

"family" by pa chin essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In Pa Chin's novel, *Family*; it revolves around the Gao family and the many obstacles that the three sons have to go through to obtain their freedom. Since the setting for this novel was based in the early 1920's, there are many conflicts and struggles that the book expresses and there are many situations where now a days it is understandable but during that time period it was really hard for many of China's youth to be able to endure and accept the facts. The social conflicts that are described mostly in Pa Chin's novel, *Family* are the problems of being a filial son/daughter and the importance of being in a higher status.

In the beginning, the novel begins with introducing the three sons who are the successors of the family. The eldest son, Juexin, is the one that will be the person to rightfully inherit the " throne" from his father and hold the family line. Even though there are three brothers and they all have the same mother and live in the same house, Juexin's position is different from theirs. Because he is " the first son of the first son" (Pa, p. 293), his destiny has already been decided for him the moment that he came into the world (Pa, p. 35). And to become the filial son that he had to be, he must obey all orders from the elders, because in that way Juexin is showing his family and the world that he is capable of accomplishing these orders that are given to him and it shows that he is a devoted son to his family and to others.

Although there are also orders that are put on Juemin and Juehui, they do not have as much responsibility as Juexin. When their father makes the decision for Juexin to marry after graduation and tells him to quit his university studies and start to get a job; he agrees and completely goes with whatever his father says (p. 36). In this way, it is showing that Juexin is being a filial

son and doing his rightful duties, but at the same time it makes him cowardly. It makes him become like a machine, a robot; doing whatever anyone says no matter how painful it is.

It is understandable the Juexin is just trying to fulfill his duties and make sure that he does not go against his father or his grandfather or any elderly person, but still he loses all his freedom and basically his life. By doing what he does in the novel just basically means that he put his life into the hands of someone else, someone who will control him for the rest of his life. And by the time that he is able to take control of his life and his goals, he would be old and not even capable of doing anything besides making orders all day to someone else.

As for Juemin and Juehui, they are a bit more different. They understand the whole being filial to your elders thing, but they still do whatever to get what they want, especially Juehui. Being the rebellious person that he is, he never listens and in fact wishes that he could leave his home and get the freedom that he wants. Juehui knows of the whole family system and the whole fulfilling what your elders ask of you to do and understands it, but unlike his eldest brother, he wants to rebel. Throughout the novel, he wants the free life of being able to make decision for himself and so he disobeys the orders that are given to him. He forms a magazine article with his brother and other relatives, called Dawn, and from there he writes his own articles about the rebellion and publishes them. Even when Dawn is suspended, he and the rest of the members come up with a new magazine name, For the Masses, and continue with their articles (p. 238). Juehui is very bold and defiant that

he shows no shame of calling out a person who has done wrong, like when he talked about Master Feng, shouting; " That murderer—old man Feng!" (p. 250). Although Juemin had tried to quiet him down, Juehui continued and did not care whether anyone had heard him or not.

It is not just the boys that have to deal with filial piety; Qin, although is a girl, also has rules of her own that is given by her mother and other elders. Being the only child that she is, her mother requires a lot from her. And seeing the pain that her mother went through after her father has passed away, Qin did not want to disobey her mother. Although she too is like Juehui, because of her mother, she is willing to listen and follow the orders that are given, because her mother is currently living a miserable life. Therefore when Chien-ju talks to her about cutting her hair and going to a co-ed school and those many things, Qin cannot help but retreat from doing all that because of her mother. " Some time ago I made up my mind that I should do what I want.... But when the time comes when I can do what I want.....I think of her toiling through miserable years of widowhood to bring me up, all the while loving me, caring for me, and it is now my turn to make her happy" (p. 197)

The pain that her mother have gone through, Qin wanted to get rid of it by being by her mother's side and comply with everything that her mother asks of her. Although she is only a girl and should being her duties that many other girls should being doing; she strives for education and freedom of her own rules. When she hears from Juemin about his school becoming coed, she immediately wants to transfer there. She wants to make a difference in the society and change the rules around, making all boys and girls being able to

attend class together and learn the same things. " Girls are human beings the same as boys. Why shouldn't they study in the same classroom? (p. 32)" As seen from this quote, Qin believes that there should be equality between boys and girls and so she insists on going to a coed school even if her mother or her grandmother, or anyone in her family rejects it.

Throughout the novel, there are a lot of situations where status is a problem, especially when it comes to being in a relationship. All three brothers encounter this and eventually two of them lose the love of their life, all because of being in a different status. The biggest problem in Juehui's life overall is because of this that makes him not only want to disobey the elders but make a change in the society. Because he falls in love with Ming Feng who is of a lower class than he is, the two do not end up with one another. Therefore, it results in Juehui to hate everyone in his family and for him to leave home for good.

Because of Ming Feng is only a servant in the Gao household, she is to obey the orders that are given. She cannot be in any sort of contact with Juehui or else she would get a scolding. In the beginning, Juehui does not know that holding Ming Feng back and talking with her will cause her pain. He does come to realize and this is what makes him start to want to rebel and leave his home (p. 20). Hence, when Ming Feng commits suicide, he puts the blame on his grandfather. He does not understand why someone has to go through something such as being forced to become a concubine and live an even miserable when they already have no relatives and is of a low class. What he is most mad about is that fact that after, Ming Feng died, his

grandfather still send another servant to take Ming Feng's place. " She ended her life in the waters of the lake, and another girl, weeping, went to the Feng family to bury her youth to satisfy the passions of a lustful old dog" (p. 228). In this quote, it really shows how much Juehui hate how status is so important in a person's life, that it makes someone else end theirs just because they were of a lower status.

The social problems that are mostly showed in Pa Chin's novel, Family; are the difficulties of being a dutiful son/daughter, the relationship between one of higher status and one of lower status, and the role of women equality during this time period. The three brothers lives have been very complicated the day they were born and having experiences so many conflicts during their twenty some years of life, they have finally come to a conclusion of rebelling and choosing the right path. Although they are at different paths at the end of the novel, the three of them are just beginning new journey of freedom and no more social struggles.