LJMU Research Online

Ludlam, K, Butt, J, Maynard, I, Lindsay, P and Bawden, M

A Strengths-Based Consultancy Approach In Elite Sport : Exploring Super Strengths.

http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/13113/

Article

2

3

4

5

6   A Strengths-Based Consultancy Approach in Elite Sport: Exploring Super-Strengths

7

8

9   Katie Ludlam[1], Mark Bawden[2], Joanne Butt[3], Pete Lindsay[1], & Ian Maynard[3]

10   [1]English Institute of Sport

11   [2]Mindflick

12   [3]Sheffield Hallam University

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

1 **Abstract**

2 There is a lack of literature documenting strengths-based approaches in sport psychology.

3 This study explored how a super-strengths approach has been implemented by sport

4 psychologists (*n=7*) and coaches (*n=8*), with UK elite athletes. Findings were categorized

5 into three general dimensions: defining super-strengths, identification methods, and phases of

6 development. Super-strengths were defined as a strategy for performance, utilizing a potential

7 world's-best resource to gain a competitive edge. Identification methods were subjective

8 (e.g., asking/observing athletes) and objective (e.g., performance analysis). Participants

9 emphasized three development phases: preparation, adaptation and monitoring. Findings

10 offer considerations for implementing a strengths-based approach and future research.

11 *Key words*: positive psychology, performance psychology, resources

12

13

14

1   A Strengths-Based Consultancy Approach in Elite Sport: Exploring Super-Strengths

2   Over the last decade strengths-based approaches to consultancy, underpinned by

3   principles of positive psychology, have featured heavily in research across mental health

4   disciplines, including clinical psychology (e.g., Fluckiger & Grosse Holtforth, 2008),

5   psychotherapy (e.g., Scheel, Davis, & Henderson, 2012), coaching psychology (e.g., Biswas-

6   Diener, Kashdan, & Minhas, 2011), and have been used for performance enhancement in

7   organizational contexts (e.g., Clifton & Harter, 2003). Coinciding with this, there has been

8   heightened interest in positive psychology (i.e., Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012) and

9   strengths-based approaches (i.e., Gordon & Gucciardi, 2011) within sport psychology.

10   Building on this applied interest in the literature, the current research will explore a strengths-

11   based approach to consultancy, termed super-strengths, that has been adopted by applied

12   sport psychology practitioners working within elite sport, in the UK.

13   The increase in research on strengths-based approaches stemmed from the onset of the

14   positive psychology movement in 1998 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The purpose

15   of positive psychology is to study and apply knowledge of positive traits and experiences,

16   strengths, and optimal functioning (Seligman, 2002). Furthermore, the main concept that

17   underpins positive psychology is that good health requires the presence of wellness and not

18   simply the absence of illness. Therefore, in order to aid the improvement of a person's mental

19   health, it is proposed that more attention should be paid to the positive aspects of their

20   situation, moving away from the deficit-focused model of functioning that has traditionally

21   been the primary approach adopted in mental health (Diener, 2003). Seligman (2002)

22   encouraged the initiation of positive psychology and captured the need for the movement in

23   this statement:

24   Working in the medical model and looking solely for the salves to heal the wounds,

25   we have misplaced much of our science and much of our training... by embracing the

1   disease model of psychotherapy, we have lost our birthright as psychologists, a

2   birthright that embraces both healing what is weak and nurturing what is strong. (p. 7)

3   In sport psychology, the predominant consultancy approach and subsequent methods

4   adopted by practitioners tend to be underpinned by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT; cf.

5   Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2014). Although used for various positive means, the primary focus

6   of CBT is to remediate negative thought disorders (Scheel et al., 2012) and develop an array

7   of tools to fix these disorders, which signifies a problem-focused approach. With CBT having

8   a major influence on sport psychologists' practice, it is understandable that some athletes and

9   coaches still perceive sport psychology to be a discipline that supports problem athletes (Gee,

10   2010). Furthermore, a technique that is commonly facilitated by sport psychologists to assess

11   athletes' needs is the performance profile (Butler & Hardy, 1992). Although both strengths

12   and weaknesses are identified during this process, the intervention that follows, largely

13   involves initiating training goals to improve athletes' weaker areas (Weston, Greenlees, &

14   Thelwell, 2011; 2013). The assumption that weaknesses should predominantly be addressed

15   to enhance performance is typical in sport, and training sessions are often designed around a

16   focus on eradicating weaknesses, rather than enhancing strengths (Gordon, 2012). It is not

17   proposed that sport psychology practitioners fail to adopt strengths-based methods in their

18   practice, but there is little evidence to support this contention in the literature.

19   One study that explored a strengths-based approach in sport was conducted by

20   Gordon and Gucciardi (2011). Primarily, this study focused on building mental toughness

21   with cricketers, however a key aspect of the intervention involved integrating a strengths-

22   based approach. Specifically, the cricketers' explored their own strengths within the team,

23   and techniques from Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008) were used

24   to elicit this information. In addition, principles from a strengths-development model

25   (Realise2; Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener et al., 2010) were adopted as part of the

1 intervention process to help players identify how they could make their weaknesses less

2 relevant. As noted, the main aim of the study was to introduce a strategy for building mental

3 toughness, and therefore it was not possible to assess the role or impact that the strengths-

4 based elements had in this study. Nonetheless, it was reported that participants were

5 complimentary about the inclusion of discussions about their strengths, and the study offers

6 some preliminary support for strengths-based approaches being used in sport psychology.

7 The researchers also recommended that future research should explore the application of

8 strengths-based approaches in sport.

9 Although documented evidence of strengths-based approaches in sport psychology

10 literature are scant, this does not necessarily imply that in applied work, sport psychology

11 practitioners are not implementing strengths-based interventions with clients. As suggested

12 by Scheel et al. (2012), even when operating within a cognitive-behavioral framework of

13 practice, where the primary emphasis is on the remediation of disorders, positive processes

14 (e.g., reinforcement and support) can be offered by practitioners. Nonetheless, following a

15 review of existing literature, it is clear that there is a lack of clarity on the implementation of

16 strengths-based processes. It would be particularly beneficial for practitioners wishing to

17 adopt strengths-based approaches in their practice, if a clearer agreement was established on

18 how to optimize client strengths (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011; Scheel et al., 2012).

19 As practitioners often outpace research with their applied methods, it is common for

20 them to adapt concepts and theories so they are locally applicable for the client they are

21 working with (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). In sport psychology, it is evident that practitioners

22 conduct novel interventions which may be informed by existing principles from the literature,

23 but are adapted for the clients they are working with (i.e., Gordon & Gucciardi, 2011).

