

Compromise and concession

Law



Compromise and Concession In most immigrant families, making more money, living better and raising kids as Americans are their goals. Parents know the importance of assimilation, but may not know the paradoxical predicaments their children may face. On one hand, parents expect children to become fully “ American”; on the other hand, they desire children to inherit their ethnic culture as well. Concession and compromise are unavoidable in many occasions and this is more obvious in immigrant families.

Concession or compromise means to give up something, especially in order to end an argument or conflict. In the essay, “ The Good Daughter,” Caroline Hwang describes her as a second-generation immigrant; her life is paradoxical with compromises and concessions. Hwang becomes fully assimilated in America, but her “ American culture” conflicts with her parents’ “ Korean expectation”. As an immigrant, I fully understand Hwang’s plight because it reflects me well: being myself or obey parents. I am a second-generation immigrant from China.

Before I moved to US with my mother at the age of 15, my father had already worked in a Chinese takeout restaurant in Connecticut for more than 10 years. He worked 6 days a week and more than 12 hours a day, but without good pay. Lacking skills in English not only shrank his career choices but also excluded him to study the American culture. Therefore, he expected me study English hard and engage in school. However, he also wanted me to help at the restaurant at the same time because of my family’s financial situation.

So my high school life was like a line between the school and restaurant. I learned English hard in school, but I had to speak in Chinese after school when a group of Chinese staff in the restaurant surrounded me. I engaged in school and enrolled in clubs as much as I could, but I had to stay in the restaurant after school most of the time. I felt that I was distant from classmates and American society. My reading and writing skills improved gradually, but my speaking remained almost the same. I noticed this after a while but I chose to concede and remained silent.

Then, this problem emerged unsurprisingly after I attended college: my social inability hurt me badly. I ate in the cafeteria alone; I studied without companions; I wandered in school aimlessly with no friends. I dropped out of college after one year because I was not able to fit into the community and got lost between two cultures. Studying new culture and engaging in community is essential and important. However, after we absorbed new culture, our own one will remain less and the divergence will become greater.

Therefore the differences in viewpoint among cultures will become greater. Immigrant parents like to think or do the way they are familiar. The ingrained conventions or habits will influence their judgments and determinations. As Hwang writes, “ Though they raised me as an American, my parents expect me to marry someone Korean and give them grandchildren who look like them” (Para. 17). In my culture or community, most of the parents expect children to have lovers from China, and some parents even expect lovers from the same home - city.

Allowance and acceptance from parents before marriage are critical because of filial duty. Lovers are not allowed to decide by themselves unless they wish to separate from the family. That is why many fully assimilated Chinese find it is difficult to find matches unless they are willing to concede or compromise. Different cultures can lead to paradoxical predicaments and bring problems back to family. Concession or compromise is often unavoidable when deciding. Because of vast of opportunities in America, most of the people can pick a career they like based on self-interests.

Nonetheless, some people are not able to decide for themselves, and this problem is more obviously in immigrant families. As Hwang writes, “ A writing career is riskier than law” (Para. 14). Surely, a lawyer is a better career than writer, and it has a bigger chance to be successful. For Hwang’s parents, career is not for self-interest but living better; despite her interest, Hwang concedes to her parents because of her cultural habits. “ After 20-some years of following their wishes and meeting all of their expectations, I couldn’t bring myself to disobey or disappoint” (Caroline, Para. 4). Living freely and thinking independently are two the prominent values in America; however, obedience is important in China. We have to obey the rules in schools and government when we are young, and we cannot challenge because of punishments; we have to obey our parents because of filial duty. Parents like to plan the future for children, and they believe this job is their duty too. Therefore, we obey the “ commands” and concede even if we have different opinions most of the time.

By making a choice, either parents or we may be dissatisfied or disappointed. Immigrant parents sacrifice themselves by leaving the

homeland to give us a better opportunity to become successful, we cannot just do whatever we like or want. We need to concern about our families, parents, and even siblings. As Hwang writes, “ By making the biggest move of their lives for me, my parents indentured me to the largest debt imaginable—I owe then the fulfillment of their hopes for me” (Caroline, Para. 15).

My parents do not require me to bring a bulk of wealth back to them, what they expect is one day I can fulfill their dream that they do not have the chance to achieve, and live in happiness. I was unhappy with their decision sometimes, but I felt their love for me also. Therefore, I never minded or regretted making concessions or compromise. Straddling two cultures are complicated, even though different cultures may complement values in each other. Concession and compromise are necessary in a family or different cultures.