. The need for such consideration is explained by the structure and hierarchical levels of mentality, among which are conceptual-semantic, value, and behavioral levels. In this case, mentality and behavior are correlated as “whole–part”. At the behavioral level, mentality is considered from the standpoint of readiness to act in a certain way in accordance with the established attitudes (persistent features of



actions recurring in different situations). In addition, there is another approach where mentality and behavior are characterized from the standpoint of “object– object’s externalization”. It is considered appropriate to combine these approaches and consider both structural components and manifestation of mentality in behavior.

Depending on specific behavioral patterns the research literature distinguishes several types of mentality (*Tab. 3*).

The main features distinguishing the presented types of mentality are: *way of world view*, *depth of perception*, *prevalence of particular interests*, *standards of interaction between economic entities* (equality/inequality in interaction), *stereotypes of interrelations of society and individuals* (independent or collective nature of problem solution), *consumption patterns* (prestige, conspicuous behavior or psychology of subsistence minimum) [33, pp. 24–29].

In fact, one may say that mentality is a kind of manifestation of “dominant social ways of thinking and feeling, reflection of life in a particular environment” (Frumkina, 1999 [47]). In turn, social environment is formed on the basis of patterns of social practices which are established in the society and become social institutions. Thus, there is

actually a two-way communication between institutions as social structures and individuals as carriers of mental models. Similar conclusions may be found, for example, in the work by P. Sztompka [56] and other researchers [3, pp. 3–7].

Given the correlation between mentality and the prevailing social institutions, the research literature distinguishes two main types of mentality – “Western” and “non-Western” which are different in parameters such as *world view* (holisticity and interrelatedness/analyticity and atomism), *dimensionality of the world* (continuity/discontinuity), *type of decision-making* (intuitive/rational). The characteristics of the defined mentality types emphasize that people with the western type of mentality are characterized by rational thinking and emphasis on parts rather than on the whole; in the second case, on the contrary, all aspects are considered as interrelated, tolerance for contradictions is more common. This results in the situation where rational, logical decisions are made by the “followers” of the Western culture and a contrary situation from those belonging to the non-Western culture (Buchtel, Norenzayan, 2009 [53]) [3, pp. 3–7]. In thus regard, the authors find interesting the research of scientists (S.G.

Kirdina, I.Yu. Alexandrov, 2012) [3], who proposed the Institutional Matrices Theory (X and Y) based on comparative analysis of countries. The nature of mentality types and institutional matrices dominant in different countries helped conclude that countries with the prevailing X-matrix¹ are characterized by the “Eastern” type of mentality, while countries with the Y-matrix are “Western”. Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that there is correlation between the country’s institutional order and the type of mentality predominant among the population. However, it should be mentioned that, in practice, the coexistence of X- and Y-institutional forms is widespread in social systems partly due to the fact that the dominance of institutions of the same type can generate systemic risks. For example, the predominance of the X-matrix institutions will lead to disinterest of market economy in production of public goods, the “every man for himself” – lifestyle, disregard

of public interests in favor of private, and, consequently, to alienation of members of the society [26, p. 322]. Mentality is associated with the political, economic and ideological structure of the society. This is confirmed by a series of studies which present the results of evaluating the impact of institutions on interpersonal trust, as well as evidence of positive relations of trust as a structural component of mentality with economic growth (Guiso, Sapienza, Zingales; 2013 [54], Nunn, Wantchekon; 2011 [55]).

In recent years more and more works have been appearing which give arguments in favor of correlation between the cognitive model and the type of economy dominant in the society (Uskul et al., 2008 [58]; Kitayma, Uskul, 2011 [57]). The experience of developed countries which have made profound socio-economic transformations proves that their success was possible under one important condition – the results of

¹ X- and Y-matrices are institutional matrices, i.e. a system of economic, political and ideological institutions permanently coinciding. The X-matrix (previously called Eastern) is characterized by the following basic institutions: in economic sphere – institutions of redistributive economy based on obligatory mediation by a service centre, as well as right on their provision and use; in political sphere – institutions of unitary-centralized political order; in ideological sphere – predominance of collective, supra-personal values with priority placed on the “We” over the “I”, i.e. communitarian ideology. It is suggested that the X-matrix is dominant in Russia, most Asian and Latin American countries. The Y-matrix (previously called Western) includes the following basic institutions: in economic sphere – institutions of market economy; in political sphere – federative political order; in ideological sphere – the dominant idea of individual, personal values, i.e. priority of “I” over “We.”, or ideology of subsidiarity, meaning primacy of a personality, its rights and freedoms over the values of communities of a higher level, which, accordingly, have subsidiary character subordinate towards a personality. Preliminary studies revealed that the Y-matrix is dominant in the social structure of most countries in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (see [26]).



reforms should reflect the interests of the majority of the population and be supported by them.

