

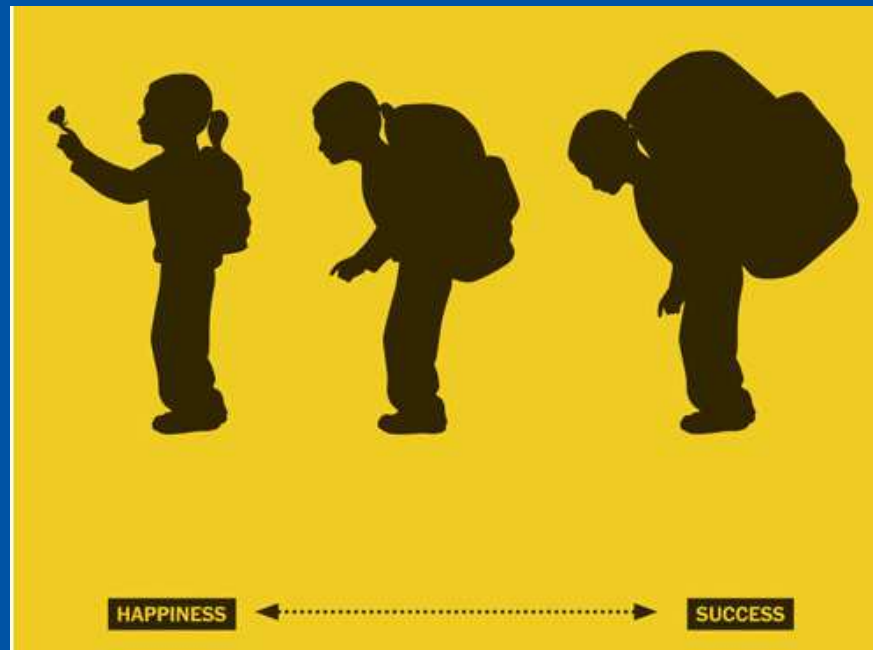


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Sporthochschule Köln  
German Sport University Cologne

Psychologisches Institut  
Abt. Leistungspsychologie

# The Athlete's Trajectory

## 6th German-Chinese Symposium



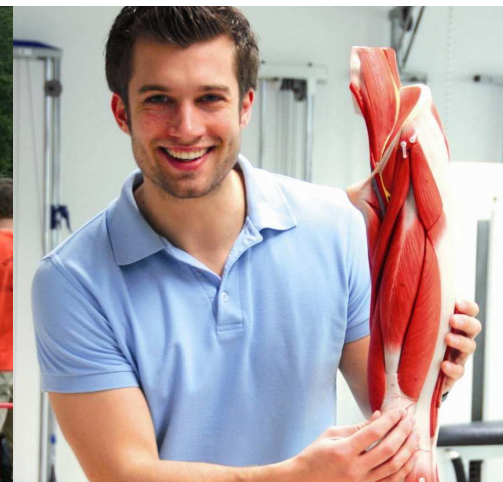
**Coping with early specialisation and pressure**

