

# Family traditions as they are viewed by contemporary Russian teenagers

G. Biktagirova

Kazan Federation University, Kazan, Russian Federation

## ABSTRACT

**The article investigates the phenomenon of “family traditions” as it is viewed in Russian psychological and pedagogical researches and by children of teen-age. The author considers a related category “tradition”, defines major characteristics of family traditions, singles out their components, observes pedagogical value of family traditions, supports the necessity to keep family traditions and create new ones. The author presents teenagers’ views about family traditions at the present stage. The article is addressed to teaching staff, educators, child and youth counselors, scientific researchers.**

### 1. Introduction

The concept “tradition” is the subject of investigation of many sciences: philosophy, ethics, sociology, ethnography, linguistics, legal studies, pedagogy, psychology. This proves its multifacet character. Present day attention to such phenomenon as “family traditions” is not extrinsic. It is family traditions that are considered important for transference of experience and family interaction. Today we observe the situation that determines the contradiction between the necessity to bring back family traditions and the lack of competence to understand this phenomenon. The aim of the present research is to determine components of family traditions and identify contemporary Russian teenagers’ views about family traditions on the basis of “family traditions” phenomenon analysis exposed in modern Russian pedagogical and psychological researches.

### 2. Theoretical grounds. Phenomenon “family traditions” as investigated in Russian scientific researches

The concept “tradition” arises from latin *traditio*, and the verb *tradere* in the meaning “to transfer”. Originally this word was taken in its literal meaning “material action”. From philosophical point

of view tradition is a phenomenon of social communication, in fact such form of people’s communication as traditions transfer cultural experience from one generation to another and from one nation to other ones (Biktagirova, 2013).

S.V.Kornev (Kornev, 1999), a sociologist, was one of the first to make an attempt to set forth a general scientific notion of traditions: “Tradition is a form of numerous individual wills consolidated into one creative project; it is a single way to reconcile a fate of one independent personality with united wills of separate wills within one project”.

To investigate a modern approach to the interpretation of this concept, attention should be paid to V.B.Vlasova’s point of view. She treats “tradition” as a peculiar social link of groups and individuals in a society the specific content of which includes procreational activity connected with the transference of social experience from one generation to another with the help of certain meaningful views, actions that record accumulated social experience and that appear to be regulative principles in the process of new conditions and goals of activity development [Vlasova, 1980, p.36]. Thus, tradition is given a specific function to link generations. Family traditions appear to be a bright example of this.

Issues connected with family traditions and processes of forming specific attitude to them were studied in the works of such authors as N.F. Vinogradova, V.M. Ivanova, L.V.Zaghik, O.L. Zvereva, T.M. Markova and other researchers. One can find different interpretations of traditions as a part of national, public culture. Family traditions are presented within the frames of pedagogical and psychological researches, relevant to specified scientific research subject matter.

Family as a social institution is characterized by the complex of behavior patterns, standards, sanctions which regulate relationships between children and parents, spouses, and other relatives. Traditions cultivated in the family are just taken as behavior patterns. Thus N.A.Karatayeva (Karatayeva, 1999)

treats family traditions via valuable pedagogical experience kept in them. Sometimes it is unclaimed due to the fact that traditions usually act in those spheres of social relationship where regulating mechanisms are less applied. Legal norms are determined by time and situations as opposed to traditions. Traditions are specified by such criteria as uncertainty, polyvariability, and self-development potential which are not intrinsic for any law. Researchers V.D. Plakhov and I.V. Sukhanov think that observance of traditions admits freedom, some degree of voluntariness, option and is realized via person's independent activity. "Performing their functions family traditions accumulate patrimonial experience of social development, put it into a compact "matrix" and keep it as of such for centuries, record the past and present of a family, provide stability of relations, guide the development of relationship, order and structure them" (Karatayeva, 1999). Therefore, family traditions are important for making views about family and stability of relationship in children's and teenagers' future family.