24 However, as Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) suggested, it is necessary to explore these novel

25 approaches and ensure that practice informs and is congruent with research:

1   Practitioners can conduct novel interventions, based on a strong theoretical rationale,

2   as long as adequate data are collected to test the effectiveness of these deviations from

3   the literature... All data should be shared with the field to be evaluated for quality

4   control and synthesized to inform existing theory and intervention. Work by

5   practitioners in the field is an untapped resource for innovative developments and

6   these guidelines provide an initial step for building a two-way stream. (p. 107)

7   With this in mind and due to the extremely limited research available on strengths-

8   based approaches in sport, it is deemed necessary to study the methods used by sport

9   psychologists in the field, to identify and develop a method for implementation. The present

10   study explored a strengths-based consultancy approach, termed super-strengths, which has

11   been developed and utilized by sport psychology practitioners working within elite sport in

12   the UK. Super-strengths has received anecdotal support from elite athletes/coaches (i.e.,

13   Atherton, 2012) who have experienced the approach, and a case study of how super-strengths

14   has been applied with various athletes was presented at a professional outlet (Bawden, 2012).

15   However, as the approach has not been explored in research, the practice of super-strengths is

16   not yet known. Thus, it is proposed that studying this area is relevant, timely and potentially

17   important for enhancing knowledge of specific strengths-based approaches in our field

18   (Tracy, 2010). The purposes of this study were three-fold: first, to explore the meaning of

19   super-strengths; second to explore how super-strengths are identified; and finally to capture

20   key phases for implementing the approach. It is anticipated that data generated will provide a

21   conceptual pathway for implementing the approach in sport psychology consultancy.

22   **Method**

23   **Participants**

24   When designing the study, in line with Tracy's (2010) suggested criteria for excellent

25   qualitative research, specific considerations were made. These considerations focused on

1 ensuring that the research was ethical, sincere, would have meaningful coherence and rich

2 rigor, and thus make a significant contribution to the literature. The sample for this study

3 comprised of sport psychology practitioners (*n*=7) and coaches (*n*=8) who had adopted a

4 particular strengths-based approach in their practice (i.e., super-strengths). Participants were

5 purposively sampled (Patton, 2002) for the most appropriate persons to be identified for the

6 question being explored (Arnold & Sarkar, 2015; Sharp & Hodge, 2013; Tracy, 2010). The

7 criteria for inclusion of coaches were that they had co-facilitated a super-strengths approach

8 with a sport psychology practitioner, with the same intention (see practitioner criteria), in an

9 elite sport environment. Consistent with previous research into elite sport, participants were

10 world-class, competing at the highest possible international standard in their sport (e.g., Hays,

11 Maynard, Thomas, & Bawden, 2007). Participants represented a range of sports, including

12 field-hockey, rugby union, cricket, and sailing, and all were working with elite athletes at the

13 time of data collection.

14 **Procedure**

15   Following institutional ethics approval, all participants were sent an information letter

16 explaining the aims of the research and details of the procedure for data collection for

17 participants, if they volunteered to be involved in the study. Informed consent was also

18 sought prior to data collection and participants were reminded that all data will remain

19 anonymous and confidential via the use of pseudonyms.

20   Due to the exploratory nature of the study, interviews were considered to be the most

21 appropriate method of data collection (Tracy, 2010), because they allow for in-depth, rich

22 accounts of an experience to be gathered (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). The interview

23 guide developed for the study was informed by strengths-based intervention research in sport

24 (i.e., Gordon & Gucciardi, 2011), and focused on enhancing knowledge within the following

25 major areas: the concept (i.e., what is the meaning of super-strengths?), identification

1 methods (i.e., how do we identify super-strengths in practice?), and development of the

2 approach (i.e., what are the key phases for implementation?). Prior to data collection a pilot

3 interview was conducted with a sport psychologist who had previously used this strength-

4 based approach in practice with athletes. This pilot interview ensured that questions were

5 phrased in a manner that was understandable for participants and effective for eliciting

6 information. It was evident from the pilot interview and from initial contact with participants

7 that both coaches and practitioners were facilitators of the super-strengths approach and

8 played similar roles. Thus, the three major areas were covered in the interview schedule for

9 practitioners and coaches and all data were combined for analysis, rather than the two

10 samples being analyzed separately. Following data collection, all interviews were transcribed

11 verbatim; interviews lasted between 32 and 64 minutes (M_{mins}=38.81; SD=9.06).

12 **Data Analysis**

13 As knowledge of super-strengths practice in sport psychology is relatively unknown, a

14 thematic content analysis was adopted for analyzing the data (cf. Côté, Samela, Baria, &

15 Russell, 1993; Tracy, 2010). This analysis was deemed appropriate to capture the

16 categorization of content emerging from the transcripts (i.e., displaying the main themes

17 representing participants' perceptions) but also to understand the meaning of the participants'

18 quotes as the organized thematic structure evolved (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006). In

19 accordance with the specific aims of the study, initial analysis involved raw data themes (i.e.,

20 quotes that represented a single, recognizable aspect of participants' views in relation to the

21 process of using super-strengths in practice) being identified through a deductive process.

22 Specifically, themes were placed into the three a-priori dimensions on the basis of

23 content. The next stage involved coding the raw data (i.e., the meaningful units) by breaking

24 it down and organizing it into meaningful categories that emerged inductively within each of

25 the three dimensions. Following this process, categories were refined into broader themes,

1   with the identification of categories that were similar and those that were stand-alone.

2   Higher-order and lower-order themes were generated from this process. As advocated by

3   Côté et al. (1993), during the development and organizing of all categories, it was particularly

4   important for the research team to discuss similarities and differences of the raw data themes

5   to establish meaning.

6   As emphasised by Tracy (2010), qualitative researchers must consider the credibility

7   of what they present to be true in their studies. Tracy suggested this can be achieved by four

8   main methods: thick description, triangulation, multivocality and member reflections. In line

9   with these suggestions, the present researchers engaged in analyst triangulation, employed a

10   member checking procedure, and have provided thick description with direct quotes from

11   multiple participants in the results. Analyst triangulation involved three researchers

12   independently reading transcripts and making suggestions for the inclusion and removal of

13   data or themes. This resulted in the change of descriptions of themes to better represent the

14   concepts in the raw data, along with re-organization of higher and lower-order themes. To

15   gain member reflections, participants were emailed a copy of their transcript and asked to

16   provide comments regarding their views of the interview, and their experiences of the super-

17   strengths approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). No additional comments were made.

