Most discussions of Filipina/o American history in the 1920s and 1930s focus on the role of young men like Carlos Bulosan, who migrated to the United States in search of opportunity. Margaret Duyungan Mislang’s life suggests a different way to approach this history. Mislang met her first husband, Virgil Duyungan, at a church social in the Pacific Northwest. Duyungan was, according to Mislang, from a “very high class” background. They married when she was twenty-three. Interviewed in an oral history project in 1975, Mislang remembered that Duyungan worked in a smelter, and then as a contractor “over east of the mountains,” where he would find male workers for crops such as hops, apples, and peaches, a reflection of the extractive and agricultural economy of the region. The children came quickly. Mislang gave birth to a daughter a year after she was married, and she eventually had six others. Raising a Filipina/o American family was a struggle because they encountered discrimination from people in the area. Mislang remembered the serious problems they faced in securing housing. As she recalled, “One year alone we moved 13 times. And if we get into a house and the landlord likes us then the neighbors would kick, and the next thing I knew we were asked to move.”

Mislang’s family was relatively fortunate, though, because Virgil Duyungan was able to get jobs that were considered relatively prestigious for Filipina/os (racial and social segregation faced by the group during the time often barred them from such positions). During the Great Depression, her husband had a series of “higher
class” jobs, which in the context of the time meant that he was able to be a cook in downtown establishments.2

In the history of the community, Mislang’s husband, Duyungan, became famous and was most remembered as one of the founders and presidents of the Cannery Workers’ and Farm Laborers’ Union, organized in the 1930s. Duyungan’s tenure as president, however, was not long, as he and vice president Aurelio Simon were tragically slain in 1936. Afterward, Mislang went to the Philippines with her children for three years under circumstances that are somewhat unclear. Mislang reported that people in the union thought “that it would be good to send his body back to the Philippines.” But then she added, “So, as I had been working in the union, I knew maybe a little bit too much. They want[ed] to get me out of the way, so they sent me back with my seven children.” Mislang also related to an interviewer, “My husband told me how much money they had in the union and then they killed him and stole the money.”3 It is not clear to whom Mislang is referring when she mentions “they,” but her oral history does suggest that she was largely excluded from the organizational process of the union following her husband’s death.

To this day, the circumstances around Duyungan’s and Simon’s deaths are still murky. Their deaths occurred in the midst of considerable turmoil around the status of the union. At the time, both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) were trying to recruit Filipina/o Americans and their unions. The AFL, in keeping with its organizational philosophy and historical practices, wanted to support separate, ethnic locals, which was why Duyungan’s union was the AFL, whereas the CIO was trying to recruit across class.4 Referring to the growth of the CIO, Mislang reported that “they wanted to take it out of the AF of L [sic] because the AF of L wouldn’t stand for radicals [sic] movement in their union.”5 These “radicals” would later emerge as victors in the union movement, which is perhaps one reason this story of Mislang is seldom discussed.

When Mislang went to the Philippines with her seven children, ranging in age from four months to eleven years, she had no money because it was believed that her late husband’s family in the province of Negros would aid her. According to her testimony, this did not happen. Mislang had to work as a tutor to support the family in Manila, and she also received money from her godmother. She took care of her children for three years in the Philippines, then returned to Seattle when she was subpoenaed for a court case regarding the union and was ordered by the high
commissioner in the Philippine Islands to go to the United States. She testified for three weeks. She was allowed to take only two of her children with her to the United States; the others had to stay behind in the Philippines.6

Mislang eventually pressed a case against the union in the Washington State Superior Court to gain more funds for her children, through which she received almost two thousand dollars. From this sum, however, she also had to pay the costs of the trial.7 Through connections, she found support from Catholic Charities and then was able to get money from the Aid for Dependent Children program.8 A year later, she married Joe Mislang, another Filipino, fulfilling a request made by her late husband before his death. Joe Mislang was the children’s godfather and had been picked by Duyungan to raise the children if he himself was killed.9

