

Article

Understanding Filipino Special Education Parent Participation: A Qualitative Research Study

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Abstract

Parent participation is mandated in special education and transition planning for students. However, immigrant Filipino parents face numerous challenges related to immigration, navigating special education, and transitions. To understand their participation in their children's education, it is important to understand their history, immigration experiences, and beliefs. This study explores how immigrant Filipino parents advocated for their children in New York City's public schools and how their immigration experience has shaped their participation. This qualitative research study conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two Filipina immigrant mothers. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis informed by Bourdieu's theory of capital. Two themes were identified from the data: (1) uncovering the mothers' habitus through their ways of participation and use of capital and (2) communities and social networks as supports for parent participation and child-reading. The mothers possess capital, such as language, which is useful in accessing supports and services for their children. Their values and beliefs regarding education, disability, and their role as parents are shaped by Filipino values, which are also influenced by years of colonial influence on the Philippines. Educators and schools should be proactive in coordinating efforts of parents and families as they plan for the student's education and transition.

Keywords: parent participation; immigrant parents; transition planning; Filipino/a/x

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, was advocated for by parents and family organizations towards legislation in the United States ([Department of Education, n.d.](#)). Through the IDEA, free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities became a legal right. It mandated parent participation in special education and expected parents to advocate for their children to secure the special education services they need ([Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \[IDEA\], 2004](#)). This parent participation is expected throughout the students' basic education and is crucial during students' postsecondary transition. During transition planning, the goal is to identify students' postsecondary goals and the supports needed to achieve them, and this requires the active participation of parents, who serve as advocates for their children.

Immigrant parents face numerous challenges in navigating special education in the United States (US) ([Aceron & Savage, 2004](#); [Yan et al., 2017](#)). Parents face language barriers, limited information about their rights and the US education system, and other challenges related to their immigration ([Lo, 2023](#); [Park, 2024](#)). Immigrant parents also may carry different



Academic Editor: Craig Johnston

Received: 1 July 2026

Revised: 7 September 2026

Accepted: 16 September 2026

Published: 21 September 2026

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beliefs and conceptualizations of disability (Berek, 2014), which could have implications for how they may participate in school and seek support for their children. Based on education data from Massachusetts, Landa (2023) found that children whose parents are immigrants are also less likely to receive special education services than those with US-born parents. In the same data, Landa (2023) found that immigrant children with disabilities are also more likely to be educated in segregated settings than in inclusive settings, as compared to those with US-born parents.

Specific to postsecondary transition, immigrant and first-generation parents may be unfamiliar with the services available post-high school and are less likely to have experienced the transitions themselves (Trainor et al., 2019). Meetings and planning interactions attended by immigrant parents have also been identified as often lacking cultural responsiveness (Trainor et al., 2019). While research on immigrant parents broadly is limited, the experiences of Filipino parents and families in transition are significantly lacking. With the interplay of challenges associated with immigration and evidence of disparity in terms of services and placement, what remains underexplored is how Filipino immigrant parents advocate for their children with disabilities in transitions and how they do so even in the face of various barriers.

For the purposes of this paper, I use the terms “parent advocacy” and “parent participation” interchangeably. When discussing disability, I use person-first language unless I am quoting another person who uses identity-first language. I understand that there is an ongoing discussion about the use of person- and identity-first language in writing (Best et al., 2022), but for the purposes of this paper and for consistency, I will use person-first language, such as “student with disabilities” or “child with disability.”

1.2. Filipinos in New York City

In New York City, Asian and Pacific Islanders remain the fastest-growing immigrant racial group (NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, 2021). However, the Asian and Pacific Islander category is not a monolithic group in terms of culture, language, and history. Filipino immigrants are the fourth-largest Asian ethnic group in the city, with 6.6% of the NYC population speaking Tagalog (NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, 2021). Filipinos are spread across different boroughs, but are more concentrated in Queens, specifically Elmhurst and Woodside (NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, 2021; Lu & Li, 2025). The Asian American Federation released a profile of Filipinos in New York City, showing that they are likely better educated, have good English proficiency, and have a higher average income than the city’s general population (Lu & Li, 2025). While they have higher household incomes than other Asian groups and the overall population on average, 17.8% of households still receive SNAP benefits, and 42.1% of the Filipino population is enrolled in Medicaid, medical assistance, or other government assistance programs (Lu & Li, 2025). Researchers use these as measures of poverty, and these data could indicate the wide range of socioeconomic classes among Filipino residents in the city (Lu & Li, 2025). In terms of employment, one in three Filipinos in NYC works in healthcare, while the other top industries for Filipinos are professional services, entertainment, and retail (Lu & Li, 2025). Most Filipinos in the city hold a bachelor’s degree (49.4%), followed by some college (19.3%) and a degree beyond a bachelor’s (16.3); those with a high school diploma comprise 10%, while 5.2% did not complete high school (Lu & Li, 2025).

1.3. Filipino Immigration and Culture

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (INA) created a preference framework to guide American immigrant admissions, prioritizing family ties, followed by occupational skills, and finally political refugee status (Tichenor, 2016). This act also initiated the wave

of Filipino immigration to the US. The first wave resulted from the Manila–Acapulco trade during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines between 1565 and 1815 (Paik et al., 2016). The second wave of immigration consisted of pensionados, predominantly men seeking undergraduate degrees at US universities from 1903 to 1938 (Paik et al., 2016). The third wave from the late 1920s to the early 1930s consisted mainly of “unskilled laborers” who worked in agriculture and domestic work and moved to Hawaii and the West Coast. This led to increased hostility with the white majority due to economic difficulties brought about by the Great Depression (Paik et al., 2016). During World War II, Filipinos were among those recruited to serve in the US military, which influenced Filipino immigration patterns to the US (Paik et al., 2016).

The INA created the largest Filipino immigration to the US. This change in immigration policy led to a significant influx of Filipino immigrants to the US, including New York City. Through the family reunification pathways, between 1966 and 1970, more than 62 percent of Filipinos came to the US (Liu et al., 1991). Between 1967 and 1977, more than half of occupational immigrants immigrated with their spouses and children; however, this trend may have been disrupted by the 1976 law passed by the US Congress that requires sponsorship by a US employer (Liu et al., 1991). The trend changed again after 1985, when immigration policy once more prioritized family reunification (Liu et al., 1991). Family reunification in New York–New Jersey during this period meant that occupational immigrants could sponsor relatives, specifically parents and siblings under 21 years old who were likely to have socioeconomic and educational attainment similar to those of their sponsoring siblings (Liu et al., 1991).