18   **Results**

19   The analysis resulted in the generation of eight higher-order themes comprising 13

20   lower-order themes, representing the data set. Results are presented in three sections to reflect

21   the general dimensions of the study. The first section includes data outlining the participants'

22   understanding of the meaning of super-strengths. The second section concerns the methods

23   employed by participants for the identification of super-strengths. The final section includes

24   participants' understanding of how the approach is implemented and how super-strengths are

25   developed. The number of participants who discussed each theme is included in parentheses

1 (see Figure 1). This is to display the prevalence of themes within the raw data, but does not

2 signify superiority in the conceptual understanding that has been generated.

3 **Defining Super-Strengths**

4 　　　　To gain initial contextual knowledge of the super-strengths approach, participants

5 were asked to discuss their views on the concept underpinning the approach and how they

6 would use it within the context of their sport. During analysis it was evident that a clear

7 definition was emerging from the consistency of language used by practitioners and coaches

8 when discussing the concept of super-strengths. Thus, in order to capture the meaning of the

9 data, a definition of super-strengths was generated from the raw data and subsequent themes:

10 "A strategy for performance that utilises a potential world's best resource to gain a unique

11 competitve edge in a performance context". The raw data, lower-order and higher-order

12 themes that the definition emerged from are presented in Figure 1 and are detailed below.

13 　　　　Three higher-order and three lower-order themes were identified from the 18 raw data

14 themes capturing the meaning of super-strengths. The higher-order themes were competitve

15 edge (e.g., sets athletes apart from others), world's best potential resource (e.g., world-

16 beating strengths) and strategy for performance which was broken down into three lower-

17 order themes, default method (something athletes can rely on), impactful method (helps

18 athletes win), and identifiable method (something people will know and fear athletes for).

19 　　　　**Competitive edge.** This higher order theme was discussed by all participants (N=15),

20 suggesting that identifying super-strengths can give a performer an edge over their

21 competitors. Participants proposed that the super-strengths approach is about "identifying

22 what is going to make the biggest difference, what is going to give you the edge".

23 Participants also suggested that the competitive edge is related to winning. As one participant

24 noted:

1   A strength is an area which you are good, you already have a high degree of

2   competence, a super strength is your potential way to win, it's like we are finding a

3   way to win, it's not about getting better at things (P1).

4   **Unlocking world's best potential.** The majority of participants (*n*=13) discussed that

5   when working with athletes in elite sport, the super-strengths identified should have "the

6   potential to be something they could become best in the world at". One participant stated:

7   It very much starts with athlete/ coach agreeing on this is an area that you have the

8   potential to be world's best. I think what is important at first is to try and remove the

9   glass ceiling so the point at which people usually stop at, which is seen as pretty much

10   impossible (P1).

11   **Strategy for performance.** Within this higher-order theme, participants talked about

12   super-strengths being an identifiable method, so athletes would "have a weapon" where "this

13   is my thing, my edge, this is the bit I am recognized for". One participant gave this example:

14   They know it's different to anybody else, that's key. Malinga knows there is nobody

15   else in world cricket that bowls like him, this is my thing, the bit I am recognised for,

16   Usain Bolt his last 60m, if he is in the race in the last 60m you are screwed! (P3)

17   Another participant elaborated, suggesting that athletes' oppositions knowing them

18   for their super-strength could be a way of generating fear in their opponent:

19   It is your way to win but almost something that scares the opposition, that super-

20   strength where they have to adapt to it, they can't ignore it, and straight away they

21   take their mind off their method and all they are concerned about is stopping you. (P2)

22   Participants suggested that this method would also be one that they could rely on and

23   go back to, which was categorized within a lower-order theme of default method. The lower-

24   order theme impactful method was apparent from participants suggestions that super-

1   strengths is it's a strategy for maximum effect, "so they can impact games, matches,

2   tournaments when crunch time comes essentially."

3   **Identification of Super-Strengths**

4   When asked about how they identified athletes' super-strengths, participants

5   discussed an array of methods they had employed. These were categorized into two higher-

6   order themes: subjective and objective methods of identification. Subjective methods

7   encompassed three lower-order themes: athlete identification (e.g., questioning them),

8   observations (e.g., in training and competition), and coach and others' (e.g., asking

9   coach/team mates). Objective methods comprised two lower order themes: performance

10   statistics (e.g., competition data) and formal strengths assessment measures (e.g., personality

11   preference). The methods are detailed in Figure 2 and discussed in the following section.

12   **Subjective methods of identification.** Within this theme, participants cited several

13   different ways they attempted to identify athletes' super-strengths. These varied somewhat

14   across participants, usually due to the different settings within which the participants had

15   used the approach. For example, one participant who worked with and employed the super-

16   strengths approach in a team sport, identified that a key method was involving others and

17   "getting team mates to identify each other's strengths" in order to gain an external, non-bias

18   perspective. Whereas, another participant who worked predominantly one-to-one with

19   athletes relied on the coaches' knowledge of the players' assets and resources in order to

20   identify potential super-strengths. Another participant stressed the importance of utilizing the

21   coaches for identification, rather than looking for an objective measure; they suggested that

22   "you don't need a screening tool to tell you that, coaches have that information."

23   Observations were seen as a useful source of information in the identification process,

24   and this was not limited to just the performance or training environment; participants

25   highlighted the need to "gather resources" and take notice of the athlete as a person:

1   You have to know the athletes and see them in different environments so in training

2   and competition, and the team dynamics and the interactions with coaches… You are

3   always looking out for it, it's not just in the sport there are loads of things it could

4   come from (P3).

5   **Objective methods of identification.** Participants discussed methods of identifying

6   super-strengths that were more objective in nature. Some participants believed this to be

7   integral to the identification process but again, methods depended on the context in which the

8   participants were working with. For one participant (working in rugby), gaining objective

9   performance statistics to inform the discussion for identification was deemed to be crucial:

10   You need an objective evaluation as well and I am really massive on this… you can

11   subjectively know whether an athlete has done well or not but actually the data behind

12   that is imperative, so we can actually look at the stats and say right his hit rate is

13   this… so you get an understanding of well right in this game he was on fire. (P6)

14   Some participants favoured, or were better suited to, the adoption of quantitative

15   methods of identification. For example, one coach cited his use of statistics and performance

16   data in order to identify where an athlete was strongest and had most potential: "I do a lot of

17   stats collection and that sort of thing… and Jennifer (pseudonym) completely revolutionized

18   the way girls raced". The sport the participant worked with was predominantly a racing sport

19   whereby statistics and data surrounding start, lap and race times were deemed to be highly

20   important for identifying a level of performance and future race plans.

21   Generally, participants suggested their identification process included a mixture of

22   methods and a process of triangulation, as highlighted by one participant:

23   Performance profiling and identifying the different bits where they are strong, so

24   again across the board, through talking with the coaches, through observations

25   perhaps you pick them up yourself, through the athlete's ideas what is confidence

1 enhancing for them and then I think it is looking for the themes across them and then

2   you say right this is what we have got. (P4)

3 For example, in the racing sport mentioned above, an amalgamation of identification methods

4 suggested that Jennifer's super-strength was to have potentially the world's fastest start.