This thesis is also confirmed by the Russian practice. The transformation of the socio-economic system in the 1990-s, transition to market economy had a new semantic meaning for the population due to changes in ownership relations, rapid growth of cooperative and private enterprises, joint ventures, joint stock companies, deep restructuring in the nature and mechanisms of inclusion of a human in labor relations. All this made both the issues of new management skill formation and the problem of lifestyle in general, values, behavioral standards relevant (for more detail see 44, pp. 60–67). Only half the population (49%) had positive perceptions of the term “market”, 67% – “private property” [23]. Fifteen years later (the same study was conducted by VTsIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center) in 2007) more than 2\3 of respondents gave positive feedback towards these terms concepts (66% – “market”, 73% – “private property”). The attitude to “market” and “private property” was significantly worse in older age groups – among the respondents over 45. Thus, the concept of “market” stirs positive emotions among 73–78% among respondents over

45; 65% – among respondents aged 45–59; 45% – among respondents over 60; “private property” is regarded positively by 80–84%, 71% and 53% respectively. It should be noted that the older generation demonstrates the greatest distrust of new concepts in this matter, expressing their doubts about the improved quality of life during the transition to market economy and anxiety over loss of a number of social guarantees. This is an example of how people fear everything new and resist to changes, which is undoubtedly transferred from their consciousness to their behavior, being a certain hindrance to social development.

Currently a similar situation can be observed, for example, in the population’s estimates of privatization. The expectations of Russians from the new wave of state property transformation differ significantly from those in the 1990-s. 25 years ago, half of Russian citizens (51%) expected that privatization will help the country emerge from the economic crisis. Nowadays, only 19% of the population believe in this (the youth is more optimistic about it than people of retirement age: 33% of people aged 18–24 against 12% of people over 60). The research results show that 65% of people expect that current transformations will aggravate

the issue of injustice related to income distribution, while 43% believe the opposite. According to VTsIOM experts, the new privatization program has almost no support from the Russian public; its implementation requires the support of the population [36].

This attitude to the country's transformation has reason behind it. For example, according to the social survey conducted by ISED T RAS² in 2016 in the Northwestern Federal district, a significant share of people (46%) retain "team spirit" associated with the priority of public values over private ones, as well as preserving key traits of the Russian people (kindness, generosity, frankness). This conflicts with a new reality where market transformations require individualism and substitution of public interests with personal ones. The latter are gradually becoming an integral feature of the younger generation. Thus, the specified ISED T RAS research reveals that young people are more likely to seek employment in the private sector with high incomes but without guarantees for the future rather than

in the public sector with guaranteed, stable but low incomes. This may partly explain the fact that young people often give a positive evaluation of the reforms.

Despite their support from some population groups, there remain many challenges related to overcoming the violation of rights of socially vulnerable population groups (workplace quotas for disabled people, temporary disability insurance, etc.). 24% of respondents indicated the absence of such mechanisms, 44% – their poor performance. For example, in the Kaliningrad and Murmansk oblasts, people of retirement age noted that these mechanisms do not work well (51% and 47% respectively). In the Republic of Karelia, this opinion is shared by another socially vulnerable population group – disabled people (56%).

All of the above leads to a significant conclusion that it is necessary to take into account the population's mentality when pursuing the socio-economic development of territories. Strategic development should take into account the interests of all population categories and be focused on society consolidation and its confidence in the state. Therefore, studying mentality, its dynamics, its various components change rate, its impact

² Sociological survey in the framework of studying the population's sociocultural code in the Northwestern Federal district was conducted by ISED T RAS in 2016 in 5 regions: the Vologda, Murmansk, Kaliningrad, Novgorod oblasts and the Republic of Karelia. The sampling amounted to 3101 people selected by sex, age, territory.



on social and economic transformation becomes a relevant research objective.

Russia's National Security Strategy [37] approved in 2015 stresses that one of the country's strategic goals is preservation of traditional moral values. Such values are: priority of the spiritual over the material, nationhood, family, creative work, national loyalty, rules of morality, humanism, mercy, justice, mutual aid, collectivism, historical unity of Russian peoples and historical

continuity. Considering mentality as a system

of sustainable values, beliefs and standards which govern the behavior of members of the society and express the historically established way of thinking determining the individuals' actions and interactions, the authors focus on the need to consider mentality as a factor in socio-economic transformations – at the stage of strategy development for socio-economic development of territories and during its implementation.

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