S.P. Akutina and I.A. Ilin recognize that family is "the original basis of human culture" and it is supposed not only to support, apprehend but transfer spiritual-religious, national and cultural traditions from generation to generation as well. Family is a part of central social values (Akutina & Ilin, 2009, p.26). Family being safe, supportive and foreseeable environment favors conditions where children's psychological, emotive, physical and intellectual development takes place. The importance of a family is proved by the fact that within it "children obtain their first skills of cooperation, they master their first social roles (including gender roles, features of masculinity and femininity), they comprehend prime norms and values. Parents' mode of behavior (authoritative or liberal) impacts child's self image development (Sneider, 2006). Parents contribute to a child's understanding of cultural basics, religious traditions, ethnical stereotypes and moral values.

Many different aspects of family traditions were studied in the works of such scientists as N.S. Danakin, I.S. Maksimov, P.D. Pavlenka, L.I. Savinov, M.V. Firsov, A.Yu. Fodorya, E.I. Kholostova and others (Bigtagirova, Valeeva, Bigtagirov, 2012). According to V. Satir family traditions are considered as major features of a healthy family. Along traditions a sound family includes equality of every member of a family; honesty, confidence, openness; congruence of interfamily communication; support; responsibility, pleasure and joy due to the opportunity to be together; recognition of peculiarities and uniqueness, right for privacy (Satir, 1992, p.11).

Russian sociologist M.V. Toropyghina defines "Family traditions as a spiritual phenomenon when members of a family establish standards and values that are not restricted by legal norms and that take the status of a family law which regulates, integrates

and arranges family life" (Toropyghina, 2009, p.115). Family traditions are one of the basic mechanisms in the family: rules of communication in the family itself, allocation of responsibilities and supremacy in all spheres of family life, and even ways to solve arising problems. They are based on many religious, ethnical, historical and social traditions and rites, supplemented by new traditions, and transformed and as a result are specific for each family. S.P. Akutina connects family traditions with patrimonial values and includes religious ceremonies, family celebrations, collecting, arrangement of verisages, photos, family leisure time, succession of pedagogical traditions, careful attitude to treasures into them (Akutina, 2009).

E.P. Aleksandrova emphasizes that the opportunity of access and effective transference of family traditions and values is only possible in case of an intentional dialogue between values and traditions interaction in which motivationally significant determinants of personal life activity are not only declared, transferred, accepted but also recreated, transformed and replenished. (Akutina, 2009). At all times and in all societies traditional family values were developed within a long period of time, and they are essentially the result of various types and forms of public associations. The mechanism of family traditions development perfectly agrees with the mechanism of any national tradition development in general: labour, household, ceremonial, artistic etc. Storing of social experience, its careful selection, elements representativeness, their further reproduction and transference from generation to generation is the scheme of this process that takes thousands of years in a real life and in which scores of people's generations take part.

Some researchers (f.e. B. Madzhitova and others) consider family traditions as an essential part of Ethnopedagogics, a condition of permanent development, family traditions provide generation succession, promote stereotyped behavior retention, "formation of childhood memory" (Bigtagirova, Valeeva, Bigtagirov, 2012). She pointed out the following characteristics of public customs and traditions:

- 1) humanistic and democratic orientability and high resultativeness;
- 2) comprising and realization of all upbringing tasks, personality formation as an overall process;
- 3) reflection of basic components of pedagogical culture: respect of elder people, hospitality, love for children, mother, native land, mercy, modesty, industriousness, honesty;
- 4) people's awareness of child's upbringing process acquired by experimental way in the process of centuries-old practical activity, intensive socialization in general;

- 5) convincing evidence of people's folklore traditional use in family upbringing: fairy-tales, proverbs and sayings;
- 6) collective character of upbringing; participation of all family members that promote the consolidation of upbringing forces, cooperation and intergenerational continuity;
- 7) priority of upbringing over education because the process of education implies obtaining of certain amount of knowledge and learning skills and is regarded as the task of upbringing and educational process (Kornev, 1999).

A. Shmakov singles out some features of family traditions:

1. Duration and recurrence in public practice, habitualness in family perception, approval of the family.

2. Uniqueness and peculiarity is the inspiration of a tradition. Traditions (weddings, child's birth, hospitality, festive table) are a part of every family life but they are performed in different ways.