5 Upon identification, participants suggested the need for a "check point" to ensure that what

6 has been identified, does indeed constitute a super-strength. Specifically, it was suggested

7 that going back to the aforementioned definition and reflecting on the super-strength was

8 important before moving on to the development of it. Examples of reflecting questions

9 included, "does this give them a strategy to perform?", "could they potentially be best in the

10 world at this?", and "will this give them an edge over their competitors?"

11 **Phases of Development**

12   Analysis of the data within the general dimension encompassing the implementation

13 of the approach, revealed three key phases: preparation phase, application phase, and

14 monitoring phase. All themes are presented in Figure 3 and key points are outlined below.

15   **Preparation phase.** This higher-order theme was generated by three lower-order

16 themes. All participants emphasized the need to initially sell the approach to stakeholders and

17 athletes to encourage buy-in, also to provide athletes with context for utilizing their super-

18 strength(s), and ensure there is a strategic plan for change. Participants suggested a "sell" of

19 the approach where the concept is presented to those involved (i.e., athletes, stakeholders, and

20 people influencing the training environment) to initiate buy-in and ensure they understand the

21 aim of the approach. One participant reflected:

22   Well firstly you need to understand it, it's too easy to kind of be black and white in

23   your thinking in that right I'm just going to focus on this and forget everything else,

24   well no you're not you have still got to address areas of weakness so a good

25   understanding of the philosophy behind it but also you have to be able to get people to

1   buy in to this way of thinking and sell it so you have to be able to frame this idea and

2   this re-framing idea effectively to key stakeholders like athlete, coach, Performance

3   Director etc. (P2)

4   All participants highlighted the need for athletes to understand "when, where, how"

5   their super-strength will give them a competitive edge. It was proposed that a coach, who

6   must give license for the athlete to utilize their super-strengths without concern or "fear of

7   failure", would provide this context. One participant explained the importance of this:

8   Because points of difference are noticeable by definition and if people are playing

9   with a fear of the consequences of getting it wrong, what will happen is they will lose

10   their edge, everything becomes average or OK, or maybe good but nothing sticks out.

11   When people truly have the freedom to do what they do best, their point of difference

12   will shine… there is still a responsibility to make good decisions around that because

13   it's not a case of play to your strengths and to hell with the consequences, this gives

14   you a mental model of how you will do that. (P1)

15   Along with providing context for using super-strengths, it was suggested that a

16   strategic plan for maximizing these should be developed with the athlete. One participant

17   described an athlete's awareness of both context and strategy as being crucial for success:

18   Putting an action plan into place and then working at it, reviewing it and improving

19   it…how working on those super-strengths could relate to other weaknesses or those

20   becoming evident or indeed how an overdone strength could become a weakness…

21   the greater the athlete's awareness of this, the greater chances of success. (P5)

22   **Application phase.** All participants highlighted the need for adaptations to take place

23   in order for the super-strengths approach to work optimally. This higher-order theme

24   comprised of two lower-order themes describing the application to the culture (influencing

25   stakeholders) and application to training (e.g., physical changes to athlete's training regime).

1   Several participants (*n*=11) suggested influencing key stakeholders in the sport is

2   integral; "you need people who create the environment that the athlete performs or trains in

3   because that is the bubble, and that's who decides which game we are playing." Methods for

4   influencing and adapting this included "getting it into the language" to ensure people

5   understand the aim.

6   The adaptations to training that participants discussed included "making the super-

7   strength more robust" via "testing them on their super-strength in pressurized situations" and

8   having "specialized super-strengths training sessions". One participant highlighted the need

9   to agree training adaptations with the athlete and people who manipulate training:

10   I think it needs to be clear how much time they are going to spend on this aspect of

11   their performance and how they are going to do that. You know what are the

12   processes that need to be manipulated or the contexts that need to be put in place to

13   give them the best chance to develop the super-strength. (P7)

14   Specifically, one participant identified that their athlete's super strength was to be the

15   strongest, fittest athlete in their sport and thus their plans for strength and conditioning

16   changed to allow for this change in focus. Consequently, to develop this super-strength the

17   athlete "used the fitness guys a lot more and got a lot more scientific with it" and "definitely

18   had more precise plans as far as his fitness was concerned, as to what he would do when

19   going through (sport specific competitions) and stuff".

20   **Monitoring phase.** This higher-order theme did not consist of any lower-order

21   themes, however the raw data comprising the theme was deemed to be highly important in

22   the development of the approach. All participants discussed a monitoring phase, specifically

23   where "tracking where you are at" and "adapting and evolving" would take place.

24   Participants suggested that this monitoring phase must be constant and highlighted the

25   need for "coaches to keep re-visiting the approach" to ensure the approach is successful.

1   Interestingly, participants noted that the phases of the approach are not necessarily temporal;

2   i.e., that monitoring and checking "you have the right thing" does not come at the end of the

3   intervention, but should take place throughout the application and preparation phases:

4   Reviewing the super strength with the athlete has got to be quite a lot, so maybe every

5   month you have a big review with the athlete and then every week you talk to them

6   about how they are getting on and rather than just say 'we are doing a super strength

7   session', we need to hear their feedback and make sure they are learning… We will

8   review performance so if I know for example his opposition has made 4 direct errors

9   [at the beginning of the year] then at the end of the year he has played him again and

10   he has made 6/7 direct receive errors, well then I know that it's working. (P14)

11   **Discussion**

12   The purpose of the present study was to gain an insight into how a novel strengths-

13 based approach (super-strengths) is being used in elite sport, and to develop a conceptual

14 pathway for understanding and implementing the approach. The definition yielded from the

15 data suggests that super-strengths are identifiable as a unique resource or blend of resources

16 that would provide an athlete with a strategy to gain a competitive edge in their performance

17 context. This means that the super-strength identified will not necessarily be stable across

18 contexts and may need adapting in different performance environments, which contrasts the

19 usual definition adopted in strengths-based research. Typically, researchers exploring the use

20 of strengths and resources for positive gains have adopted a trait personality definition,

21 identifying strengths as something stable that a person naturally has and would thus apply

22 across time and settings (e.g., Linley & Harrington, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For

23 example, the Values Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS: Peterson & Seligman, 2004) which

24 identifies a person's top five "signature strengths" is considered a trait inventory.

25 Specifically, signature strengths are trait-like character strengths such as hope, honesty, and

1   fairness, and are taken from a list of 24 potential strengths. Although it is agreed that such

2   strengths could be useful if applied in training and performance environments, the strengths

3   identified by this tool are not context-specific and thus would not necessarily provide an

4   athlete with a strategy to gain a competitive edge.

