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Internships in Germany are much more common than in the US. Time commitments can vary from twice a week to five days a week, so often students have both an internship and attend classes. Due to the emphasis on study and practice in most disciplines at the university, there are many intern opportunities including those which might interest a Dickinson student. As a Psychology major at Dickinson, I grabbed hold of this opportunity here in Bremen, Germany to expand my knowledge of German and gain practical experience in my secondary major field.

I completed an internship at the psychotherapeutic children's clinic (Psychotherapeutische Kinderambulanz) associated with the University of Bremen. This research-based clinic performs IQ testing for 6 year-olds who are of school age but have troubles concentrating at home. In addition to this work, the clinic provides therapy for kids who have trouble relating to friends or have difficulty excelling in school. I was able to view diagnostic and therapy sessions as well as perform statistical tests to generate IQ scores. After the diagnostic session, I had the task of looking through the child's answer sheet and scoring his/her IQ based on a given mathematical statistic and information on averages from other children in Germany, the so called "norm".

At Dickinson, I had taken courses that prepared me for working with adults and not children. I had learned about social psychology, mental disorders, and sexual psychology. I had discussed the IQ test as well as the controversy surrounding it. In a summer course at a university near my hometown, I had learned how to help children with Autism and similar disorders regulate their problematic behaviors. Academically, the internship was a forum in which I could bring previous knowledge to bear at the same time as I was able to learn in a practical setting.

Initially, I was skeptical of working with children. My long-term academic goal was to study the effects of trauma in adults, working with victims of sexual assault; however, working with children brought laughter and joy to my life every day. I did not expect this to affect me so profoundly. For example, when asked how many days a week has, one little boy who was having trouble with social angst responded with a very serious look on his face, and said "2 and sometimes 13". This kind of interaction can make the intensity of certain problems vanish. I still wish to work with victims of sexual assault, but now I am considering counseling children. My internship has taught me that helping children at a young age with even the slightest problem can change the rest of their lives. That is the most incredible and powerful thing in the world.

In addition to gaining real life work experience, internships offer the ability to apply German to a real-life setting. I learned to think critically in German; to use the language I had in order to express myself in an office environment. While this is frustrating at first, challenging of oneself, and succeeding at this challenge, is the best feeling in the world. It is remarkable what I have learned about myself though venturing outside of my comfort zone, so to speak. There are many things to discover that cannot be found in a rehearsed, safe world. I would highly suggest studying in Bremen if you wish to improve your German, no matter what area of study you currently pursue. But, more importantly, I suggest studying in Bremen because it is one of the most language-intensive programs. Through this challenge, your life will change in multiple ways. There are incredible opportunities awaiting you here in Bremen.