In conjunction with US policies, the 1974 Labor Code, signed by the former dictator Marcos, also became the first step in brokering the “export” of migrant workers not just in the US but all over the world (Rodriguez, 2010). This move aligns with the economic development paradigm that serves US interests (Rodriguez, 2010). These policies, in both the US and the Philippines, shaped how we may understand the context in which Filipinos immigrate and their own understanding of when, why, and how they would move to the US. The waves of Filipino immigration mirror the lasting legacy of US colonization and reveal the persistence of neocolonialism in the Philippines (Rodriguez, 2016).

Aside from Filipino immigration and policies, it is also important to note that Philippine society and culture are heavily shaped by the enduring effects of colonization by Spain and the US. This should guide our efforts to understand Filipino immigrants’ experiences. Filipinos and Filipino immigrants are ultimately the product of almost 400 years of colonization, violence, and erasure. This violence requires us to interrogate what it means to be Filipino. Benitez (2022) argues that the construction of Filipino is a product of a “Western project called ‘nationalism’ which marginalizes precolonial thoughts, cosmologies, and traditions of plural communities in the Philippines” (p. 41). He also said that the adopted norms and values that we currently talk about are driven by modern nation-state-making and replicate the same dynamics of racialization, dispossession, oppression, and marginalization (Benitez, 2022). An example of this is the persistence of religious, educational, political, and economic institutions as a means of leveraging control (Benitez, 2022). These can be seen in the day-to-day interactions of Filipinos with different institutions, including schools, and have shaped the expected hierarchical relationships between teachers and parents and between students and teachers.

1.4. Cultural Responsiveness in Transitions and Special Education

Postsecondary transitions aim to support students with disabilities and their families with life after high school (Trainor et al., 2020). The transition team, which comprises teachers, school professionals, the student and their parents and/or family, must collaborate

to set post-school goals and plan for the student ([Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \[IDEA\], 2004](#)). These goals are set through collaboration among everyone on the transition team; thus, teachers must be equipped and prepared to teach students and collaborate with their parents ([Romano et al., 2023](#)). While the role of parents in families is noted to be important during transition, immigrant parents are met with barriers given that the system and practices privilege a specific type of participation ([Romano et al., 2023](#)). The efforts of parents and families can be disconnected or disjointed, either because they are deemed irrelevant to their children's education or due to differing beliefs about their role in the student's education ([Romano et al., 2023](#)). This gap needs to be addressed, as effective home-school collaboration developed in culturally sustaining ways contributes to a more successful transition for students ([Mazzotti et al., 2021](#)).

1.5. Immigrant Parents' Experiences in Transition

As of the writing of this writing, I have found no study that explicitly examines Filipino immigrant parents in special education and transition. One study by [Wilgus et al. \(2013\)](#) interviewed immigrant mothers as they navigated special education in New York City. They included Agnes, a Filipino mother of a student with a disability. Agnes and her husband, who is Irish American, were noted to have different approaches in seeking information and support for their daughter with Down syndrome. Her husband sought information from organizations, while she sought support from other mothers whom she met at their local neighborhood playground. Their experience was also unique in comparison to the other immigrant mothers in the study. Takako, a Japanese mother, had a generally positive experience in schools, while Maria, a Dominican mother, had to fight for her son's support services and faced discrimination against her from the school teachers and administrators. Although the study sample was small, it is difficult to ignore the diversity in the mothers' experiences, which is linked to other issues prevalent in schooling, such as racial stereotyping of the students and their families.

While there is other research on Asian parents, most of it focuses on East Asian and other Southeast Asian immigrant parents broadly. [Lo and Bui \(2020\)](#) explored the experiences of Chinese and Vietnamese parents of youth with disabilities in transition planning. One striking research finding is how community-based initiatives supported Vietnamese and Chinese immigrant families navigating special education. The parents in the study had varying socioeconomic statuses, English-language proficiency levels, and educational backgrounds. Still, most were unaware of transition services until they were informed about their local community group ([Lo & Bui, 2020](#)). [Lo and Bui \(2020\)](#) found that while consideration of socioeconomic status and some education in the US may help parents understand the transition process, it is not enough to access quality transition services due to limited knowledge of requirements and planning timelines. For example, even some parents who earned higher education degrees in the US did not understand how the transition process worked. They learned about their rights and their children's rights through community-based initiatives rather than in school ([Lo & Bui, 2020](#)). Schools in the study also showed a lack of cultural competence in terms of being inclusive of the parents and youth, as well as being proactive in communicating transition planning to the parents. While the researchers recommended having translators at Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) meetings, this should already be in practice, since Sec. 300.322 of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \[IDEA\] \(2004\)](#) states that interpreters are needed to ensure that parents understand the proceedings of the meetings. Another example is ensuring that the workforce, teachers, staff, and school administrators reflect the diversity of the student population. Teacher education should

also ensure educators and staff are equipped to work with parents, specifically those from immigrant backgrounds.

Kim et al. (2023) presented three case studies of Korean American young men with autism in college and their parents in California. The research aimed to explore the experience of Korean American youth with autism and their parents in relation to transition, utilizing a multi-level model of intersectionality (Kim et al., 2023). This model of intersectionality allowed them to analyze the experiences of the students and their parents on three levels (Kim et al., 2023). The first is based on social categories such as dis/ability, race, language, immigration experiences, and socioeconomic status. The second is an investigation of the societal arenas, where they look at various contexts in which the students and parents engage. The third is the historicity of the experiences, which looks at how their experiences may have changed or stayed the same over time. Findings of the case studies highlighted the impact of racism and bullying, residential segregation, socioeconomic status, ableism, and immigrant status on the experience of the youth (Kim et al., 2023). It is worth noting that while all students ended up in college and have high GPAs, students living and attending schools in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods receive “generic” transition plans in their IEPs, compared to the one student with a college-oriented IEP. Their intersectional approach showed that the experiences of the students and families in education are a product of interlocking oppressions embedded in systems that marginalize based on race, dis/ability, immigration, and language (Kim et al., 2023).