But there is yet another level at which Mislang’s story might seem surprising to the reader. Margaret Duyungan Mislang, who went to the Philippines as a widow with seven children and eventually returned to Seattle to marry one of her husband’s colleagues, was actually not Filipina by ancestry. Mislang was a European American of Scottish descent, born in Seattle in 1901. Both of her parents were immigrants who came to the States in the late nineteenth century. As Mislang recalled in her 1975 interview, they were “really oldtimers here,” indicating how new the European American community was in Seattle, and also how quickly European immigrants became integrated into the city’s culture. Mislang’s father had a job in Rainier Valley as a freight clerk on a streetcar line, later working on a shipping line as a freight clerk and a mechanic; Mislang’s mother worked at home.10

Mislang’s story, positioned as it is within the formation of American culture as well as Philippine culture, delineates some of the major interventions that this book will undertake, including emphasizing the primary role of colonialism in the development of the American West and the fluid transpacific culture and economy that resulted. It thus operates within the context of a number of interdisciplinary fields, including American studies and Asian American studies. This book lies within the political projects of both of these disciplines through its investigation of American culture and its relationship to the Filipina/o community in Seattle. To more fully delineate this book’s analytical framework, the next sections explain how this study addresses concerns in three related areas: American social history, immigration studies, and the New Western history.
American Social History: Reclamation and Community Studies

First, my work on the Filipina/o American community in Seattle can trace its lineage to the “new social history,” now over three decades old. In contrast to previous historians, who focused on “great men” and political institutions, historians in the 1960s and 1970s sought to expand the field, in part in response to the social movements sweeping American culture at that time. David Montgomery and Herbert Gutman, two leading figures in this regard, argued for the importance of history “written from the bottom up.” Everyone had a part to play in history, these writers contended, and the fact that ordinary people’s stories were not yet written was a function of a society in which only the elite were seen as spokespeople. The new social history privileged the voices of people articulating their own experiences and particularly looked at groups that were typically marginalized in American history. As part of this movement, the “new labor history” also sought to expand its sites of investigation. For example, scholars pointed out that “private” sites such as the household were also important spaces for social and political activities and that the new labor history needed to look past the traditional scope of trade unions to analyze labor activity beyond that sphere. Christine Stansell’s finely detailed study of the lives of women in New York City in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is one illustration of this approach. Historians such as Stuart Blumin sought to integrate not just the working class but also the middle class in these new views of history.

Attempts to address these previously less-documented groups transformed the nature of studies of American culture and did not go uncontested. Critics argued that the new paradigm was fragmented and unwieldy, pointing out the difficulty of assembling these new histories into a coherent whole. Dana Frank, in her study of the Seattle labor movement, *Purchasing Power*, countered these charges in her examination of how both gender and race are central to labor mobilization. As she noted, “Integrating race and gender into the ‘main’ story of labor history does not ‘splinter’ class analysis. The skilled white male workers who constructed the movement and claimed to speak for the whole working class did that.”

Like a good number of these works, this book draws its rationale in part from the political project of American social history and ethnic studies to record the histories of communities that have rarely been examined. This introduction began by highlighting Mislang’s story in an attempt
to place people in the picture, or to underscore the role of individual agency in the face of the hegemonic structures that dominated and continue to dominate the political and economic landscape of Filipina/o America. In this sense, it is an attempt to build upon studies such as sociologists Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich’s landmark work on labor immigration under capitalism, which emphasizes the political and economic forces that brought Asian immigrant workers to this country, but does so at the expense of a fuller discussion of the individual agency of these immigrants.  

In the new social history, methodological concerns also shifted as the role of oral history took on greater importance, particularly because of the general lack of documentation on the working class, women of all backgrounds, and people of color. Ethnic studies, which was emerging as a distinct field at the same time, produced many works that were part of this movement, especially because people of color have been among the most historically marginalized groups in American culture, a fact reflected in the historiography. Community studies dominated much of the early work of Asian American studies, and it continues to play a prominent role, such as in the field’s focus on San Francisco Chinatown. Scholars such as Him Mark Lai, Judy Yung, Genny Lim, Ruthanne Lum McCunn, Wei Chi Poon, and John Kuo Wei Tchen and organizations such as the Chinese Historical Society of America were instrumental in reclaiming community history, particularly that of San Francisco Chinatown. For example, Island, a study of Angel Island, a longtime detention center for Chinese immigrants similar to Ellis Island on the East Coast, features poems written by detainees. The original poems had been carved into the walls of the immigration detention barracks, and the site was narrowly saved from destruction when an alert park ranger realized that the Chinese characters on the walls were more than simply graffiti.  