3. Availability of a fixed idea, stability of some components that are transferred from generation to generation.

Thus the pedagogical value of traditions is tremendous. Since the ancient times of Russian culture, there were developed and perfected major spiritual values and ideals that have been kept with care in people's memory and saved until present. They are of great value as they have been selected for a long period of time and proved their necessity and consistency. Respect for mother may be one of these examples. The analysis of cultural artifacts such as song folklore and oral poetic creativity demonstrates that mother is appreciated as one of the most important objects of worship and maternity is regarded as the unity of natural (biological) and spiritual, and moral fundamentals. A peculiar "encyclopedia" of Russian way of life are lullabies and "poteshki" in which according to A.A. Korinfski "there have been expressed both cognitive and sensitive powers of a woman's soul" (Shcherbo, 2003, p.90). It is necessary to remark that due to these rituals a child feels protected. An important tradition is the tradition to respect the elders and love the youngsters. This tradition was declared in "Edification" by great prince of Kiev Vladimir Monomakh (XI century): "Respect the elders as your father and the youngsters as your brothers" (Kolesov, 2000, p.136). Traditions in this context are regarded as a construction element of family relationship, it helps people adapt to their family life in a better way, decrease conflicts during the period of their partnership adjustment. As for the attitude to a child it can also be traced in proverbs, fairy-tales and sayings.

Family leisure time sticks to previous experience, steady values, moral norms. In N.P. Bolotova's opinion "family regulations and values are some-

thing that is open, that is approved and cultivated" (Abramyan, 1978, p.25). Family regulations are the grounds on which a family life is based. Indistinctness of rules and standards, the absence of their explanation may lead to misunderstanding, conflicts, and at the phase of transition to new stages it can be an obstacle for the development of the whole system or some parts of it as well. Thus, traditions become a kind of regulation of psychological atmosphere in the family. Family traditions are the main means of social and cultural standards and values of a family. They are multifunctional, they are emotionally rich and serving as background they make child's development more successful. Ethnical, religious, cultural peculiarities, professional membership are reflected in customs and traditions. The basis of traditions is always some value, standard, idea, family experience. Enrichment of family traditions meaning is the way to arrange one's family life to its full extent, it provides its growth, helps to perfect the process of home upbringing.

Russian psychologist V.Yu. Zavyalov treats family traditions as "repeated understandable rituals, rites, joint actions transmitted from generation to generation. It is important to make every member of the family understand their meaning: both children and adults should feel "the consolidating power" of family traditions" (Vlasova, 1980, p.140).

One of the strongest sides of traditions is that they are instilled in natural conditions on the subconscious level that in its turn lead to better securing of norms and ideals. By the period of adolescence a child has conceived basic traditions of a society and family he lives in. Good knowledge of them and following them even though they are taken negatively due to the peculiarities of adolescent age help a child feel a member of the family, gives a chance to be proud of it. It brings a child closer to the family and allows to overcome some difficulties of adolescence much easier.

Summing up the sense of different approaches developed by Russian researchers it is possible to point out that family traditions are connected with spiritual, moral, cultural and pedagogical phenomenon of getting acquainted with the experience of the past and formation of standards and values of each family, at that they may have a polyvariant character, they can develop on their own and change.

Having investigated the notion on the basis of an essential analysis within the context of Russian psychological and pedagogical studies there can be formulated the component structure of family traditions:

1. Cognitive component (it includes knowledge of ancestors' traditions, adequate understanding of family traditions etc.);

2. Emotive reflexive component (analysis and perception of traditions, their adjustment to new reality, positive emotions as a result of realizing oneself as a part of the given unique family);
3. Axiological component (it supposes the availability of family values);
4. Performing component (activity that leads to transference and accepting of family traditions, working out of positive attitude to them).

The most important family traditions are: respect for elders, respectful attitude for women, hospitality, mutual help and mercy, childcare, healthy generation care, upbringing of industriousness, different approaches to girls' and boys' preparation for family life etc.

### 3. From theory to practice. Research of family traditions as they are viewed by Russian teenagers.

Family traditions are a complicated ritual and rite activity that is taken hard by new generations. It should be noted that there have gradually been disappearing family rites associated with household culture, children's birth and their life protection though it was very important earlier because of very high death rate.

To reveal views of modern Russian teenagers there was carried out an experimental research of 198 teenagers of secondary comprehensive schools of the city of Kazan, the Republic of Tatarstan. There was used the questionnaire "Family traditions" (cognitive, activity component), test "Family biofield" (emotive reflexive component), "Questionnaire of terminal values" comprised by Senin I.G. (axiological component).

