

*Explain your intellectual interests and commitments. Identify fields/areas you may pursue. Explain why Rutgers is a good match for you. No longer than 500 words.*

I am applying to the history PhD program with an intended emphasis on women's history, focusing on the broad intersection of ethnicity and gender in twentieth century American cities. Using involvement in sexuality, fashion, beauty, consumption, and political movements as a focal point, I am interested in the daily life of second-generation Italian, Greek, and Jewish women and the expression of immigrant identity. I have ancillary interests in the cultural reactions to these women's presence in the public sphere and contextualizing female choice through the cultural and society of their home countries. At the doctoral level, I intend to explore the role that immigrant identity played in female choice, while highlighting generational differences and processes of acculturation among the second generation. Deviating from the political and economic focus that current historiography awards immigrant women, I want to reframe immigrant narratives from a social and cultural perspective.

I first became interested in the expression of immigrant identity when I studied abroad in Rome as a sophomore. This immersive experience left me with a lingering question: how did Italian-American culture become so far removed from that of the metropole? When I returned to the United States, I aimed to answer this question in my honors thesis, "*Paesani della Montagna: Keeping Italian in St. Louis, 1900-1990*," which centers around how Italian immigrants in St. Louis maintained such a cohesive ethnic and cultural identity. Though other ethnic colonies in the city dissipated, the Hill maintained the traditions, community, and culture of the motherland. Of course, regional identities were modified into a more nationalized identity, but the lack of assimilation makes St. Louis an anomaly.

Crafting a thesis provided me with an intellectual and practical background for my current research interests. Through the oral histories I collected as an intern at a small museum on the Hill, I realized that identity histories are best explored through the words of those who lived them. In my preliminary research, I pored over a variety of primary sources written in both Italian and English-- often

a mixture of both in a single document. Wanting to place the Hill's residents in the context of their Italian motherland, I navigated through a sea of difficult to decipher records and unorganized raw data, a daunting task that often stunts the aspirations of potential historians. Of course, I found myself navigating through biases in the media and my oral sources. Wanting to combine the social and cultural approaches of my thesis with the immigrant narratives I grew up with, I would like to use my thesis as a starting point for a future dissertation.

Rutgers is a good fit for me for several reasons; first, the strengths of the department's faculty. I am interested in working with Professors Devlin, Koven, Schoen, and Mittelstadt. Professor Devlin's work in girlhood, sexuality, and race, parallels the intersections I wish to explore in the graduate level. Her work in female involvement in politics, paired with Professor Mittelstadt's interest in women in social movements and politics, would provide the ideal insight to the political involvement aspect of my work. As an undergraduate, I consulted Professor Schoen's book *Choice and Coercion* in research for an essay; her work in the public health aspect of female choice and sexuality would add an essential dimension to a future dissertation. Finally, the work of Professor Koven in modern European women's history, comparative urban history, and the history of sexuality would help inform my the contextualizing aspect of my work. In addition to the faculty, Rutgers' strengths and degree options in women and gender history and comparative history make it an ideal place to pursue my project.