Reclamation was also a critical project for Filipina/o American community history, as demonstrated by Fred Cordova’s pictorial history Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans (1982), which portrays the pre-1965 period through oral history excerpts and photographs. It was also realized on an institutional level with the founding of the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS) in the early 1980s.

My study builds on previously unavailable sources that have allowed a more nuanced and expansive U.S. history to be written. In the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a tremendous increase in the production of public history, including oral history collections, exhibitions, and documentaries. Some of the core materials for my book were assembled in response to
this upsurge in democratic historical production. For example, more than fifty interviews of Filipina/o Americans were created as part of the Washington State Oral/Aural History Program, through the auspices of the Demonstration Project for Asian Americans, in commemoration of the American bicentennial year, 1976. The staff of the Demonstration Project also completed several other interviews through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Through their dedication and hard work, researchers now have a stunning array of oral histories, artifacts, and other materials available for use. These sources form the basis of my work, along with scholarly studies, archival documents, and materials from newspapers and magazines from diverse places. In particular, I gleaned information from records about the Philippines and Filipina/o Americans at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and College Park, Maryland; the Pacific Northwest regional branch of the National Archives in Seattle, Washington; and library collections at Yale University, Cornell University, UCLA, and the University of California, Irvine. Fortunately, I was also able to gain access to diverse public and private collections in Seattle, Washington, especially at the Manuscripts, Special Collections, University Archives Division of the University of Washington; the National Pinoy Archives at the FANHS; the Demonstration Project of Asian Americans; the Museum of History and Industry; the Seattle Municipal Archives; and the Seattle Public Schools Archives and Record Management Center. I name these sites to emphasize that while oral history forms an important means of documenting the past, it is crucial to use its insights in conjunction with other existing sources, since people’s voices and perspectives are available to us through “official” histories as well. For example, one rich source for my study was the Bureau of Insular Affairs records at the National Archives in College Park, which contained considerable correspondence from American colonials articulating their demands on the United States government.

Like many other scholars, I believe that the history I seek to tell should go beyond mere celebration of previously “invisible” or “forgotten” people, to mention two adjectives commonly used by reclamatory projects. Michael Frisch cautions historians against “using historical intelligence as a commodity whose supply they seek to replenish, whether by bringing down illuminating fire from elite heights or by gathering gold in mineshafts dug from the bottom up.” Frisch reminds us that this reclamation, however well-intentioned, is also fraught with potential problems, like documentation of any community. As Renato Rosaldo demonstrates in his discussion of imperialist nostalgia, or “a particular kind of nos-
Let me illustrate the complex politics and narratives that surround reclamation of Filipina/o American history with two related examples. In Asian American studies, the narrative that is perhaps used most often in charting the pre-1965 history of Filipina/o America is that of Carlos Bulosan, whose stirring autobiographical novel, *America Is in the Heart*, is considered one of the classics of the field. The novel begins by describing the impact of American colonialism and the resulting economic and political unrest in the Philippines, a situation that leads to Bulosan’s migration to the United States and an extended journey among working-class communities in the American West. Like many fictionalized narratives that come to represent the whole of an experience, Bulosan’s novel is powerful and dramatic, and it represents a deeply problematic record for historical use because of its particular blend of fact and elaboration. Bulosan’s story is often told and retold in community settings such as public history programs, in plays, and in academic classrooms. I am less interested, though, in critiquing the writings of Carlos Bulosan per se than I am in understanding why this particular image of the past has had such an impact on how pre-1965 Filipina/o American history has been understood. How have cultural nationalism and gender privilege guided who and what are reclaimed? Why does the single male hero resonate so much with these definitions of Filipina/o American history? The emphasis on the working class, and also on Filipino-ness, greatly influences who is highlighted in Filipina/o American historiography. Mislang’s story, which was collected in 1975, has been available for several years, yet it has been little discussed by scholars in the field of Asian American studies. Instead, the narrative of the single male hero has continued to hold sway, as suggested by the iconic figures of Carlos Bulosan and, more recently, Philip Vera Cruz, who holds a similar place in this pantheon of male leaders who are held up to represent Filipina/o American history.