I highlight these three studies to briefly show how Asian immigrant parents and their children face barriers in navigating special education services and transitions. Their immigrant experience continues to influence and shape their and their child’s transition experience. While it is not hard to ignore that language continues to be a significant barrier for parents, their experience is also shaped by other factors such as their socioeconomic class, beliefs, educational background, and their relationship with the teachers and school. Artiles (2019) has argued the importance of understanding the intertwined history of disability with race, language, and immigration because these are our analytical tools for understanding and dismantling inequalities. As I have mentioned earlier, Filipino immigrants have a unique history as they have moved to the US, which may continue to shape their experience as parents of students with disabilities. Understanding the context in which Filipino parents have advocated for and supported their children in special education and transition helps us better understand their needs and the possibilities for collaboration and support. To provide appropriate support, these should not be disconnected from “historical, moral, social, economic, and political ties to racialized practices and ideologies” (Gutiérrez & Jaramillo, 2006, p. 184).

To support the analysis of the parents’ experience, Bourdieu’s theory of capital is useful to understand how the parents navigated educational spaces, as well as what and how they were shaped by their own history, practices, and experiences. In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of Bourdieu’s theory of capital and other related concepts, specifically habitus and field.

1.6. Bourdieu’s Theory of Capital

Capital refers to the resources an individual has access to and may use and has been described as accumulated labor taking on various forms, including objectified and embodied forms (Bourdieu, 2018). For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on three types of capital: economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital refers to money or other financial assets, while social capital is the social connections one has access to (Bourdieu, 2018). Social capital may include people in one’s family, those known through school or work, and those known in the community. Cultural capital can be in the form of

an embodied, objectified, or institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 2018). The embodied state is the long-lasting dispositions of one's mind and body, such as knowledge of a language; the objectified state is in the form of cultural goods, such as books; and the institutionalized state is a form carried from an institution, such as a higher education degree (Bourdieu, 2018). There is also symbolic capital, a transformed form of capital, which is material but hidden; it can be a person's taste, reputation, or language (Mahar et al., 1990). Capital can be converted from one form to another (Bourdieu, 2018). For example, having money (economic capital) to afford language lessons gains embodied cultural or symbolic capital.

Another relevant concept is habitus, which is defined as a property that comprises a "structured and structuring structure" (Maton, 2014). This means that it is "structured" by one's history, and it is also structuring one's present and future practices (Bourdieu, 2004; Maton, 2014). These "structures" are not random but comprise "a system of dispositions that generate perceptions, appreciations, and practices" (Maton, 2014). It is the unconscious learning of rules, values, and dispositions from cultural history that stays with us across contexts, as it is durable and transposable (Webb et al., 2002). Disposition is defined as a way of being or a "habitual state" (Maton, 2014). It is durable, meaning it lasts over time, and transposable, meaning it is applicable across various contexts of social action (Maton, 2014). Simply put, habitus produces one's actions and practices, or how one "plays the game" in the field. It is a result of one's objective world and, at the same time, has the power to reproduce these structures (Webb et al., 2002). While this process is continuous, producing and reproducing structures is not explicit or intentional (Bourdieu, 2004). Habitus is shaped by our cultural history and is thus influenced by class or material conditions characteristic of one's class; hence, our actions and practices are also influenced by one's class (Maton, 2014). While habitus and capital are both influenced by class, they are different. Habitus is hidden, and its processes are not explicit; it is forgotten (Maton, 2014). This means that the decisions we make in relation to our practices are unconsciously done, yet reflect our culture and become a part of common sense (Webb et al., 2002).

The (cultural) field, or the embedded power structure within it, dictates the value of specific capital and shapes the habitus (Webb et al., 2002). It "determines the properties, internalized as dispositions and objectified as economic or cultural goods, that are valid, active, or pertinent in a given social setting" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 7). It is a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments, and titles that constitute an objective hierarchy and produce and authorize certain discourses and activities (Webb et al., 2002). It is fluid and dynamic, built on interactions among institutions, practices, and rules rather than being fixed (Webb et al., 2002). The field is similar to a football field, with specific rules, expectations, values, and skills required to win or excel at the game.

As the field is continually shaped by its actors (and vice versa), it is important to recognize that it is structured and historicized (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014). The structures within the field, including policies, curriculum, and beliefs, must be examined through a historical lens and acknowledged as being shaped by colonialism and imperialism (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014). It is also hard to escape the current effects of globalization and how it may blur the line between fields, as there is an unregulated flow of cultural texts (Webb et al., 2002). People are continuously confronted with narratives, information, voices, and perspectives from all corners of the globe that do not align with the received ideas of their habitus (Webb et al., 2002). Using Bourdieu's theory is helpful not just in listing down the parents' capital but in uncovering the ways in which the capital is acquired, converted, and utilized. Their habitus is also shaped by their own socialization, having grown up in the Philippines. Their capital and habitus are intertwined with their personal history, Philippine history, and the enduring effects of colonialism and imperialism both before and

after they have immigrated. All in all, these influence how they participate in or advocate for their children's transition.

1.7. Research Questions

Immigrant parents face challenges as they navigate their and their children's post-secondary transitions. I argue that it is important to examine the experiences of Filipino immigrant parents not only to disaggregate data but also to gain a deeper understanding of their participation. It will allow us to understand how their participation is shaped by colonial history and the ongoing influence of the US on the Philippines. Understanding the influence of the US before and after the parents migrate to the US allows us to gain deeper insight into how the parents may participate in education and advocate for their children before and during transition. It can also inform teachers and schools about how best to collaborate with the families they work with. This research paper asked the following:

1. How have immigrant Filipino parents advocated for their children in New York City's special education, before and during postsecondary transition?
2. How have their background and immigration experience shaped their participation?

2. Materials and Methods

I approach the study epistemologically through a social constructivist lens (Patton, 2002; Priya, 2021). Social constructivism is linked to human subjectivity, meaning that individuals create and develop subjective meanings (Priya, 2021). Each individual interprets and constructs realities, and this research aims to examine the multiple realities people create and how these realities affect their lives and experiences (Patton, 2002, p. 96). I use this lens because parent advocacy and immigration experiences are unique to each individual. They create their own meaning from their own experience. While the constructivist paradigm is often used in grounded theory, I also draw on Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu, 2011) as a framework to analyze the advocacy and participation of Filipino parents.

This is an exploratory qualitative research study (Given, 2008). This approach allows for intentional data collection to maximize discovery (Given, 2008). It allows for the description of phenomena and the identification of emerging processes, and is not meant for verification or confirmation (Given, 2008). While there is a significant body of literature on immigrant parents, parent participation, postsecondary transition, and Critical Filipino Studies, there is a lack of studies that specifically examine the experiences of Filipino immigrant parents as they participate in their children's postsecondary transition. Thus, the exploratory approach fits this study.

