The financial support I received from the Office of International Programs’ Pre-Dissertation Travel Grant enabled me to undertake an on-site ‘fact-finding’ mission to inform my proposed dissertation topic, the history of children and adolescents in pre-industrial Spain. Such a trip was tremendously useful, as little research has been done on this topic. Thanks to this grant, I was able to fulfill my objectives of assessing the quality and form of the available historical documentation and to select appropriate thematic and geographical orientations for my future dissertation research. I now not only know that my project is feasible but also have a very solid idea of the types and quantity of documents available and where they are located. Based on this information, I have decided to focus my research efforts on child labor in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Seville.

Since one of my main objectives on this research trip was to establish an appropriate local focus for my research, I visited a number of cities—Madrid, Seville, Granada, Zaragoza, and Valladolid—and different types of archives to compare the holdings and merits of each. The flexibility and timing of this grant were particularly opportune, enabling me to accompany my academic advisor, Professor Helen Nader, for the first 2½ weeks of the seven weeks that I was in Spain. Professor Nader provided invaluable assistance in introducing me to the holdings and protocol of the principal archives in Madrid, Seville, and Granada, as well as the archivists, scholars and students working in them. After her departure, I made trips to Zaragoza and Valladolid on my own and returned to do additional research in Madrid and Seville. While I had to return to Madrid for my return flight to the U.S., I decided to return to Seville only when it was becoming increasingly probable that I would focus my research there. During this second visit to Seville, a graduate student from the University of California at Davis doing research in the Archive of the Indies kindly invited me to stay with her while I undertook an additional week of archive-digging and laying the groundwork for a possible longer stay there in the future.

An unanticipated benefit of visiting a variety of cities and archives was gaining exposure to many different types of relevant historical documentation, including apprenticeship contracts, letters from parents to schools requesting scholarships for their children, administrative records from institutions serving children (e.g., schools, orphanages, and foundling homes), journeymen’s complaints about apprentices recorded in guild documents, and lawsuits over the pay of young workers. Nothing could compare with having a yellowing document placed in front of me and then gently folding back the cover and reading, in their own words and hand, the thoughts and ideas of the seventeenth-century Spaniards whom I spend so much time these days trying to understand.

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I have decided to focus my research on Seville because of the treasure trove of relevant documents I found in Seville’s municipal and diputacion [regional] archives, archives of the archdiocese and cathedral, the Archive of the Indies, and the University of Seville, as well as national archives at Madrid and Simancas. Among my most intriguing finds are sixteenth- and eighteenth-century documents concerning a municipal official in charge of orphans and other juvenile employment matters. Also particularly promising are documents I found at the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla, including both apprenticeship contracts and agreements for youths to travel to the Americas in the employ of Spaniards making the journey.

Documents left by Seville’s foundling home, schools, orphanages and other institutions for poor children offer other rich possibilities. I was fortunate to locate voluminous documentation left by these institutions in the municipal and diputacion archives and was alerted to other relevant material in the cathedral library and in the massive collection of convent and confraternity documents at the archdiocesan archive. Several institutions in Seville, including a school that prepared boys for Spanish naval occupations from the sixteenth century onward and an eighteenth-century home for