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### Being Pulled in the White in the Wrong Direction? Traditional Sports Benefits vs. Enjoyment

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## BEING PULLED IN THE WRONG DIRECTION? TRADITIONAL SPORTS BENEFITS VS. ENJOYMENT

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Today's fast-paced culture is responsible for young adults feeling that they must be certain of their college choice, major, internships, and career choices, however, this trend is also increasingly prevalent in youth sports. At younger and younger ages, children are solely dedicating themselves to one sport in an effort to maximize their success, but this specialization is proving itself both physically and mentally detrimental.

In my analysis, I first investigate how researchers, including kinesiologist Andrew Driska, tend to focus on the beneficial aspects of youth sports participation, such as developing worth ethic and accountability, but fail to ask whether children truly enjoy sports. After surveying approximately 40 student-athletes at Washington University in St. Louis, a Division III school that is prohibited from offering athletic scholarships, I examine why student-athletes still participate in sports and their attitudes towards sports participation. I then examine how more rigorous practice schedules and individual sport demands practically force children to choose a single sport while also increasing sports injuries. I also examine how increased specialization is prevalent across society, namely in higher educated by encouraging students to bypass general education requirements by accumulating pre-matriculated Advanced Placement credits in high school. Finally, I question the accelerated college athletic recruiting process by asking how both athletes and colleges can be sure of how the athlete will contribute to the college athletic program early in their high school career; recruiting athletes earlier into high school also contributes to the pressure to specialize with hopes of receiving an offer to play college athletics.

Understanding the increased specialization and its impacts on children can help parents, coaches, and educators to understand the pressures these children are facing and to help them better cope with the accompanying challenges while also attempting to return to a carefree culture to youth sports.