5   Conversely, while it is clear that there is a trait element of the resources utilized to

6   identify an athlete's super-strength, the actual super-strength that is generated would be more

7   state-like, depending on the sport/ position/ competition the athletes find themselves in.

8   Specifically, the super-strength is part of an athlete's relevant strategy for performance which

9   can be a unique amalgamation of their talents, traits and resources, and has the intention of

10   providing them with a competitive edge in their performance context. For example in short-

11   track speed skating an athlete's super-strength could be "to be the fastest starter in the world",

12   but the talents and strengths underpinning this might be the athlete's aggressive nature (trait-

13   character strength), their composed fast reaction (talent), and explosive power (physicality).

14   However, in some races, leading from the front and having the best start may not provide the

15   athlete with a competitive edge (i.e., in the endurance distances), thus there is a need for

16   context and adaptation to ensure that the intended impact (i.e., gaining a competitive edge) is

17   achievable.

18   Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) reinforced the idea that strengths are contextual and

19   encouraged practitioners to consider "strengths development", which involves adopting a

20   more sophisticated approach, by considering contextual elements and how to adapt strengths

21   for maximal impact. Yet the researchers argued that the majority of practitioners adopting a

22   strengths-based approach typically adopt "identify and use" approaches. Specifically, identify

23   and use approaches include practitioners employing a formal strengths assessment to identify

24   trait strengths (e.g., VIA) or talents (e.g., Gallup StrengthsFinder: Buckingham & Clifton,

1   2001) and then use the information to discuss ways the client might use these more in life or

2   work. Biswas-Diener and colleagues discouraged such approaches, suggesting that "strengths

3   development" would be more beneficial to clients, enabling them to better understand their

4   strengths and how to implement them to greater effect. This notion has been reiterated in

5   sport psychology and it has been suggested that helping athletes develop their unique,

6   signature strengths could potentially help build robust sport-confidence (Beaumont, Maynard,

7   & Butt, 2015).

8   Evidently, the Realise2 (Linley et al., 2010) has a strengths development element to it.

9   The online questionnaire requires participants to rate 60 pre-determined attributes in relation

10   to how energizing they find them, how good they are at them, and how often they use them.

11   These attributes are then categorized into realised strengths, unrealised strengths, learned

12   behaviors and weaknesses with an accompanying model to help participants maximize,

13   marshal, moderate and minimize them, respectively. With regards to super-strengths, it is

14   unlikely that the attributes used in the Realise2 online questionnaire would provide specific,

15   contextual strengths relevant to an athlete's performance strategy; however the accompanying

16   model does include strengths development considerations. Accordingly, Gordon and

17   Gucciardi (2011) adopted such elements of the Realise2 model in their study described

18   previously, with cricketers. Specifically they utilized the model's pathway for minimizing

19   weaknesses, however they applied it to contextual attributes they had identified with the

20   players, rather than the pre-determined attributes identified by the online tool.

21   Similarly, strengths development is evident within the phases of development

22   reported in the present study which were considered crucial for implementation of the super-

23   strengths approach. Within the phases of development, participants stressed the importance of

24   providing the athlete with context for using their super-strengths. Specifically, building a

1   strategic plan around how the athlete's super-strength will look in competition and what the

2   super-strength might look like overplayed and underplayed (i.e., if they use their super-

3   strength too little or too often), a notion that has been discussed in strengths-based research in

4   psychotherapy (Scheel et al., 2012) business psychology (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011) and

5   coaching psychology. Understanding what the super-strength might look like overplayed and

6   underplayed was deemed to be crucial in order for athletes to clarify what "optimal" use of

7   their super-strength would look like. Participants suggested that coaches must be aware that

8   sometimes athletes might not implement their super-strengths optimally, but must provide a

9   "license" for them to have a go. This license involves agreement between athlete and coach

10   on the boundaries around when, how and why they would use their super-strengths. It is

11   suggested that the license offers clarity to athletes, would increase their buy-in to the

12   approach, and reduce hesitance and fear of failure. Thus, ensuring that boundaries and a

13   license for using super-strengths have been established and agreed is an important

14   consideration for practitioners looking to implement the approach.

15   A further interesting finding was that the three key phases of development of the

16   approach represent a cyclic process, rather than a linear process. It was suggested that

17   monitoring should be conducted continually throughout the intervention to check that the

18   super-strength is still applicable and would provide the performer with a competitive edge. If

19   this was not the case, for example if the demands of the sport had changed, then in order to

20   continue there would potentially need to be a re-identification process or a reiteration of the

21   context for utilizing or strategic plan for maximizing their super-strength(s). The importance

22   of monitoring the progression and effectiveness of intervention strategies is something that

23   has been consistently cited as an important element of sport psychology practice (Andersen,

24   Miles, Mahoney, & Robinson, 2002). Necessary adjustments should be made to ensure that

25   athletes continually develop and that the intervention is best suited for the needs of their

1   situation (Murphy, 2012). This is an essential consideration for practitioners looking to adopt

2   a super-strengths approach in practice to ensure it is most effective for the performer.

3   Another finding reinforced by participants was the necessity for the facilitators of the

4   approach (coach and/or sport psychologist) to discuss with athletes where working on

5   weaknesses would feature in their super-strengths plan. Although participants suggested that

6   the intention is for weaknesses to become less relevant during the process of implementing

7   super-strengths, they recognized that weaknesses cannot and should not be ignored. As

8   proposed by Scheel et al. (2012) in their research in counselling psychology, there is a need

9   to consider when and how to elicit and use client strengths in therapy, and when to attend to

10 problems. Specifically, they suggested that if someone has a crisis problem a practitioner

11 might need to manage some of the symptoms first, before moving onto how strengths could

12 be used. Similarly, the participants in the present study stated that if an athlete has a

13 significant weakness that could be noticed by a competitor, the athlete would need to address

14 this before trying to utilize their super-strength in competition. However, participants

15 discussed that the approach is to be used with athletes who are already operating at elite level,

16 thus weaknesses tend to be less visible as most athletes should have developed competence in

17 the elements of their sport. For this reason, participants suggested that the approach might not

18 be applicable for athletes who were lower down the ability levels in the sporting system, as

19 their weaknesses might be too significant and could potentially nullify their strengths.