2.1. Researcher Positionality

I am a Filipino international graduate student based in New York City who grew up and was primarily educated in the Philippines. My interest in the research question grew from my previous experience working with parents in intervention planning for their children, as well as from personal experience transitioning to a new country and city. In working with parents, I learned how the parents navigated the health and education systems in Manila to access the services their children needed. The shared stories and conversations usually include conversations on how the parents navigate the "labelling" or diagnosing of their children, how it impacts their lives, and how much it may have changed over time.

My experience as an international student further influenced this curiosity. Learning the norms and expectations unique to the US and NYC, both in social and academic contexts, was necessary. Having gone through these new experiences, I have become more

curious about how we may adapt at different periods in our lives and how this may affect our various roles and responsibilities in our personal lives. For example, when immigrants become parents, what is the difference between those who moved after completing their formal education and those who experienced schooling in the US? How does one build and navigate their social network after migrating? From my experience, there were situations wherein there was little need to adapt, given my prior familiarity with the fast-paced life of city living and exposure to media portrayals of US schooling and workplace. These have given me some familiarity in this new context.

I also had to reorient myself to the administrative aspects of education, educational expectations, and the higher education system. I have also learned to appreciate how my social community at home has influenced and supported me. Hence, I became interested in understanding how Filipino immigrant parents have navigated these transitions and whether there is a need to better support them. I want to learn how Filipino immigrants adapt and maintain their cultural beliefs and practices in a new context. In the same vein, I also wonder what similarities and differences they may perceive between the Philippines and their new context, and how their prior experiences have supported or hindered them as they navigate it.

I developed these research questions with an understanding of the colonial histories of the Philippines and the US. In reading the literature on immigrants and Asians in the US, including studies on special education, I question whether what is found in the literature about immigrants and Asians holds true for Filipinos. Given the enduring influence of the US on language, education, governance, and popular culture, I wonder whether we have “assimilated” even before we moved to the US, since we are ultimately products of the empire. An example is the value and emphasis placed on learning and being fluent in English. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of the school curriculum I had growing up was taught in English. Filipinos were also among the target consumers of American goods imported into the country during and after the American colonization of the Philippines. The colonial histories of the US and the Philippines influenced Filipino labor migration to the US, not only through US policies but also through policies in the Philippines (Rodriguez, 2010). My curiosity about the lingering effects of colonialism and neoliberalism has shaped this research project. I became curious as to how this history has shaped and continues to impact parents’ experiences of parenting and child-rearing, and how it ultimately shows up in transition planning.

2.2. Data Collection

I utilized purposive sampling in the current study, and participants were recruited via online dissemination of recruitment materials to the mailing lists of Filipino organizations and Filipino and New York City Facebook groups. The recruitment materials were in plain-language English. I contacted seven organizations to help with participant recruitment, and two of those disseminated the materials. The following inclusion criteria were used: (1) Filipino immigrant parents who migrated to New York City after 1965 and (2) those who have attended an individualized education plan (IEP) meeting for their child/ren. No parents responded through the Filipino organizations. Three parents responded to the call on Facebook, and the two parents interviewed in the study met the inclusion criteria. Over 50 emails and texts showed interest in participating, but they appeared to be spam accounts or bots. These emails and texts were sent within the same period, and the messages appeared to have been generated by generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) chat tools. I hypothesize several reasons why only a few respondents answered the call. The materials deliberately used the language “child with an individualized educational plan” rather than students with disabilities. While I argue that disability as a term should

be destigmatized, it still carries a lot of stigma, especially for Filipino parents. Parents may also be hesitant to talk about their child's disability if they have their own beliefs about whether their child has a disability. The dissemination was also focused on Filipino organizations and groups in New York with a more general affiliation or membership, rather than posting and connecting with parent and/or parent support groups for those who have children with disabilities.

The two participants and their children are assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. The two mothers reside in the borough of Queens, and all their children go to separate public schools. Beth is a business owner who immigrated to the United States in their teens, approximately 20 years ago. She married her first husband and had their first child in her early 20s. She got divorced and completed her undergraduate degree while serving as the primary caregiver for her son. Currently, Beth is married and has two children. At the time of the interview, her child, Gabriel, was graduating from high school because he had reached the maximum age eligible for special education services in New York City Public Schools, which is 22 years old. According to Beth, Gabriel is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Esther migrated to New York around 20 years ago after initially moving to Texas from the Philippines. Esther completed her undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Development in the Philippines. Since moving to the city, she has been working as a nanny. She married in 2011 and has two children, both of whom have IEPs. James, the older son, is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and Ian is diagnosed with speech delay. Both of Esther's children are in elementary school.

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The in-depth approach to questioning enabled detailed discussions of participants' experiences and perspectives. This provided a means to understand the context of their experiences (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This is integral to answering the research question that seeks to understand how parents' participation is shaped by their experiences, specifically as immigrants from the Philippines. Since it is also semi-structured, it was guided by a general interview guide that included questions related to their immigration to New York from the Philippines, learning about their children's diagnoses or support needs, and their experiences with the IEP and transition process and with the IEP team. I began by asking questions to introduce the topic, such as "What are the things you have done to make sure your child receives their education and/or education services?" and "How has engaging in ____ activities impacted your and your child's life?" The semi-structured aspect of the interview allowed participants flexibility to discuss their experiences and interpretations, while ensuring the interviews covered the general areas that could help answer the research questions.

To build rapport with the participants, I first asked about their immigration story and let them share their experiences. There were brief discussions about the difficulties they faced and the support that helped them with their immigration. This question contextualized their knowledge and established common ground since the participants and I have both moved to the US. Before the interview, I also shared some details about myself beyond the context of the study, including my background in health professions and my experience growing up and living in the Philippines. Since I am a bilingual speaker, I let the interviewees lead in choosing the language they were most comfortable with and conducted the interview in Taglish (Tagalog-English). The interviews were audio-recorded and ranged from 60 to 90 min. Only one interview was conducted for each mother. The interviews were conducted during the summer of 2024. The interview with Beth was conducted at a coffee shop near her office, and the interview with Esther was conducted at her home, where I met her two children and husband. Both participants received a \$20 gift card as a thank-you for their participation.