Due to the results of cognitive component diagnosis of teenagers' family traditions views we got the following data: 57% of respondents did not distinguish such notions as "tradition" and "family tradition" and associated them with birthday parties, national and religious holidays, 23 % had some difficulties to define these notions, and only 20% could correctly answer these questions. The most widespread traditions in the respondents' families were collection and keeping of family albums and cherished objects (90%), rituals of greeting and leaving (77%), family meals (67%).

Activity component is at a low level: 77% of respondents think that there is not enough attention to traditions in their parents' families, there is the necessity to introduce new and revive old traditions. 3% of respondents experienced some difficulty to answer this question and 20% believed that their family had a good set of family traditions and rites. As for teenagers' readiness to follow family traditions in their future families 63% of respondents were of the opinion that it is necessary to keep tradi-

tions in their future family. 17% refrained from answer and 20% thought that there was no such necessity.

Having studied emotive reflexive component of teenagers' family traditions views with "Family biofield" test we have come to the conclusion that the majority of students have favourable family atmosphere (in 50% of family it is steadily favourable, in 32% unstable favourable atmosphere). 18% of respondents characterize their family atmosphere as unstable. Families with negative family atmosphere have not been found out. Thus 82% of families are characterized by favourable atmosphere that facilitates observance of traditions in these families.

### 4. Conclusions and proposals.

Thus it becomes clear that family traditions are an important factor of family stabilization, its standards and values. Views of modern teenagers about family traditions are unfortunately indistinct, they do not think over their necessity. Nevertheless teenagers show their readiness to form their views about family traditions. Today it is extremely important to help children and teenagers to perceive their necessity. Issues of traditions and novations in culture are getting specific practical significance: their study will contribute to socialization of coming generations, and will encourage new members of the society to take part in the processes of cultural development. Besides, traditions are direct evidence of family health, they form positive attitude to a family. That is why we see the necessity to equip children of adolescent age with views about them.

### REFERENCES

1. Abramyan, E.G. (1978). Innovation and stereotyping as mechanisms of ethnical culture development. *Methodological problems of ethnical cultures: International scientific conference*. Yerevan. 91-93. (Russian)
2. Akutina, S.P. (2009). About the problem of family spiritual moral values classification. *News of RGPU named after A.I. Gherzen*. N94. P.9-20. (Russian)
3. Bigtagirova, G.F., Valeeva, R.A., Bigtagirov, R.R. (2012). Family traditions: issues of theory and social projecting. Kazan: Publ. house "Otechestvo". 228 p. (Russian)
4. Bigtagirova, G.F. (2013) Interdisciplinary analysis of the «tradition» concept. *Fundamental research/ № 6 (part 3)*. P.725-729 (Russian)
5. Vlasova, V.B. (1980). Tradition as a social philosophical category. *Philosophical sciences*. N4. 36p. (Russian)
6. Karatayeva, N.A. (1999). Preschool children upbringing of respectful attitude for family traditions: Thesis of cand. of ped. sciences : 13.00.07: Yekaterinburg. 238p. (Russian)

7. Kolesov, V.V. (2000). Ancient Russia: heritage in a word. The world of an individual. In V.V.Kolesov – St.Petersburgh Faculty of Philology of St. Petersburg state university. 236 p. (Russian)
8. Kornev S.V. Postmodern fundamentalism. M. Mysl. 1999. -34p. (Russian)
9. Madgitova, B. (2004). Folk traditions and customs as a means of forming moral qualities of children in a family. Doctoral thesis, Dushanbe. 43p. (Russian)
10. Satir, V.(1992). How to build yourself and your family. Transl. from English) M: Pedagogica press. 211p. (Russian)
11. Toropyghina, M.V. (2009). The influence of demographical situation in Russia on family institution. *Vestnik of Russia Academy of education*. p.114-117. (Russian)
12. Sheider, L.B. (2006). Family psychology: study guide for higher educational institutions. Yekaterinburgh: Delovaya kniga. 300p. (Russian)
13. Shcherbo, I. (2003). A rush forward or a second coming of project method. *School principle*. N7. p.99-100. (Russian)