A second example of the complexity and political contingency of the existing Filipina/o American narrative, connected to the first, is the way in which women’s labor typically is marginalized within pre–World War II Filipina/o Seattle, especially because of the demographic majority of men. My study underscores what can be gained when students of American social history explore not only paid labor in public spheres but also unpaid labor in the home, especially as that labor helps us to see the inte-
gral position of women in community formation, even in communities that were overwhelmingly male. Scholars have demonstrated that reproductive labor, often taken for granted, was vital to household economics and within families. One way in which my study departs from other portrayals of Filipina/o American labor, such as Chris Friday’s discussion of cannery workers, is in my attempt to show more fully how the private and public spheres were linked. Both in Hawai‘i and on the mainland, for example, public sphere labor unions provided one of the few outlets for Filipina/os to gain political resources and recognition, as well as to make political connections with other groups.26 However, unions were often male-dominated public space, despite the many contributions made by women, as demonstrated by Margaret Mislang’s story, and women’s labor is regularly rendered “invisible.”

Moreover, unions were not the only venue for activity. In the course of the interviews I performed with Filipina/o Americans in Seattle in the early 1990s, I was typically told about people’s union membership in the context of their several other identities and affiliations, including kinship ties and membership in churches, secret societies, and ethnic organizations. Once more, without a full accounting of both public and private activities, much is lost or obscured. As a result, although the public space of the Cannery Workers’ and Farm Laborers’ Union is a primary area of focus in my book, I try to place it within the larger set of frameworks indicated by informants that includes both public and private arenas.27 Because the critical struggle over workers’ control took shape not only inside the workplace but also outside it, a good portion of this book follows people’s lives beyond places of wage labor—for example, I demonstrate that popularity contests and other social activities were sites for contests over class power.28 In this way, I have attempted to make stories such as those told by Margaret Mislang more visible and to demonstrate their centrality to the growth of Filipina/o America, showing them to be as integral to its history as that of her first husband, union president Virgil Duyungan.

American social history, along with other disciplines, has helped to open a space for formerly less documented peoples, and our understanding of the past is far richer for it. Now we not only have more sources to draw upon in writing these histories but also have radically reshaped where we look for information and what we see when we do so. As a result, my project analyzes how power and privilege have informed which stories are preserved and told, a selection process that is familiar to anyone who documents the history of groups that do not typically form the
mainstream of American culture or to anyone who has ever listened to family members recount contested versions of “what really happened.” One of my main motivations for this book is to better understand the dominant narratives that inform Filipina/o American history and to find counternarratives that recontextualize, if not challenge, this history.

IMMIGRATION STUDIES

The second body of studies that I address is a related field that often overlaps with the others I have named: immigration studies. If an account of Mislang’s life seems a surprising way to approach the formation of the Filipina/o American community in Seattle in the pre–World War II era, the surprise is also illustrative of the narratives in popular American culture that regularly structure our approach to the history of Asian American communities. In American history, we often document how Asian Americans come to be included in the mainstream European American whole and how those who are more “marginalized” are incorporated into the “center” and thus “become American.” The phrase to become American, I would contend, is somewhat loaded when it implies that people are assimilated to a mainstream “norm.” In the mythic tale of becoming American, immigrants go to school to receive American civic lessons, nonmainstream accents are lost, and national loyalties are irrevocably shifted to the United States. The locus of power thus remains centered in an American culture that is oriented to a white, male, heterosexual norm.