Dr. Dipl.-Psych. Babett Lobinger MA



**Deutsche  
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German Sport University Cologne

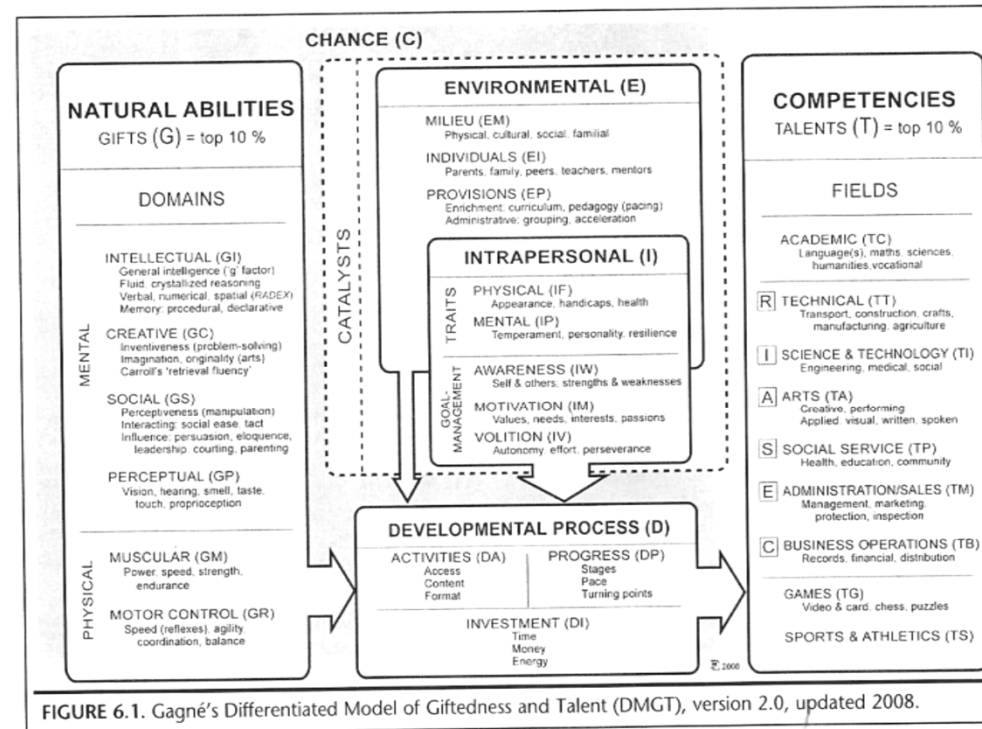
**Psychologisches Institut**  
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Abt. Gesundheits- und  
Sozialpsychologie





## Outline: **Coping with early specialisation and pressure**

- Talentidentification, -selection and development
- Early Specialisation
- Pressure
  - Peer pressure
  - Pressure to perform
- German competitive sport system and psychological support
  - Sport Schools
  - Dual Career
  - Olympic sports (BISP, DOSB)
  - Football (DFL, DFB; Youth Academies)