2.3. Data Analysis

I analyzed the data through thematic analysis guided by Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2021). There were three broad steps in the analysis: data familiarization, coding, and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I transcribed the interviews and read and reread the transcripts to become familiar with them. I have translated the quotations included in this paper. However, for the analysis, the interviews were not translated, and the analysis was conducted in the language in which the interviews were conducted (Tagalog-English). The transcripts and articles were uploaded to ATLAS.ti for coding. I developed the codebook deductively and inductively (Miles et al., 2014). The deductive analysis of data allowed me to use Bourdieu's theory as a framework, while the inductive analysis left space for exploration and discovery within the data (Patton, 2002).

I identified and defined initial codes prior to coding. However, I identified and defined new codes as I read and re-read the data. An example of this is the code "acceptance," which is an in vivo code when mothers discussed the need to find acceptance with their children's diagnosis. I revised and updated the codebook as the data analysis progressed. The coding process was done iteratively. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data and support my analysis, I maintained an audit trail through memo writing and the codebook, with detailed descriptions of the interview codes. I began writing memos after the first interview and continued to do so with every interaction with the data, including after transcription and coding, and when identifying themes. During the interviews, I took field notes. I also conducted peer debriefing by consulting with another scholar throughout data collection and analysis. This scholar is an expert in qualitative research methods and postsecondary transition research.

3. Results

The unique experiences and backgrounds of the mothers have shaped their beliefs about education and disability, as well as their participation and advocacy as their children prepare for and go through transition. This is supported by the themes identified in the study: (1) the mothers' habitus through their ways of participation and use of capital and (2) communities and social networks as supports for parent participation and child-rearing. Their upbringing and socialization in the Philippines, as well as their immigration pathways, have provided them with support and advantages in meeting their children's access needs at school and during transitions. These advantages are in different forms of capital, supported by the mothers' understanding of the field. However, they also face some level of unfamiliarity with the transition processes and personal challenges, which they sometimes address through community support.

3.1. Theme 1: Uncovering the Mothers' Habitus Through Their Ways of Participation and Use of Capital

The parents demonstrated an understanding of their children's diagnoses and school processes for receiving support. Both mothers' initial experience with disability or diagnosis has been through their children's healthcare provider, which has shaped their experience as they sought supports and services in school and later on the transition of their children. Additionally, years of working with the IEP and other health professionals have taught them their expected role in their children's education planning. They shared that they would actively participate by asking questions during IEP and transition meetings and by corresponding with professionals to ensure that what they do in school is carried over at home. Beth shared that she is not scared of giving consent during the IEP and transition meetings because, to her, the IEP team members adequately explain the needs and support for her child, Gabriel. She shared:

“I would really research or I would read about it [...] so that’s why I I wasn’t scared to say yes or to be able to give him the per—them the permission to do things [...] I think it’s good, I think it’s fine, no, and I think [...] people are scared—it’s because they’re not educated. But once you are educated and you learn, you understand what’s going on then you’d be able to know [...] if there’s something that’s not right, you can also be able to understand what you can do about it. Not just saying no right away, right? Or being scared or stressed out like other parents”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

She also said that she proactively sought clarification whenever something was unclear. For Beth, it is important to be involved and assertive, as it is a sign of maturity as a parent. Esther, too, said,

“I’m just amazed with the teachers. I mean, I love the public school system when it comes to special ed[ucation] here in New York ha. I don’t know about the other states (laughs). But in New York, they’re the best, especially my child’s school, because they really give you support, and if you have any questions, every day you get notes [from the teachers]”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

The experiences shared by the mothers differ from those reported in the literature by other immigrant parents. Based on the literature, immigrant parents often have difficulty collaborating with the IEP team, which some attribute to language barriers and the school’s lack of cultural competence (Barrera-Lansford & Sánchez, 2025; Choe et al., 2024). Esther and Beth both drew on their English-language competence and cultural knowledge, even if this was not explicitly stated. Both parents are comfortable speaking English, and much of the interview and prior conversations were in Tagalog-English and English. When they discussed their experience working with schools, they did not mention any language-related or communication difficulties, and in the interviews, they also assumed my English-language competence.

In addition to their language skills, the mothers reported using the Internet to research programs available in the city that their children could access, to learn more about their children’s diagnoses, and to connect virtually with other parents of students with disabilities. They shared that their experience in higher education had equipped them with some level of Internet literacy, as both had become mothers when the Internet became more widely accessible. Esther shared,

“So when the OT evaluator came, they gave me a note they said to look up pervasive developmental disorder. Which is when we looked up, it’s under the spectrum. Autism spectrum. Of course we felt sad and it was painful; how could we have missed it? But we got all the help. We reached out to our pediatrician; all the symptoms, like the eye contact, we missed them. We didn’t know because he is our first baby”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

Beth also shared,

“I think during that time I really liked doing research online. Like I went online since I was already like going to school at College 1, so I was already exposed to being able to navigate, you know, the system on knowing things that is available readily in the internet yes”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

While there are also issues with online disinformation, their undergraduate degrees in education and health were helpful in differentiating trustworthy information. This may also be complemented by their motivation to consistently ask the health and education professionals about their children. Beth completed her undergraduate degree in psychology in the United States after Gabriel was diagnosed, and Esther finished her degree in early childhood in the Philippines. It is important to note that most higher education degrees in

the Philippines are also taught in English. Both degrees are also closely related to education and health, which could have helped them better understand their children's needs. This offers them more insight as to their child's diagnosis, even if Beth got her degree after Gabriel was diagnosed.

The mothers' positive experience, due to their access to language and information, is also compounded by their beliefs about their relationship with the IEP or transition team. They had a positive experience with the IEP team and described themselves as empowered, but there is also an inherent trust in the IEP and transition professionals. They found the collaboration with the professionals productive, as they trusted the professionals and felt empowered in their decision-making regarding their children's education. Beth said:

"They were very helpful if I have questions or anything; they would, uh, let me know, especially when we do meetings on the goals—specifically on what you want. You can express whatever, uhm, you like—about your son to develop—and they will work it for you. So it's not just based on what they want or what they think is needed, but they also work with the parents. They are going to consider what you feel, [what] you think would be good for your child, especially if you are outspoken and you know what to say". (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

The quote above reflects their efforts to make sense of and negotiate their identity as mothers who value working with the professionals while understanding the need to be their own advocates. As Beth shared,

"Actually it's a two-way [...] thing. Here in the US, actually here in New York City, [...] people are so busy, right? So even if somebody tries to give you something free, free time, the people they're very busy you know, you wanna do something, but they have work. Everyone has just limited time. Even in the weekend [...]. So I think uhm for me I really reach out to the PT (physical therapist), therapists and they are very communicative, they're very supportive so one thing that that I've always asked is what can I do at home to be consistent with what you do at the school". (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