The traditional focus in immigration studies, exemplified by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki’s classic work on the Polish community from Chicago, has been on how immigrants fit themselves within the dominant culture and in doing so suffer fragmentation and loss. Thomas and Znaniecki’s analysis of social values and attitudes in the Polish immigrant community and the role of ethnic ties, social disorganization, subjectivity, and qualitative research materials provided models of inquiry for Robert Park and his students in the development of the Chicago school of American sociology in the 1930s. Later, Oscar Handlin would also characterize the immigration process as one of alienation, writing, “The immigrants lived in crisis because they were uprooted.” This story of assimilation was long the dominant trope in characterizations of immigrants, and it continues to have prominence in popular culture.

Even within this dominant framework, however, Asian Americans have occupied a peripheral position. One result of the dominance of the
Chicago school narrative, as Henry Yu has explained, was that the “marginal man” theory developed by Robert Park had enormous impact on how Asian Americans were perceived. According to this theory, those who migrated were caught between two cultures and embodied the conflict and hardship of negotiating two worlds. Since they were not truly members of either world, however, Asian Americans also demonstrated the possibilities of bridging this gap. Because of this pervasive framework, Asian Americans, although they reside in the United States, have been regularly characterized as being outside the American culture, as “perpetual foreigners” with a transplanted “traditional” culture from Asia. Over the decades, the emphases of these immigration studies have changed—they once focused on dysfunction and assimilation into American culture but now more fully address immigrant strategies in the transformation of American culture. However, until well into the 1980s, it remained difficult to escape the common notion that Asian Americans were somehow lost foreigners, particularly because general recognition of Asian American history has occurred only relatively recently, despite the many decades of scholarship documenting their experience. Notably, the two books considered primary general histories of Asian Americans, Ronald Takaki’s Strangers from a Different Shore and Sucheng Chan’s Asian Americans, were published only in 1989 and 1991, respectively.

John Bodnar, in his aptly named book The Transplanted, calls for a more complex and nuanced analysis that takes into account the diverse ways that immigrants addressed life in the United States. As he writes, “Immigrant adjustment to capitalism in America was ultimately a product of a dynamic between the expanding economic and cultural imperatives of capitalism and the life strategies of ordinary people.” He argues that relations with the homeland have to be seen in this far more complicated context. Tracing the ways that migratory Filipina/os both worked within and resisted first Spanish and then American rule, for example, provides insight into the class dimensions of the migrants who journeyed to the United States and how these individuals might have been affected by events “back home.” This process further reminds us that many who came were among the more privileged, and they need to be considered in that wider context. Thus, when we examine the life of Mislang, we must note that she married into a Filipina/o American world and thus occupied a space in both the Philippines and the Seattle area.

Other members of this newer generation of scholars, such as Robert Orsi and George Sánchez, have further documented the rich life of immigrant communities in major urban centers, particularly in New York
City and Los Angeles. Sylvia Yanagisako’s study of the Japanese American community in Seattle, written more than four decades after Miyamoto’s classic study of that same community, for example, identifies a much more fluid sense of kinship and identity, one in which the past is informed by current understandings. Despite these important advances, Asian Americans up until the present have still been identified as alien to the American culture, and their ability to assimilate remains contested.

Mislang’s story also points us away from the dominant reliance on American exceptionalism, in which the United States was seen as the most favored destination for immigrants, and toward the fluidity of migration experienced by many, as suggested by Frank Thistlewaite’s early characterization of migration. Mislang’s journey across the Pacific to the Philippines for a few years further emphasizes the role of transpacific networks and empire, and her decision to go to the Philippines as a place with more viable options for her and her children contests the dominant characterization of the United States as the “land of opportunity.”

The recent emphasis on diaspora studies, driven particularly by the expansion of scholars studying transnationalism in Filipina/o American studies, has redirected our attention to the critical role of the Philippines and Asia as a whole, helping us to move beyond American nationalist perspectives. Theories of transnationalism further enable us to contest nationalist boundaries, to understand, as Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc have described in their classic text Nations Unbound, “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” Such studies urge us to pay close attention to the multiple sites of interaction for Filipina/o American communities both in the United States and in the Philippines, and to the contested nature of cultural practices and community formation as illustrated by Mislang’s experience.