## Understanding Giftedness and Talent



# Route to Excellence

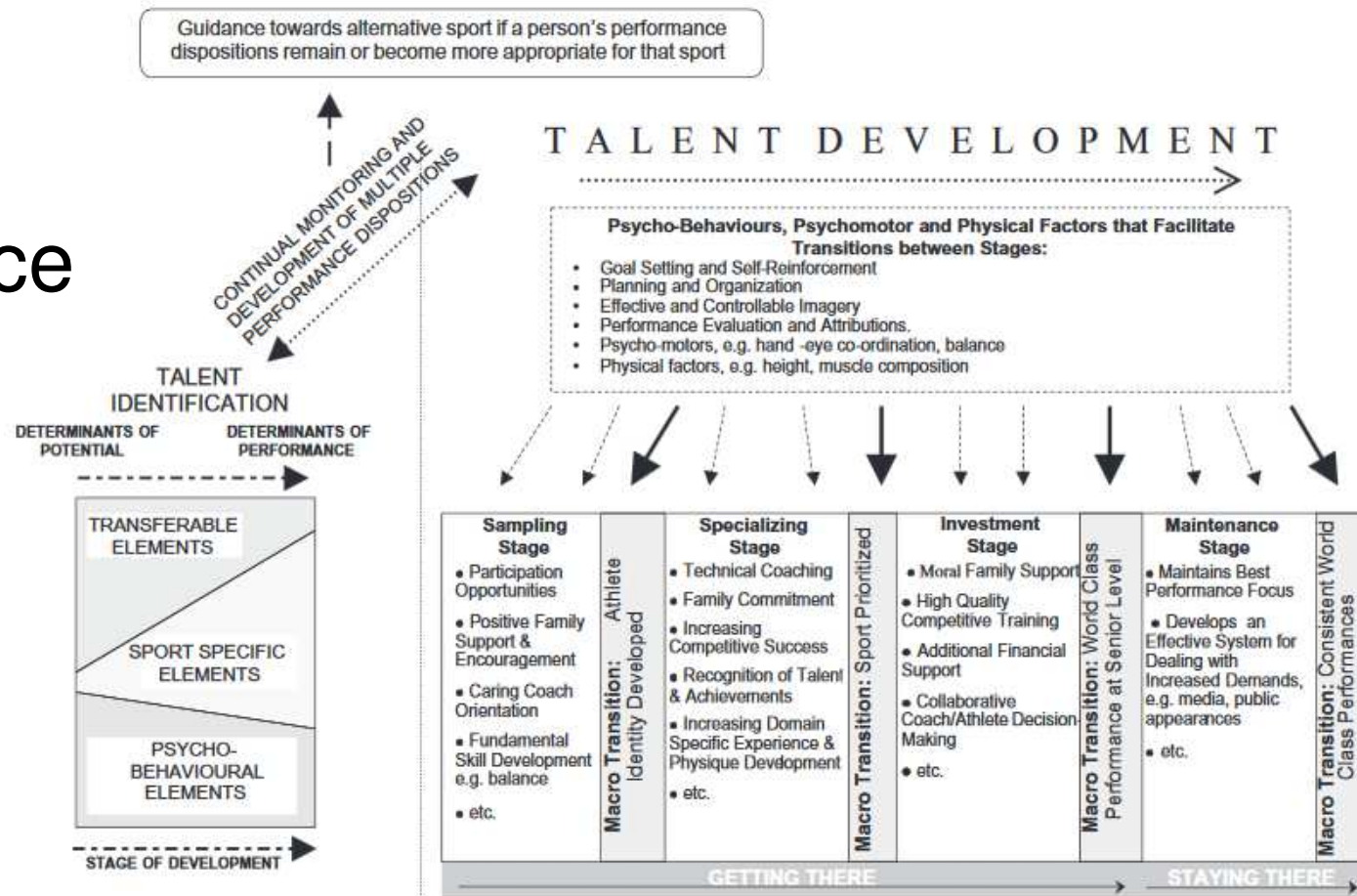


Fig. 2. The role of psycho-behaviours in facilitating the successful negotiation of developmental transitions within a multidimensional and dynamic concept of talent.

(Abbott & Collins, 2004)



# Nature



Personality, Traits,  
Abilities



Talentselection



Antecedents

# Nuture



Mental Skills, Life Skills



Talentdevelopment



Performance  
Outcome

# Heuristics



# A theoretical framework for predicting sport expertise?

**Simple heuristics in sport (Raab, 2012)**

**Adaptive toolbox approach for developing expertise**

(D'Oliveira, Lobinger & Raab, 2014)

Expert athletes are characterized by their optimal **adaption** to situations/ problems in sports

**Development of heuristics in the context of athlete's natural abilities, past experiences, developed skills and situational context**

**Expert decision making**





# Research in the field of early specialization

*High Ability Studies, Vol. 14, No. 1, June 2003*



## Early Specialization in Youth Sport: a requirement for adult expertise?

JOSEPH BAKER

*The role of early specialization in the development of sport expertise is a point of contention among researchers. While there is consistent evidence linking quantity of training with level of proficiency attained, a focus on specialized training during early stages of development has been linked with several negative consequences. Diversified involvement in a number of sports during early stages of development has been presented as a possible alternative to early specialization. Considering the consequences of advocating the early specialisation approach and research suggesting the effectiveness of early diversification, coaches and sport scientists should consider the early diversification approach as an alternative. Further research is required to expand our understanding of the relative contributions of diversified versus specialized training.*

The acquisition of expertise in sport is the result of complex interactions among biological, psychological, and sociological constraints (Singer & Janelle, 1999). Successful negotiation of these constraints can lead to the highest levels of performance while unsuccessful negotiation can lead to burnout and/or dropout from sport (Wiersma, 2000). One issue of contention among researchers examining expertise from a developmental perspective (e.g. Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003; Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993) is whether aspiring expert athletes need to limit their childhood sport participation to a single sport, with a deliberate focus on training and development in that sport (i.e. early specialization—not to be confused with recreational participation in a single sport). The opposite perspective (i.e. early diversification) favours a focus on involvement in a number of different sports before specializing in later stages of development (Wiersma, 2000). The purpose of this review is to examine the evidence both for and against the early specialization perspective and to present the early diversification approach as another path leading to elite levels of performance. As well, directions for future research are presented in order to further our understanding of the requirements of learners in the early stages of expertise.