The quote above acknowledges expectations and norms not only in education but also in the New York context. Both mothers have capital that is dominant or preferred in the field. However, it is not enough for them to possess the desired capital; they should also understand the cultural field. Their perspective on their roles as parents is embedded in their beliefs and aligns with current practices in the field. While the mothers appear to be easily adaptable to the education systems in the US, learning about practices is still an ongoing process. There were still some aspects they had to learn or that they did not expect to prepare for later on. As Beth prepared for Gabriel's postsecondary transition, she shared that she learned about guardianship too late. She said,

"So the guardianship, uh actually it's been a year already. A year or two when the transition director told me, which for me is already late since it is something that should have been done before he's 18 years old. [...] I also don't understand, like, if someone has a disability, like back home [in the Philippines], isn't it right for them to stay with their parents? But here, we need to apply so they can be your guardian. Like if your child doesn't have a disability they don't have that right? So, I think I learned it later [than I should have]". (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

Beth is doing something beyond the school's transition plan and is working with professionals outside the school. This exemplifies how transition planning extends beyond the transition team and outside the school. This is a possible opportunity for collaboration

that is usually lacking among different agencies. She said this was not discussed much during transition planning, though it was mentioned by the transition director. It is arguably important for the transition team, Beth, and her family to discuss it in this setting. She also expressed some “shock” at the need to apply to be your child’s guardian, and she compared the familial expectations in the Philippines, where caregiving is automatic and does not require paperwork. However, she later reflected that perhaps it is a good thing to be “prepared,” and that it gives her some reassurance about Gabriel’s future.

Aside from their comparison with the US and Philippine education, the mothers also had a chance to express their views on how disability is treated in the Philippines. Beth said that she does not like that back home, families would “baby” or “hide” their other family members with disabilities even as the children become older. To Beth and Esther, the schooling and culture in the US give their child more independence, especially as they grow older and transition from school. Beth and Esther both view their experiences as more positive, as they were able to work with the capital they had. This is exemplified by the above-mentioned quotes, which indicate satisfaction with the service and their collaboration with the school and their IEP and transition teams. However, this is not solely due to their cultural capital; it is also supported by their social capital.

3.2. Theme 2: Communities and Social Networks as Supports for Parent Participation and Child-Rearing

While Esther and Beth took ownership of caring for and raising their children, they also acknowledged that their community contributed to their journey. The mothers faced personal challenges that affected their parenting context. Beth went through a divorce and had to raise Gabriel during his childhood, mainly as a single parent. They also shared challenges related to the economic costs of services their children need. They overcame these challenges by seeking available support from the community in various forms. To participate in multiple advocacy opportunities, such as attending seminars and IEP meetings, they had to mobilize their resources and networks. An example is looking for affordable childcare for Beth and negotiating their schedules to meet; she said:

“I would leave my child, and then there would also be other kids there. But she’s really kind, and I saw she really loved my kid. So there wasn’t really an issue, and it was affordable for me. [...] As long as you won’t hurt my child and you keep my child healthy. I’ll leave him with her and go to work”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

Gabriel also had a piano teacher, Ella, who had no experience teaching students with disabilities. Prior to meeting Ella, Beth reported that teachers would turn them away because Gabriel does not communicate verbally. Beth shared,

“So she was really accepting of Gabriel, my son. And from the way that she taught him, she adapt[ed]. Even though she didn’t know anything about special ed[ucation]. So the keyboard, she put colors. So now, each note has a color assigned that you would play. So Gabriel learned color coordination [...] and then sound recognition, when he presses this key, this would be the sound. Until he learned how to read music notes by color. And then, uhm [...], now he uses both his hands, and he [really] developed his musical ability”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

Esther shared that she and her husband asked their pediatrician about their child’s milestones because of a suggestion from a churchmate, a Filipino health professional.

“They’re a friend in the church. So they’ve been a nurse for a long time, and there were other babies and children in the church at the same time, so they approached

me like, ‘Why is your child still not speaking?’ So you know, she’s just curious. Then me, of course, I started to think. So I said, okay, I’ll ask our pediatrician, and then they gave me a number to call, which is also government-based. They really helped us. Someone came [and] at first, it was even a Tagalog speaker because they thought what if the child is just bilingual since me and my husband and I would speak in Tagalog at home”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

Informally, their social capital gave them the information to seek further information that later helped them understand their child’s needs. This informal occurrence has impacted their experience in the long run, as a diagnosis is usually crucial to accessing support. While Esther’s churchmate is not the parent, their capital and expertise influenced Esther’s decision to ask her child’s pediatrician. Beyond the social network, the nature of their relationship allowed her to trust her churchmate. While it was easy for the mothers to trust a health professional because of the perceived expertise, as discussed above, this also came from someone they had built a relationship with and had trusted. Furthermore, Esther also possessed forms of capital that allowed her to pursue this suggestion, such as existing knowledge of where to seek further guidance, namely, her child’s pediatrician.

More informal information sharing about their children’s diagnoses occurs during their engagement with social communities such as their workplace and church. The mothers did not share the same church and/or support meetings or groups. However, both shared that they also learn about more programs and how to get into them through their social circles or communities. An example would be a parent support group organized by other parents at their children’s schools. Esther shared,

“It was really for parents for them to un—understand. It’s mixed, some have been there for a long time, some are newbies, we call it parent training and it’s still on going until now. Some parent trainings even have potty training or to better understand your child when it comes to speaking, so it was really helpful. I used to cry a lot (laughs) of course because of frustration there are times you would really be upset. I remember I would really need to leave for a bit just to collect myself (laughs) then I’ll come back because sometimes I don’t understand him or even if he can talk there would still be tantrums. Then sometimes they would also be very obsessed with certain things [. . .] like there was a time he would really be into ringing the bells in the bus”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

The groups usually meet at their children’s schools, although the meetings were not formally organized by the schools; the mothers were initially informed through the IEP meetings. The group is for parents of students with disabilities, specifically those with autism diagnoses. Aside from learning about the programs their children may join, they found the community valuable for validating their experiences and struggles as parents.