20 Likewise, Gordon and Gucciardi (2011) proposed that practitioners and coaches should

21 consider the appropriateness of such interventions, depending on the age and ability level of

22 performers. This has implications for coaches and practitioners wishing to adopt the approach

23 with athletes in that there is a need for a pre-checklist, whereby practitioners have criteria for

24 which athletes to use super-strengths with, to ensure that the approach is the most appropriate

25 for the situation they are working in. For example, considering the athlete's level of

1 performance (i.e., do they actually have potential to become best in the world at something),

2 and whether they have any major weaknesses that could be exploited by the opposition (i.e.,

3 that would nullify any super-strength). Future research is encouraged to explore the potential

4 of adopting a similar strengths-based approach with athletes at other ability levels.

5 As an athlete's super-strength(s) are specific to them, the methods for identification of

6 super-strengths that participants described were somewhat varied. However, all participants

7 stated that they would ask athletes to identify their perceived greatest strength(s), and to

8 discuss what they believe their unique qualities to be, in comparison to other athletes.

9 Similarly, in their strengths-based intervention to develop mental toughness, Gordon and

10 Gucciardi (2011) included questions for players including where they felt most comfortable,

11 what they enjoyed most, and how they might be able to build upon these perceived strengths.

12 Whilst questioning is a useful tool for eliciting information from athletes, other methods were

13 described in the present study which could result in a more in-depth pool of resources from

14 which to identify an athlete's super-strength, for example performance profiling and

15 performance analysis. This mixed-method approach is somewhat unique to the strengths-

16 based approach literature, because most studies employ a single character inventory, in order

17 to identify clients' strengths (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). To collate the information gathered

18 from a mixed-method approach during super-strengths identification, it is proposed that an

19 adapted version of a performance profile could be utilized (i.e., Hays, Thomas, Butt, &

20 Maynard, 2010). The factors that feature on the profile could be informed by coach and

21 athlete suggestions, and measures from performance data. This would allow for a visual

22 representation of athletes' strengths and weaknesses and would facilitate the super-strengths

23 identification process. Future research should explore how identification could be conducted

24 when there are little or no objective data available or limited potential methods to employ.

1   Something that all participants discussed was the need to influence key stakeholders

2   in the sport to get a super-strengths-based philosophy engrained into the culture. To do this,

3   participants suggested the need to get coaches/sport-science staff on board and to try and

4   make super-strengths a shared language across disciplines in the sport. The suggestion that

5   sport psychologists' work is more impactful when reinforced in the system, by those who

6   support the athlete (i.e., multi-disciplinary team, coaches, organizational decision-makers)

7   has been reiterated in the sport psychology literature (e.g., Arnold & Sarkar, 2015). Findings

8   of the present study highlighted an "adaptation to training" phase which might involve other

9   disciplines. Ideally, within this phase, athletes' physical training plans would complement

10   their super-strengths strategy, reinforcing this need for collaboration. For example, if an

11   athlete's super-strength was to have the most aggressive, fastest start in a race, inevitably they

12   would need the strength and conditioning coach to adapt their training program to target this

13   area. Thus, the integration of the approach within the training environment and wider culture

14   of the sport is something that should be considered by coaches and sport psychology

15   practitioners looking to adopt a super-strengths approach in practice.

16   **Applied Implications**

17   As the aim of this study was to provide a pathway for understanding how super-

18   strengths could be implemented in applied practice, there are several implications for

19   practitioners wishing to implement the approach. First, those facilitating the approach should

20   be mindful of the definition of super-strengths throughout. Specifically, facilitators should

21   ensure that athletes identify super-strength(s) that could provide them with a unique

22   competitive edge in their performance context. It is also necessary for practitioners to engage

23   in a continual process of reflection and monitoring to ensure that they are achieving this

24   desired effect. Second, practitioners and coaches should consider the phases of development

25   outlined in this study, to get the most impact from a super-strengths intervention. Particularly,

1 agreeing with the athlete how they will maximize their super-strengths through adaptations to

2 training, and providing a license/context for using super-strength(s) in performance are

3 important elements. Finally, practitioners should aim to influence key stakeholders within the

4 sport they are working in, particularly those who shape the athlete's training environment to

5 achieve a shared-language and common understanding of the rationale and intended plan for

6 super-strengths.

7 **Limitations**

8   Although the study has generated a conceptual pathway for understanding a novel

9 strengths-based approach, there are limitations to be considered. First, it is important to

10 consider the unique population of coaches and sport psychology practitioners that were

11 interviewed in this study (i.e., working in elite sport). The ability level of athletes that applied

12 sport psychologists engage with varies significantly from school level (Martin, 2005) through

13 to Olympic champions (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). Consequently, although generalizability is

14 not the intention of qualitative research enquiries, the sample used in the study limits the

15 possibility of generalizing the findings to other populations. The second limitation is the

16 inclusion of the facilitators of a super-strengths approach in the sample, without the athletes

17 who experienced the approach. It is necessary for future research to obtain athletes' views to

18 gain an alternative perspective and their perceptions of the impact of the super-strengths

19 approach. This research could inform our understanding about effective implementation, and

20 help to maximize positive impact.

21 **Concluding remarks**

22   This study has facilitated an understanding of how super-strengths could be utilized in

23 elite sport. The findings highlight various practical considerations for coaches and sport

24 psychologists wishing to adopt the approach, particularly concerning gaining and maintaining

25 engagement with the approach, methods to identify super-strengths, and the process for

1   maximizing and developing the approach. Following the suggestions from Gordon and

2   Gucciardi (2011), this study intended to address a gap in the literature on strengths-based

3   approaches in sport psychology and has provided an insight into a particularly novel

4   approach being used in the field. Some findings from the present study are congruent with

5   existing literature from other domains (i.e., clinical psychology, coaching psychology,

6   organizational contexts) regarding the considerations to be made by those facilitating

7   approaches that utilize clients' strengths. However, there are many unique elements to this

8   approach and the elite sport population sampled and thus, it extends the knowledge from

9   previous studies. With the lack of research in sport psychology on strengths-based

10 approaches, and particularly the absence of a method for employing such approaches, the

11 findings offer a new insight for sport psychologists and coaches working in elite sport.

12

1   References

2   Andersen, A. G., Miles, A., Mahoney, C., & Robinson, P. (2002). Evaluating the

3   effectiveness of applied sport psychology practice: Making the case for a case study

4   approach. *The Sport Psychologist, 16,* 432-453

5   Arnold, R., & Sarkar, M. (2015). Preparing athletes and teams for the Olympic Games:

6   Experiences and lessons learned from the world's best sport psychologists.

7   *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *13*, 1-17. doi:

8   10.1080/1612197X.2014.932827

9   Atherton, M. (2012, May 10). Andy Flower content to let other leaders utter the words of

10   wisdom**.** *The Times.* Retrieved from http://www.thetimes.co.uk

11   Bawden, M. (2012, April). *Building super strengths and flooding weaknesses.* Presentation at

12   British Psychological Society Annual Conference, London.

13   Beaumont, C., Maynard, I., & Butt, J. (2015). Effective ways to develop and maintain robust

14   sport-confidence: Strategies advocated by sport psychology consultants. *Journal of*

15   *Applied Sport Psychology, 27,* 301-318. doi*:* 10.1080/10413200.2014.996302

16   Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T. B., & Minhas, G. (2011). A dynamic approach to

17   psychological strength development and intervention, *The Journal of Positive*

18   *Psychology, 6,* 106-118. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2010.545429

19   Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research*

20   *in Psychology, 3*, 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

21   Buckingham, M., & Clifton, D. O. (2001). *Now, discover your strengths.* New York: The

22   Free press.

23   Butler, R. J., & Hardy, L. (1992). The performance profile: Theory and application. *The*

24   *Sport Psychologist, 6*, 253-264.