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ISSN 1359-8139 print; 1469-834X online/03/010085-10 © 2003 European Council for High Ability  
DOI: 10.1080/13032000093526

## Baker (2003)

- early diversification approach as an alternative to early specialization (Wiersma, 2000)





# Research in the field of early specialization

CLINICAL REPORT Guidance for the Clinician in Rendering Pediatric Care

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of Pediatrics



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## Sports Specialization and Intensive Training in Young Athletes

Joel S. Brenner, MD, MPH, FAAP, COUNCIL ON SPORTS MEDICINE AND FITNESS

Sports specialization is becoming the norm in youth sports for a variety of reasons. When sports specialization occurs too early, detrimental effects may occur, both physically and psychologically. If the timing is correct and sports specialization is performed under the correct conditions, the athlete may be successful in reaching specific goals. Young athletes who train intensively, whether specialized or not, can also be at risk of adverse effects on the mind and body. The purpose of this clinical report is to assist pediatricians in counseling their young athlete patients and their parents regarding sports specialization and intensive training. This report supports the American Academy of Pediatrics clinical report "Overuse Injuries, Overtraining, and Burnout in Child and Adolescent Athletes."

### abstract

FREE

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DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-2148

PEDIATRICS (ISSN Numbers Print: 0031-4005; Online: 1098-4275)

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**FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE:** The authors have indicated they do not have a financial relationship relevant to this article to disclose.

**FUNDING:** No external funding.

**POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** The authors have indicated they have no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

**To cite:** Brenner JS and AAP COUNCIL ON SPORTS MEDICINE AND FITNESS. Sports Specialization and Intensive Training in Young Athletes. *Pediatrics* 2016;138(3):e20162148

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PEDIATRICS Volume 138, number 3, September 2016

FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

## Brenner (2016)

- when sports specialization occurs too early, detrimental effects may occur, both physically and psychologically



Little leagues,  
**BIG COSTS**

*The Dispatch* investigates  
the dangers in youth sports



# Research in the field of early specialization

Consensus Statement

## AOSSM Early Sport Specialization Consensus Statement

Robert F. LaPrade,\* MD, PhD, Julie Agel,<sup>†‡</sup> MA, ATC, Joseph Baker,<sup>§</sup> PhD, Joel S. Brenner,<sup>||</sup> MD, MPH, Frank A. Cordasco,<sup>\*\*</sup> MD, MS, Jean Côté,<sup>††</sup> PhD, Lars Engebretsen,<sup>‡‡§§</sup> MD, PhD, Brian T. Feeley,<sup>¶¶</sup> MD, Daniel Gould,<sup>##</sup> PhD, Brian Hainline,<sup>ab</sup> MD, Timothy E. Hewett,<sup>c</sup> PhD, Neeru Jayanthi,<sup>d</sup> MD, Mininder S. Kocher,<sup>ef</sup> MD, MPH, Gregory D. Myer,<sup>ghj</sup> PhD, FACSM, CSCS\* D, Carl W. Nissen,<sup>klm</sup> MD, Marc J. Philippon,<sup>nopq</sup> MD, and Matthew T. Provencher,<sup>rstu</sup> MD, CDR, MC, USNR

**Background:** Early sport specialization is not a requirement for success at the highest levels of competition and is believed to be unhealthy physically and mentally for young athletes. It also discourages unstructured free play, which has many benefits.

**Purpose:** To review the available evidence on early sports specialization and identify areas where scientific data are lacking.

**Study Design:** Think tank, roundtable discussion.

**Results:** The primary outcome of this think tank was that there is no evidence that young children will benefit from early sport specialization in the majority of sports. They are subject to overuse injury and burnout from concentrated activity. Early multisport participation will not deter young athletes from long-term competitive athletic success.

**Conclusion:** Youth advocates, parents, clinicians, and coaches need to work together with the sport governing bodies to ensure healthy environments for play and competition that do not create long-term health issues yet support athletic competition at the highest level desired.

**Keywords:** early sports specialization; consensus; youth sports

Despite mounting scientific evidence and professional athletes speaking out against its value, the trend of early sports specialization continues with tournaments and competitive leagues increasingly available as well as wider media exposure (eg, The Short Game [7- to 8-year-old golfers], Friday Night Tykes [Texas Youth Football]). Early sports specialization, or early single-sport specialization, is believed to be potentially damaging to the long-term physical and mental health of athletes and has not been validated as a requirement for competitive success in sport.<sup>3</sup> Early youth sport specialization has been associated with increased rates of overuse injury, burnout, decreased motivation for participation, and sports withdrawal,<sup>1,9,10,34,40</sup> while multisport participation is proposed to result in better long-term performance and an increase in lifetime enjoyment of physical activity and recreational sports participation.<sup>2</sup>

With these issues in mind, the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM) convened a think

tank on the topic of early sports specialization on October 2, 2015, in Rosemont, Illinois. This report represents the consensus of the participants of this meeting; importantly, it identifies areas where more research is necessary to address the outstanding questions surrounding this topic (Appendix 1) and achieve the goal of healthy athletic participation through adulthood at the highest level of participation desired.