MODELS OF ASIAN AMERICAN MIGRATION

Charting the development of Filipina/o Seattle is further complicated by the regular reliance on Chinese American and Japanese American models to tell the history of Asian America, especially because of the strong position of both of these fields within Asian American studies. Certainly, several ties linked Filipina/o Americans to various racialized communities, and to other Asian Americans in particular. Among these were the United States’ long-standing interests in the Pacific economy and the perception of the Philippines as a base for American interests, interests
that developed out of the United States’ prior interaction with China and Japan. Furthermore, because Filipina/os are classified as “Asians,” their experience is also shaped by this racial context. Dana Frank and Carlos A. Schwantes have argued that race relations were at the core of Seattle’s labor movement, dating back to the exclusionary anti-Chinese movement in the 1880s. By the time the great waves of Filipina/o Americans arrived in the Seattle area in the 1920s, the city’s history had already been shaped by exclusionary movements against Chinese and Japanese immigrants, and Filipina/o Americans encountered a legacy of racial discrimination and segregation. Along with Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans, they often occupied areas such as Chinatowns, and the groups regularly labored together in racialized spaces in the American West, for example, in the salmon canning industry and agriculture.

In other ways, though, the experience of Filipina/o Americans was unlike that of other groups from Asia, and it is important to question their “fit” within the dominant model that describes successive waves of Asian immigrants coming to the United States. In the popular model, the “Chinese came first” to California during the gold rush, and their experience set the path that would be followed by groups such as Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and others. This model has been contested for several reasons. First, Filipina/os have now been recognized as having developed the oldest permanent community of Asian Americans in this country through the Manila galleon trade. These workers came to North America aboard merchant vessels, beginning in the 1500s, and took up residence in what is presently Mexico and Louisiana. While they might have come on ships along with Chinese workers, and while it is likely that many of these individuals had Chinese ancestry and also intermarried with the Chinese, it is important to acknowledge that the community established in Louisiana is considered “Filipina/o,” thus challenging the dominant California gold rush narrative of Chinese settlement.

The model is also contested because it reinforces entrenched ethnic hierarchies in which Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans are placed at the center of analysis, and so inhibits our ability to see how experiences might have varied across different groups.

Another common assumption about Asian American migration is that, in keeping with the narrative of American exceptionalism in which the United States is seen as the primary destination, the United States was the only place to which Asians migrated, when in fact large numbers entered this country after initially migrating elsewhere. Finally, because our emphasis is typically on the wage workers who come to U.S. shores,
we usually focus on the men in the community, rather than fully considering the transpacific communities that men and women created on both sides of the ocean.\textsuperscript{50}

For an example of how these models shape Filipina/o American history, it is helpful to consider the phrase \textit{bachelor society}, typically used in a Chinese American context in relation to the pre–World War II era. This term is often applied to the Filipina/o community during the same period, and, similar to Jennifer Ting’s argument in the Chinese American case, it confines our analysis in the case of Filipina/o Americans during this period.\textsuperscript{51} The fact that heterosexual nuclear family formations were not the dominant mode meant not the absence of “family” but that the circumstances of pre–World War II Filipina/o Seattle privileged other kinds of familial relationships. Both men and women in Filipina/o Seattle operated within kin networks that were constructed, if not through immediate family connections, then through extended families or fictive kinship links that were typically reinforced by ties to the same village, town, or region of origin. In response to the dominance of the “bachelor society” model, I hope to contribute to a more expansive understanding of the familial nature of these male-male relationships. Because of the gender imbalance among Filipina/os migrating to the United States, “brothers” and “uncles” emerged as two dominant forms of social relations, rather than the more familiar nuclear family formation.\textsuperscript{52}