1 Clifton, D. O., & Harter, J. K. (2003). Investing in strengths. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton

2 & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive Organisational Scholarship: Foundations of a new*

3 *Discipline* (pp. 21-35). San Francisco, CA: Berret Koehler Publishers Inc.

4 Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). *Appreciative inquiry handbook*

5 (2nd ed.) Brunswick, OH: Crown Custom.

6 Côté, J., Salmela, J. H., Baria, A., & Russell, S. (1993). Organizing and interpreting

7 unstructured qualitative data. *The Sport Psychologist, 7,* 127-137.

8 Diener, E. (2003). What is positive about positive psychology: The curmudgeon and

9 Pollyanna. *Psychological Inquiry*, *14*, 115-120.

10 Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2012). A grounded theory of psychological resilience in Olympic

11 champions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *13*, 669-678. doi:

12 10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.04.007

13 Fluckiger, C., & Grosse Holtforth, M. (2008). Focusing the therapist's attention on the

14 patient's strengths: A preliminary study to foster a mechanism of change in outpatient

15 psychotherapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64,* 876-890. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20493

16 Gee, C. J. (2010). How does sport psychology actually improve athletic performance: A

17 framework to facilitate athletes' and coaches' understanding. *Behavior modification,*

18 *34,* 386-402. doi: 10.1177/0145445510383525

19 Gordon, S., & Gucciardi, D. F. (2011). A strengths-based approach to coaching mental

20 toughness. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 2*, 143-155. doi:

21 10.1080/21520704.2011.598222

22 Gordon, S. (2012). Strengths based approaches to developing Mental Toughness: Team and

23 individual. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 7*(2), 210-222.

24 Hays, K., Thomas, O., Maynard, I., & Butt, J. (2010). The role of confidence profiling in

25 cognitive behavioral interventions in sport. The *Sport Psychologist*, *24*(3), 393-414.

Hays, K., Maynard, I., Thomas, O., & Bawden, M. (2007). Sources and types of confidence identified by world class sport performers. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *19*, 434–456. doi: 10.1080/10413200701599173

Kaiser, R. B., & Overfield, D. V. (2011). Strengths, strengths overused, and lopsided leadership. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *63*, 89. doi: 10.1037/a0024470

Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social research students and researchers* (pp.138-169). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic enquiry.* London: Sage publications.

Linley, P. A., & Harrington, S. (2006). Strengths Coaching: A potential-guided approach to coaching psychology. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 1*(1), 37-47.

Linley, P. A., Nielsen, K. M., Gillett, R., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). Using signature strengths in pursuit of goals: Effects on goal progress, need satisfaction, and well-being, and implications for coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 5,* 6-15.

Martin, S. B. (2005). High school and college athletes' attitudes toward sport psychology consulting. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *17*, 127-139. doi: 10.1080/10413200590932434

Murphy, S. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of sport and performance psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (2nd ed.)*. London: Sage

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Scheel, M. J., Davis, C. K., & Henderson, J. D. (2012). Therapist use of client strengths: A qualitative study of positive processes. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *41*, 392-427. doi: 10.1177/0011000012439427

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*, 5–14. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5

Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Positive psychology, positive prevention, and positive therapy. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp.3-12). New York: Oxford University Press.

Sharp, L. A., & Hodge, K. (2013). Effective sport psychology consulting relationships: Two coach case studies. *The Sport Psychologist*, *27*, 313-324.

Sharp, L. A., Hodge, K., & Danish, S. (2014). Sport psychology consulting at elite sport competitions. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, *3*, 75. doi: 10.1037/spy0000011

Tracy, (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16,* 837-851. doi: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Wagstaff, C., Fletcher, D., & Hanton, S. (2012). Positive Organizational Psychology in Sport: An Ethnography of Organizational Functioning in a National Sport Organization, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 24*, 26-47. doi: 10.1080/10413200.2011.589423

Weston, N. J. V., Greenlees, I. A., & Thelwell, R. C. (2011). Athlete perceptions of the impacts of performance profiling. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 9,* 173-188. doi: 10.1080/1612197X.2011.567107

Weston, N., Greenlees, I., & Thelwell, R. (2013). A review of Butler and Hardy's (1992) performance profiling procedure within sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 6*, 1-21. doi: 10.1080/1750984X.2012.674543

1   List of Figures

2   Figure 1: Themes generated from analysis concerning the meaning of super-strengths

3   Figure 2: Themes generated from analysis concerning the identification of super-strengths

4   Figure 3: Themes generated from analysis concerning super-strengths phases of development

Figure 1: Themes representing the meaning of super-strengths.

Raw Data Themes   Lower Order   Higher Order
                                                                     Themes   Themes

| It's an athlete's point of difference for selection and in the context of competition (15) |
| Something that makes them better than their opposition or team mates (14) |
| Something that separates an athlete, they stand out for it (10) |
| It's what could set athletes apart from their competitors (2) |
| Something you can deliver more consistently than anyone else (3) |

Competitive Edge (15)

| It's about unlocking the potential to become best in the world at something (7) |
| It's about fulfilling potential, not necessarily something they are already doing (6) |
| It's about world-class strengths (6) |
| It's about taking the roof off limitations and aiming for the ultimate dream goal/ breaking through the ceiling (3) |

World's best potential (13)

| It's a default game plan, something they can rely on (2) |
| It's something they can go back to when things are not going too well (2) |
| It's the thing you put your hat on, it makes you able to perform (2) |

Default method (6)

| It's finding a way to win/ having a winning strategy (11) |
| It's having something to impact with in competition (15) |
| It's about getting the biggest bang for your buck (2) |
| It's about having a weapon in your locker (5) |

Impactful method (15)

Strategy for performance (15)

| Creating something people will know and fear you for (3) |
| People will change their game to account for your super-strength (2) |

Identifiable method (5)