### DEFINITION OF EARLY SPORTS SPECIALIZATION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It was the consensus at this symposium that early sports specialization, or early single-sport specialization, be defined by the following 3 criteria:

1. Participation in intensive training and/or competition in organized sports greater than 8 months per year (essentially year round)<sup>34</sup>
2. Participation in 1 sport to the exclusion of participation in other sports (limited free play overall)<sup>35</sup>
3. Involving prepubertal (seventh grade or roughly age 12 years) children.

The Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine, 4(4), 2325967116644241  
DOI: 10.1177/2325967116644241  
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## LaPrade et al. (2016)

- there is no evidence that young children will benefit from early sport specialization in the majority of sports
- they are subject to overuse injury and burnout from concentrated activity
- youth advocates, parents, clinicians, and coaches need to work together with the sport governing bodies



# Pressure

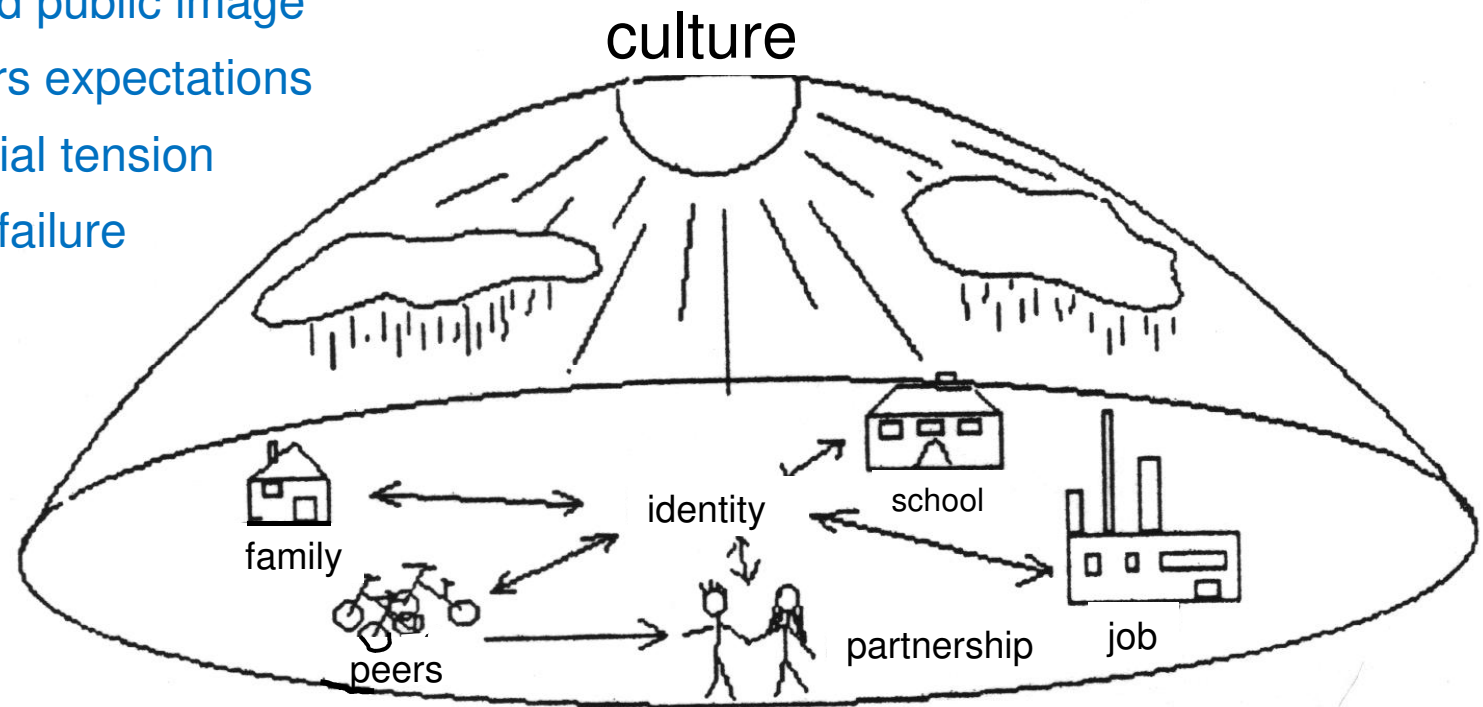
## Pressure to perform

### ➤ Components:

- self-image and public image
- Self and others expectations
- Inner and social tension
- Success and failure