“So I think by that time [my second child needing an IEP], really I was an expert, I was already an advocate (laughs). But uhm, the best thing really is to have a support group. Uhm, right now I am the one supporting other parents. Of course now we have Facebook; I went to this autism support group. Of course there are some [children] that are at a lower level [or function], and they [the parents] are struggling”. (translated from Tagalog-English conversation)

She added later on,

“And then I am part of this group chat, a chat group wherein we can talk we can vent out. We can ask questions on how to navigate so we were on different levels, different journeys which is really helpful. And they always have to post a question of the day on Facebook. Oh question of the day, uhm, how do you navigate this challenge? So what do you think? So you will put your answers,

then [other] people can help. Sometimes there are also autistic individuals [in the group]”.

This also provides them with information as they think about the future of their children. Beth, through her community and Internet literacy, has learned that Gabriel’s postsecondary transition means his services will come from a different government office rather than the school. Like Esther, Beth emphasized that parents need emotional support to be present for their children. Both Esther and Beth shared that their church communities were crucial as they navigated and tried to understand and “accept” their children’s health condition. The mothers shared that while they had their fears, they both found their respective churches to be places where they could receive emotional support and guidance. This too is a crucial component, as parents need to understand their children’s diagnosis to be able to participate in their children’s education. Esther shared that in their church, her children found peers. She shared that seeing her children socializing with their peers and forming relationships is very important and encouraging to her as her children progress through school.

4. Discussion

This paper examines how immigrant Filipino mothers have advocated for their children within New York City’s special education and postsecondary transition, and how their backgrounds and experiences have shaped their participation before and during their children’s transition. The mothers’ advocacy in the study did not start and end in the classrooms. They sought support in schools by attending transition planning meetings, talking with professionals and school personnel, and finding support within their community. They also had to juggle competing demands and overcome challenges related to their child’s disability. Their participation is enabled by their capital, such as language, education, social networks, and community. The capital they possess, as well as their habitus, is a product of their personal histories as Filipino immigrants in the US, which are also linked to Philippine history and its relations with the US.

4.1. Language

Language is one capital that Esther and Beth often use, but it tends to go unacknowledged. Researchers have identified language as one of the key barriers to parent participation and advocacy (Barrera-Lansford & Sánchez, 2025; Choe et al., 2024). The experiences shared by the mothers differ from those reported in the literature by other immigrant parents. Based on the literature, immigrant parents often have difficulty collaborating with the IEP team, which some attribute to language barriers and the school’s lack of cultural competence (Barrera-Lansford & Sánchez, 2025; Choe et al., 2024). When they discussed their experience working with schools, they did not mention any language-related or communication difficulties, and in the interviews, they also assumed my English-language competence. As Bourdieu (1991) explains, language, as a form of symbolic capital, is not only a means of communication. It becomes a tool for knowledge exchange and, in turn, a means of power. As the mothers work with the IEP teams, which is possible and easier since they can communicate in English, they gain access to important knowledge that would otherwise be unavailable to them. This, in turn, gives them the power to access more services. This is exemplified by Beth’s statement that she feels confident in providing consent and collaborating with the IEP team, and by Esther’s sharing her opinion and praising her children’s IEP team. In these situations, the mothers assert and exercise their power, enabled by their English proficiency. This difference may be due to English instruction being integrated into, or even prioritized within, the Philippine education system (Lorente, 2013). English became the de facto medium of instruction during the American colonial

period in the Philippines, when the public school system was established and modeled after the US public schools (Lorente, 2013).

However, it is also worth exploring the spectrum of language proficiency and how other factors, such as one's educational attainment and duration of stay in the US, may influence their confidence in communicating in English. Additionally, even if parents can understand the language for communication, there are implicit rules that are not readily available from online research or reading. Beth's experience learning the legal requirements and system related to their guardianship application exemplifies this limitation. While they were already proficient in English, Beth also had to learn the legal requirements that may not have been readily known to her as Gabriel is going through postsecondary transition. Unfortunately, Beth had to learn this later in the process, and it was not discussed in their transition planning. This finding mirrors the study by Lo and Bui (2020), which found that immigrant parents still lack sufficient access to quality transition services due to limited knowledge of requirements and planning timelines, regardless of their socioeconomic class or educational background. This exemplifies how postsecondary transition remains unfamiliar among immigrant families in special education.

4.2. *Habitus and Field*

The mothers' practices are shaped by their habitus and understanding of the cultural field, which they have learned prior to their move to the US and continue to learn. However, as Trainor et al. (2019) noted, the mothers were still unfamiliar with some post-high-school services and were less likely to have experienced this specific transition themselves. Beth's experience was not learning about some aspects of transition planning, such as, in their case, the need for guardianship, which reflects the cultural and practical differences as well as the gap during Gabriel's transition planning. However, since immigrating to the US, they have come to perceive that their practices are responses to the realities of city life and to their values of responsibility toward their children. They have a cultural understanding of their role as parents and the systems they needed to advocate for their children. Their habitus is also shaped by their experience with the Philippine education system, which is patterned after the US system and emphasizes individualism and exceptionalism (Constantino & Constantino, 1982). As Constantino and Constantino (1982) would argue, the establishment of the education system in the Philippines was a colonial tool to shape Filipinos into subservience, make the Philippines into a "good colony," and instill a sense of indebtedness or utang na loob. This influences Filipinos' worldview regarding institutions. Both mothers have shared their praise and high regard for the health and education professionals with whom they have worked. Beth and Esther believe that obtaining education and health services for their children is their sole responsibility and that they must seek them out on their own. They believe that services are available and that they are responsible for finding and finding means to afford them. This may contribute to Beth's belief that her assertiveness is important, and, specifically in New York, that it is important to be responsive to the fast-paced and individualist realities in the field.

The mothers also complicate our thinking about Filipino values and norms, which I introduced at the beginning as "a colonial and modern construct that fails to represent all peoples in the Philippines" (p. 41). As products of almost 400 years of colonization by Spain, the US, and even Japan, it is difficult to really characterize what we mean when we say Filipino culture, identity, or values. As the mothers have moved, they may have brought these sensitivities with them as they try to understand the US. These beliefs and dispositions may be perceived as contradictions. They are assertive as they provide consent, ask questions, and do their own research, but they are also deferent since they heavily rely on the professional opinion. They are both, and they feel a sense of indebtedness or

gratitude towards the professionals they work with. I argue that these strategies are also means of survival and self-preservation. They trust the professionals because they believe the professionals are experts. This, together with their belief that they have a perceived choice or power (acquired through their access to the English language), allows them to continue working within the system. However, it is worth noting the delays that arose given that Beth was informed late and had to seek out more information by herself with regard to guardianship as they went through transition planning for Gabriel. While immigration to New York City and the US, as well as personal challenges, affected the mothers, the cultural ways of thinking about parenthood and parenting in the Philippines dictated their actions. These parenting expectations are shaped both by religion and US influences in the Philippines, which views parenting as something that solely falls on the mothers. This messaging and these beliefs have been ingrained in the mothers, have become part of their habitus even before they migrated to the US, and can be traced through their education and their own community experiences.

