The later medieval Mediterranean is an exceptional historical microcosm for studying the intricacies of human interaction and the interplays among religion, group identity, economics, and politics. A moment of violence, such as that of a pirate attack, could bring all of these things aspects together. The bustling trade of the western Mediterranean in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, along with ongoing political division and strife, meant that opportunities to profit at another’s expense were abundant, and that pirates and corsairs were never too far away. Maritime violence was a daily occurrence in this Mediterranean; attacks and accusations of piracy litter the documentary records of medieval Mediterranean principalities and feature prominently in narrative sources.

Medieval piracy has been studied in terms of its legal definitions and its impact on diplomatic relations. This dissertation begins by acknowledging
that piracy was also a social-historical phenomenon, an interface between different ethnicities, religions, and classes. Using documents from the Archives of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona—royal registers, correspondences, municipal records, and court documents from the early fourteenth century—this study analyzes pirate attacks and the people involved, the perpetrators, the victims, and the effects and aftermath of an attack.

This dissertation pieces together a group of case studies to tell these stories. What emerges are images of daily oppositions in medieval Mediterranean life: that a piratical "identity" could be a go-to recourse for otherwise legitimate merchants and sailors, but that it did not come without certain baggage and social stigmas; that, in a world without technological identification systems, individuals—in this case, pirates—could obscure or hide their identities, while at the same time strong memories, broad social networks, and established diplomatic channels made it difficult to do so. Finally, their religious identity made Muslims and Jews especially vulnerable to Christian piracy, but at the same time, members of the three faiths might also work together to protect each other and avert such violence. Convivencia, it seems, was as much a part of the story of maritime violence as was the crusade. To medieval people, maritime violence was much more than a legal quandary or by-product of warfare. It was an integral part of the complexity that made up daily life in the later medieval Mediterranean.