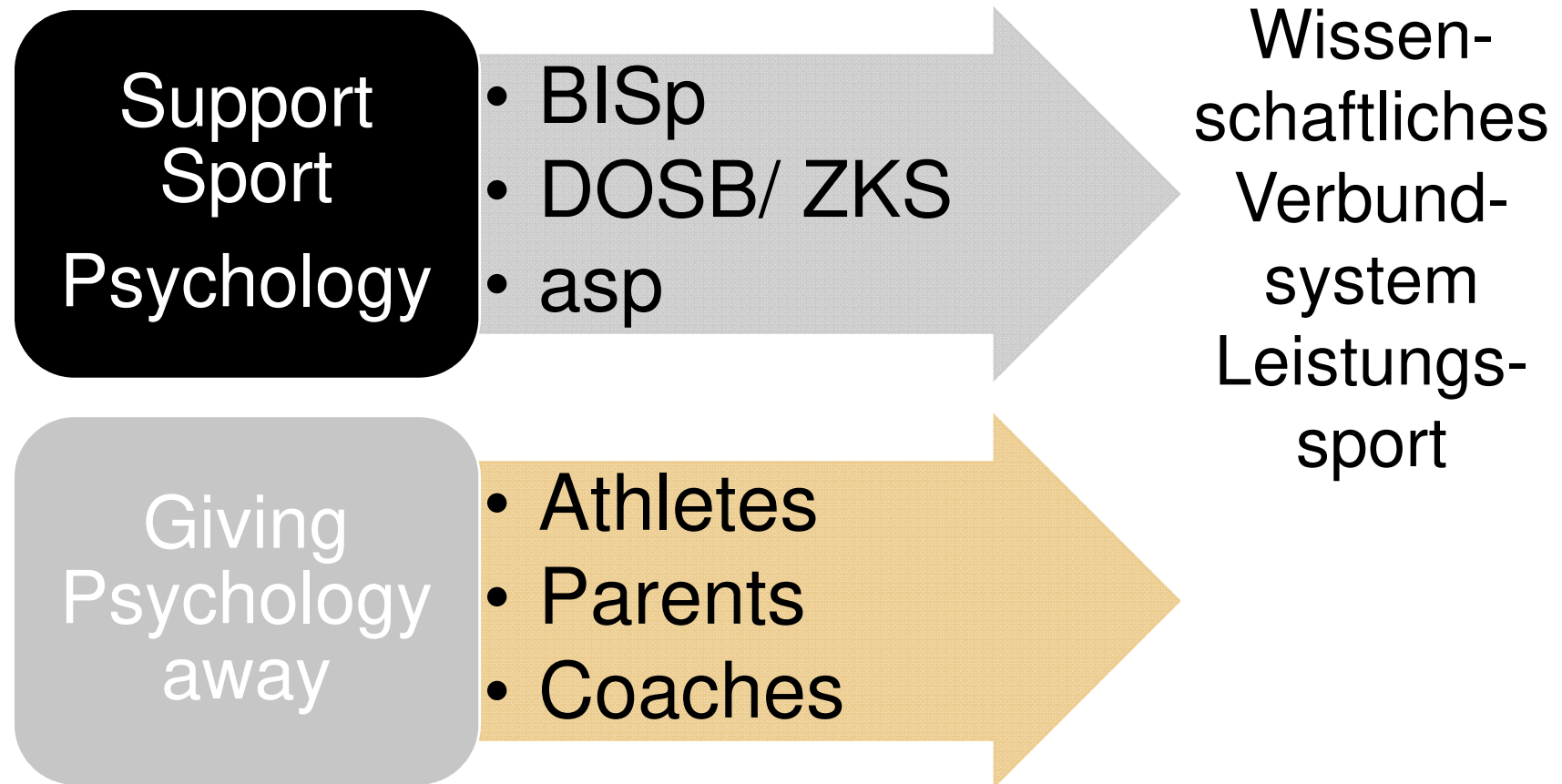
## Peer Pressure

- pressure that originates from (other's) expectations





## How can we help by means of sport psychology?





# Sport School System in Germany

- They serve to promote young athletes
- charges: depending on type of school
  - Sport schools: 200-400/month
  - Boarding schools: up to 2000/month
- Cooperation between schools and sports associations
  - 522 base camps (193 national and 329 regional base camps) as well as all 19 Olympic training centers (OSP)
  - 235 schools
  - 99 boarding schools



**Psycho-Education**



# Nuture



Mental Skills, Life Skills



e.g.

stress management  
relaxation techniques  
time management  
Self talk  
goal setting  
mental training techniques



# Dual Career



## About the project:

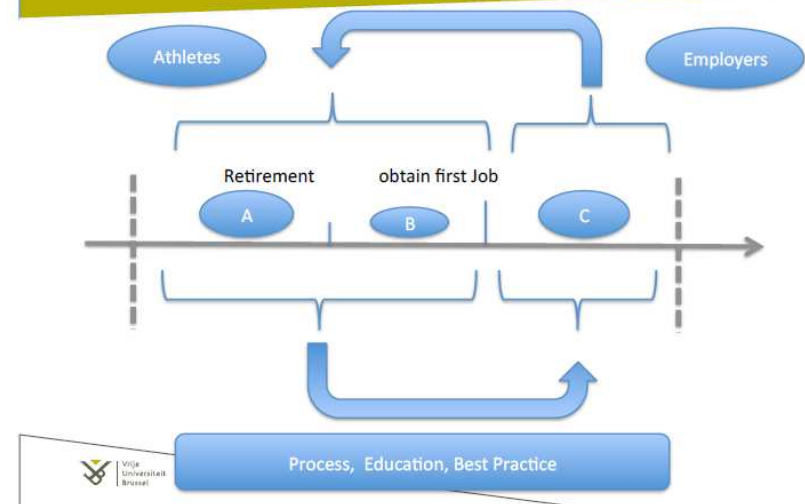
- to ensure that young sportspeople receive an education and/or professional training alongside their sports training

## Relevance:

- to reduce risks that athletes missing out on high quality education that could help to prepare for a new career after they retire