Beth also drew a comparison of how disability is being treated in the Philippines and the US. This signals her expectations as to what she thinks Gabriel is and should be capable of after he finishes high school. An emerging body of literature examines perceptions of disability in the Philippines. Palad et al. (2021) found that, in general, the surveyed Filipino population had positive attitudes toward people with disabilities. However, more information on how this translates into practices, especially in health, education, and employment, needs further exploration. A study explored the Ayta, an indigenous group in the Philippines, and their conceptualization of disability (Torre et al., 2025). The study had a particular focus on disability in the educational context. In general, the community rejects labelling and sees learning difficulties as disability (Torre et al., 2025). These learning difficulties were said to be in reading (“mabagal magbasa”), writing, and listening (Torre et al., 2025). They view disability as otherness, but they also conceptualize ability as an individual being able to fulfill their familial roles, such as contributing to maintaining their home (Torre et al., 2025). While the two studies show a leaning towards positive attitudes toward disability, access to disability services in the Philippines is neither easy nor affordable (Chiu et al., 2023). Hence, this may impact how families respond to the needs of family members with disabilities. The beliefs and experiences of Aytas in the study may still differ from those in other areas in the Philippines. Aside from geography, there are differences in cultural practices between the Tagalogs (the mothers in the study) and the Aytas. Beth’s statement regarding “baby-ing” attitudes in the Philippines also highlights the gaps in the services in the Philippines in terms of education and health, which may also contribute to her overall perceived attitude towards disability in the Philippines. This also signals her vision for Gabriel to achieve greater independence in the US as they navigate his postsecondary transition.

4.3. Social Capital

The churches filled a big gap as the immigrant mothers had to navigate becoming mothers while they were also far away from their parents, who could have provided support. It has been documented that Filipino grandparents in the US, too, take part not just in guiding their children in becoming parents but also in becoming caregivers of their grandchildren (Kataoka-Yahiro et al., 2004). While there were instances when the mother’s parents or other relatives visited, for the most part, the mothers raised their children without their own parents. The church has become a proxy for the intergenerational aspect of child-rearing. The literature has claimed that Filipinos are part of a collectivistic culture (Church et al., 2007). However, the themes show that the mothers cannot be strictly assigned to either category. Filipino immigrants in the US may value and act based on both collectivism

and individualism, moving along the spectrum rather than in a binary, depending on the situation. This disrupts the binary classification of cultures that is often used in research on immigrants, which is usually assimilationist in its perspective. Assigning the cultural background of an immigrant as either a collectivist or an individualist culture oversimplifies the definition of culture and may erase the complex histories that can also be traced back to colonialism. Situations such as those in special education may force parents to approach their participation and advocacy through an individualistic lens. This is because the system, specifically its policies, operates in ways that favor individualism and deficit thinking, under the guise of individualization and the provision of appropriate support. However, it can also be argued that their collectivist values in raising their children extend beyond relying on their social networks. Their perspective on building community extends beyond potential transactional benefits; the mothers also value the relationships they have formed with their communities and the support they wish to extend to other parents and families.

While Beth and Esther were able to maximize their capital and habitus, specifically their social and cultural capital, the study also shows the gaps that exist despite the positive experience of the parents. Their situations expose the limits of the system's ability to support students, parents, and families, particularly because postsecondary transition remains inadequately demystified in education and transition planning. It also highlights the resilience of mothers and the strength found in communities.

4.4. Study Limitations

The study has several limitations. First is the very small sample size of two, and each mother only had one interview. This can affect the transferability of the findings. Furthermore, the mothers in the study are all based in New York City and have migrated to the city around the same time. While I did not intentionally recruit only mothers, no fathers participated in the study, and I did not recruit grandparents who may serve as primary caregivers of the children. Gabriel and James were both diagnosed with autism prior to entering the school, which may have affected the mothers' understanding of what to expect in enrolling their children through the health professionals they may have initially worked with. Ian, Esther's second son, was diagnosed at school; however, she acknowledged that she was already familiar with the special education processes. This may not be representative of the experiences of other students with different diagnoses or learning support needs. Lastly, only Beth had explicit experience in postsecondary transition planning, as Gabriel has reached the transition planning age. However, Esther's own experience in IEP planning and school transitions provides important insights into the experiences of Filipino immigrant parents. Further research is needed to explore a broader range of demographics and experiences among Filipino parents as they support their children during the postsecondary transition.

4.5. Implications for Practice

This study shows the need for postsecondary transition teams and schools to proactively collaborate with parents and families, specifically the supports they may need or be able to access beyond the school. The study highlights that transition teams could consider pooling resources for parents who are also navigating their own postsecondary transition. While the mothers were able to navigate effectively given their English proficiency, they were still unfamiliar with relevant policies, processes, and expectations (ex., guardianship) related to their children's transition. Information about students' rights and support from government agencies after postsecondary transition is important to discuss during transition planning.

5. Conclusions

The present study showed that Filipino immigrant parents have advocated for their children in New York City's special education. The study showed that the mothers actively engaged with the transition team by attending meetings, asking questions, and seeking support from other professionals and within their own communities. It showed that the mothers mobilized their cultural and social capital to gain access to support services for their children. The study also showed that the mothers' habitus was shaped by the enduring influence of the US in the Philippines. Given that the parents have made efforts to understand their children's needs and to seek support beyond high school, teachers and schools could be more proactive in collaborating with them on education and transition planning. Schools could also build familiarity with potential resources and legal requirements that the families may use in preparation for students' postsecondary transition.

Funding: This research was supported by the NYU Migration Network Graduate Student Award for Summer Research on Migration.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board of New York University (IRB-FY2024-8948, 20 May 2024) for studies involving humans.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The interview data in this article are not available to protect participant confidentiality.

Acknowledgments: I want to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the two mothers, Esther and Beth, for trusting me and sharing their stories and experiences. I also want to express my gratitude to Audrey Trainor, Lara Saguisag, and anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback in the development of this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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