Figure 2: Themes representing the identification of super-strengths

Raw Data Themes | Lower Order Theme | Higher Order Themes

Asking the athlete questions (15)
Get the athletes to write them down in their time away (4)

Athlete identification (15)

Watching the athlete in training and competition (11)
Observe the athlete in environments outside of sport i.e., at home/ leisure activities (2)
See them in a team environment, what do they bring to the team? (3)
Find their resources from other parts of their life (3)

Observations (11)

Subjective Methods (15)

Triangulated approach with the athlete, coach, psych and any other relevant staff (11)
From the coaches' knowledge – they know their athletes (15)
Get other athletes/peers to identify their strengths (2)
It can come from looking at debriefs from competitions (6)
From their performance profile, looking to maximize their greatest strengths (6)

Coach and others (15)

From their strengths generated from their Insights profile (7)

Formal strengths assessment (7)

Objective Methods (10)

Objective data to see where they are excelling (7)
Competition statistics (7)
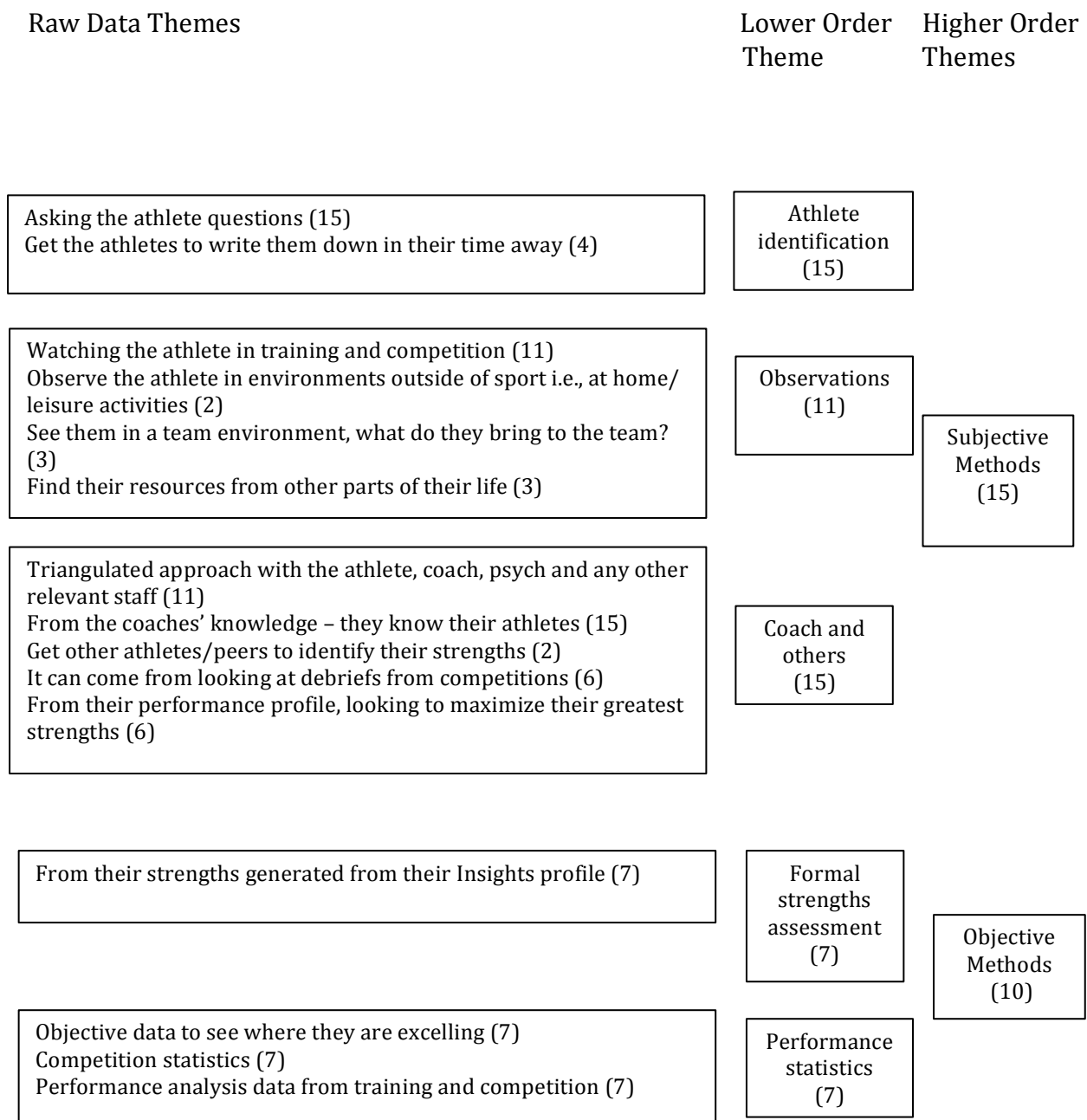Performance analysis data from training and competition (7)

Performance statistics (7)

Figure 3: Themes representing super-strengths phases of development

Raw Data Themes	Lower Order Themes	Higher Order Themes
Getting someone outside of the sport to come and present the concept (7) Psychologist sold/introduced the concept to the coaches (15) The athletes liked that it wasn't about weaknesses (9)	Selling the concept (15)	
Freedom from the coach to go out and exploit the strength without fear of failure (15) You need to put some context around how and when the strength should be utilized (6) Clarity on what the strength looks like overdone and underdone (6) Need to create a mental model on how to maximize strengths (3) Need to address unacceptable weaknesses and how they fit; you don't ignore them (9) You need to address the weaknesses within the super-strength (8) Need to have a video description of what this is going to look like, what you would see (6)	Context for utilizing (15)	Preparation Phase (15)
You need to have a strategic plan for how you are going to maximize the super-strength (9) Create a development plan with super-strengths as the starting point (3) Need to get it into the plans for training and competition (15) Set expectations for outcomes and what you want to happen (3) Make it a focus for training and competition (8)	Strategic plan (15)	
Getting it into the culture/ philosophy of the sport (11) Getting support staff and as many people as you can on board with the approach (9) Need to get it into the language across the sport (4) Need to involve all stakeholders or the cultural architects (6) Ensure staff know what the approach is and what we are aiming for (2)	Culture (15)	Application phase (15)
You need to make the super-strength more robust (3) Test them on their SS under pressure during training (1) Adding consequences around their supers-strengths training to increase pressure (1) Can they utilise their super-strength in a pressurized environment? (1) Specialized super-strength focused training sessions (13)	Training (15)	
This is something that you need to do and review and revisit often (11) Track where you were, where you need to be, and plan, do, review (12) It can adapt, change and evolve (9) Use performance measures or stats to see where you are at (5) The coach needs to reinforce and keep revisiting (4) This is not a one off (7)		Monitoring phase (15)