Prof. Paul Wylleman PI

### General aim (Summary)



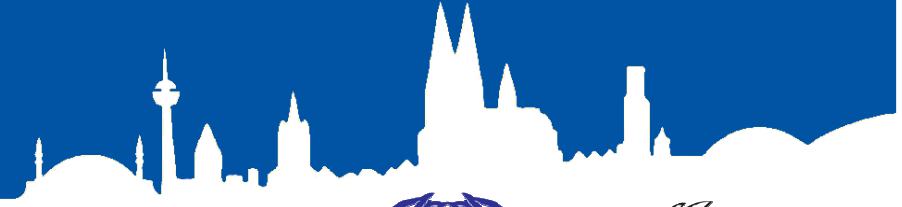
A: The process to retirement

B: The period between retirement and a first PT/FT job

C: Having a first FT job and the integration in the job market

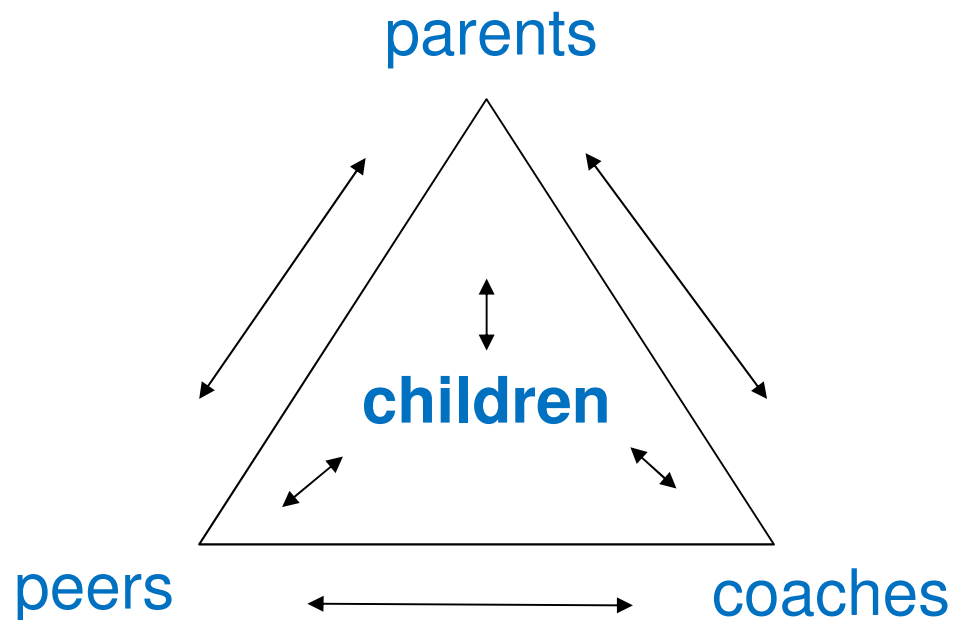


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# Support and coach parents

## Psychological Support Youth Academies





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[https://sports.vice.com/en\\_us/article](https://sports.vice.com/en_us/article)

/germany-makes-soccer-coaches-the-same-way-it-makes-cars

## Sport Psychology in Coach Education

- Dt. Trainerakademie
- DFB/ Hennes-Weisweiler-Akademie





## Summary and recommendation

- Research on Child Development
- Longitudinal Studies
- Psychosocial Support of Talents
- Support and Empowerment of parents
- Coach the Coach to Coach



**Thank you!**



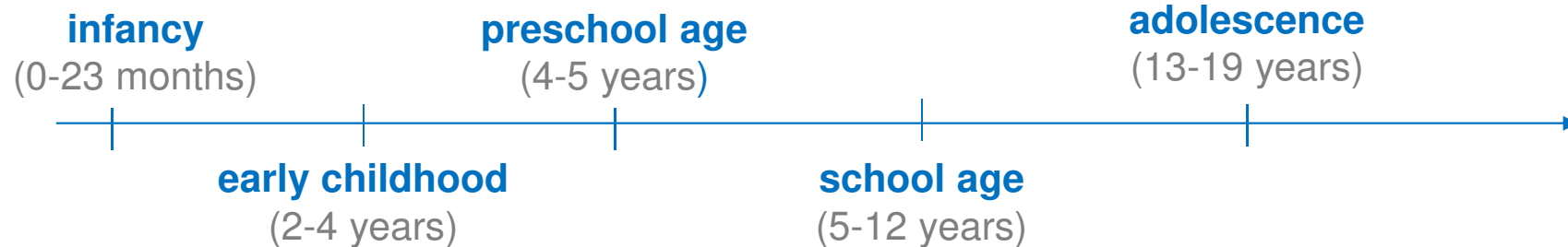
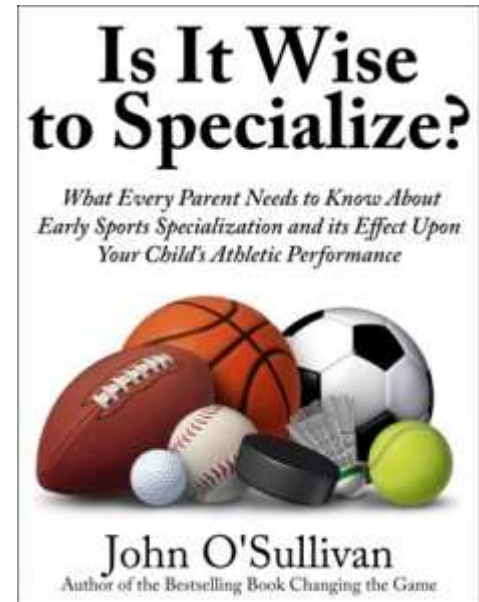
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# Differentiations

- Biological age / performance age / high performance age
- Type of sport and training frequency



(after Erikson& Erikson,1997)



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Dennis Kudla, RIO; left  
home when he was 11  
to concentrate on Judo

# Out of the „movement diary“ of an ordinary primary school pupil