Another reason that it is important to critique popular Asian American migration models is the reliance on studying Chinatowns to delineate Asian American community studies. “Chinatowns,” the study of which emphasizes the urban experience of Asian Americans, are critical sites to examine because they represent a space of interaction between the mainstream American public and the immigrant communities that blossomed in major cities such as San Francisco. However, because these neighborhoods are typically studied as bounded communities within the context of a single site, emphasizing these urban centers has led to what Gary Okihiro calls the “tyranny of the city” in Asian American studies.\textsuperscript{53} There has not been enough research on people’s movement in and through these demarcated spaces, or on the economic, social, cultural, and political relationships that connected these urban sites to rural ones. Most crucially, in the case of Filipina/o Americans during the pre–World War II period, permanent residence in an urban, ethnic space was less typical, since most Filipina/o Americans were not only nonurban but also nonstationary.
In conclusion, whereas earlier immigration studies emphasized the assimilation of immigrants within the United States, scholars have now begun to show how American culture was a contested space and that assimilation was not merely the replacement of a foreign culture with an American one. Far from being secondary participants, Filipina/o Americans were integral players in the Pacific Northwest cultural matrix, as well as in other parts of the country. Those documenting Filipina/o American history, though, have been especially constrained by the general use of Chinese American or Japanese American models to represent Asian Americans in American culture. These models might conceal more than they reveal for the Filipina/o American case. My intent here is not to overstate the differences among the communities but to point out that the experiences of Filipina/o Americans were often very dissimilar from those of other groups because of legislation or the period of migration, to name two factors among many. Even using the term immigrant for the pre–World War II period is problematic because Filipina/os came to Seattle during this era as American colonials who were not entering a foreign country but “returning home” to the United States. Thus, understanding how the U.S.-Philippines relationship was built upon force is critical, which leads to a consideration of the importance of conquest in the story of the American West.

THE NEW WESTERN HISTORY

The third body of studies with which this book is in dialogue is the history of conquest and the American West, particularly the recent conversations established by scholars working within what is known as the “New Western history.” The experience of being colonized by the United States is one that Filipina/os share with Hawaiians, Chicana/os, and others. The United States’ occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the century occurred in close conjunction with other endeavors in places such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and Samoa and followed the conquest of Alta California by roughly half a century. Hence, discussions such as Richard Drinnon’s in Facing West, which links the United States’ oppression of Native Americans with its overseas campaign and articulates the nation’s grappling with manifest destiny, helps us understand how the Philippines fell under American influence. Patricia Nelson Limerick’s Legacy of Conquest, which suggests that Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis is better replaced by a narrative of conquest, offers important ways to rethink the United States’ expansionist project, as well
as its relation to other countries. This field further reminds us of the importance of examining the interactions between the various indigenous peoples of the American West and the different “settlers” who entered the region over the course of centuries.\textsuperscript{55}

The American West, far from being the mythical open space the frontier thesis would have us believe, was populated, occupied by others, and taken by European American settlers through force in a series of conquests. This expansion is often downplayed because of the regular reference in our culture to the “American Dream,” which tends to privilege individual migration and success as well as idealize the opportunities represented by the United States. When the Philippines was colonized, it became the most western part of this American empire and entered into the realm of the American West. It was precisely this imperial expansion that brought Filipina/o Americans across the Pacific Ocean to Seattle. From their perspective, Seattle was a colonial metropole, and a “frontier city” in a very different sense than the one promoted by the narrative of European American settlement across the American mainland from the East Coast. My work underscores the vital role of Seattle in the United States’ transpacific interests, as well as the importance of Asian trade and Asian workers in the development of its image.\textsuperscript{56} In the same way that urban centers such as New York City and Boston were affected by their role as entry ports for passenger and cargo traffic from Europe, West Coast ports such as Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles also were significant because of their proximity to Asia. Part of my work is to demonstrate that in the pre–World War II period, transpacific endeavors had a vital impact on the formation of cultures in the Pacific Northwest.\textsuperscript{57}

American West studies also remind us to consider carefully the role of region in relation to race. Another reason that Filipina/o Seattle is rendered less visible is the city’s particular racial configuration. Unlike in other parts of the American mainland, most people of color in this region prior to World War II were not African Americans or Chicana/os but Asian Americans and Native Americans. In 1940, for example, there were twice as many Asian Americans as African Americans in Seattle, and many of the jobs performed by African Americans elsewhere in the country were filled by Asian Americans.\textsuperscript{58} However, not only has there been a historical focus on relations between African Americans and whites on a national level, reflecting the demographics of the United States as a whole, but until recent decades there also has been a lack of established studies on Asian Americans. Both of these factors have influenced the historiography of people of color in Seat-