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A Proposition for Cultural Praxis in Critical Disability Studies: A Methodological Design for Inclusive Research

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ABSTRACT

There have been increasing calls within critical disability studies to move beyond ethnocentric Global North/Western interpretive lenses, especially when doing work in countries that have historically been oppressed by such cultures. These lenses rarely embrace the unique cultural nuances and social structures of different communities such that meaningful social justice is not possible. In this paper, we propose that cultural praxis (based on the work of Paulo Freire) could be a necessary paradigmatic shift toward amplifying disability research beyond ethnocentrism and toward culturally reflexive and relevant study. We show how we developed this methodological process through conceptual representations of our evolved thought, author reflections, and theoretical groundings. We invite dialogue from colleagues invested in socially-just research, and hope this approach begins further conversations and methods for doing meaningful, culturally specific work to achieve cultural praxis in physical education and wider realms of critical disability studies.

KEYWORDS

Cultural praxis; social justice; methods; disability studies

Introduction

A supposedly global movement, disability studies is rooted within an ethnocentric, Global North, Western perspective (Goodley, 2017; Meekosha, 2011) which has notable repercussions for doing inclusive work in other countries (Haslett & Smith, 2020). Ethnocentrism situates research within a hegemonic lens whereby knowledge and reality are shaped by White, Globally North, Globally Western, Judeo-Christian values (Ryba et al., 2013). Such epistemological and ontological underpinnings are not only ineffective but potentially harmful, particularly when used within cultures that have been oppressed and colonized by White, Western, Northern countries (Xu, 2002). Utilizing only Global North, Western paradigms to interpret disability and define what disability is negates the rich, historic legacies of culturally embedded languages, beliefs, faiths, values, and norms of countries outside these regions, resulting in underdeveloped, underused, and underappreciated paradigms of disability (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009).

To address this, authors such as Ghai (2012), Goodley (2017), Grech (2009), Kim (2017), Meekosha (2011), and Nguyen (2018) contributed lenses and paradigms of Global South and

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Postcolonial Disability Studies to move understandings of disability “beyond the boundaries of the Gulf Stream” (Meekosha, 2004, p. 731). This scholarship provided insight into different values, histories, and beliefs of disability in respective locales such that critical disability studies (CDS) could expand beyond ethnocentric, hegemonic understandings. While Global South and Postcolonial paradigms are welcome additions, these lenses are still too wide to do meaningful, socially-just research in specific countries and contexts. For example, authors exploring disability inclusive physical education (PE) in Japan, Brazil, South Korea, and the United States concluded that to do appropriate and effective inclusive research and practice, the unique values, cultures, histories, languages, and infrastructures of each country must be considered (Haegele et al., 2017). Thus, a research approach focusing on more context-specific, culturally sensitive epistemologies and ontologies are required to truly anchor agendas of social justice within inclusive PE and, we dare say, CDS as a whole.

The following is a modest approach to address aforementioned gaps within CDS by conceptualizing culture as a central component for doing culturally sensitive, socially-just research. Such efforts have been advocated in sport and exercise psychology (e.g., Blodgett et al., 2015; McGannon & Smith, 2015; Ryba & Wright, 2005; Ryba et al., 2010, 2013; Schinke et al., 2012) and we were greatly influenced by these authors in our attempt to amplify specific cultures and contexts within CDS. Further, we acknowledge the work of authors who have highlighted the intersections of cultural studies and CDS (e.g., McRae, 2018), but we wish to move this work further to show *how* this may be done by sharing our novel methodological approach. This approach is but one way, not *the* way, to do more contextual and culturally nuanced inclusive work. We hope this paper triggers further debate and discussion regarding how to expand disability scholarship beyond ethnocentrism.

The objectives of this paper were threefold:

- (1) Describe in detail the methodological approach we crafted to address ethnocentrism in CDS;
- (2) Share our “critical moments” that shaped our decision making and how these influenced the research process;
- (3) Provide critical research-based, applied and theoretical implications for adopting this approach in CDS.

To achieve objectives 1 and 2, we have provided a methodological narrative beginning with our foundations and ending with a conceptualization of our process. Within this narrative, we provide what we have termed “critical moments” that significantly informed the development of our method. These moments contribute to a reflective journey regarding why and how we made decisions to change our initial research direction and ultimately designed an approach that, we believe, embraces cultural specificity. We wish readers to note that, though we present this in chronological fashion for clarity, this process was not at all linear or chronological, but an interactive, long, complex, difficult, frustrating, and messy development.

Methodological foundations

To set the scene for how and why our research approach was crafted, we first present (i) the positionality and cultural voices of the research team, and (ii) origins of the research.

Positionality and cultural voices of the research team

The research team were representative of multiple cultures, disciplines, and stages of research career. This was a boon to the development of the research process. Different cultural and disciplinary lenses, norms, views and experiences of the team provided a space where taken for granted notions regarding language, disability, PE, and theories could be challenged; we explore these throughout the paper. Emma Richardson had the most experience in English-language academic writing, CDS and leading research projects; she therefore took a leading role in the research team. However, she is a UK-based scholar that has worked only within Global North and Western countries. The other research team members are based in Japan and could speak to Emma's gaps in knowledge as well as provide diverse, thoughtful, and important critiques regarding interpretations of data that were central to the development of a cultural praxis approach to CDS. We approached this research as an opportunity to support scholars, teachers, and students of inclusive PE in Japan in their knowledge and practice.

Our respective cultural and research backgrounds were essential for developing this approach. We could not (and would not) share our approach without giving due diligence to who we are and what we brought to the research process. We have therefore provided individual reflective statements in the Supplemental Materials stating how we influenced the research process. In summary, the team were representative of 2 Japanese born researchers (Shinichi and Shigeharu), 1 American researcher (Cindy) that has Japanese heritage who lives and studies in Japan, and a Scottish researcher (Emma) based in the UK. Of note, 3 researchers had studied postgraduate degrees in the United States, and 2 members of the team had experience living in the UK; thus, all had experienced different cultures. At the time of development, 2 researchers were in lecturing or full-time research roles and 2 were PhD students. All members were specializing, in some way, within inclusive disability and physical activity. We, as a group, seek to serve disabled communities and work toward facilitating more socially-just physical activity.

Origins of research

The University of Worcester and University of Tsukuba are collaborative international partners. Both institutes' learning, teaching and research priorities are directed toward inclusive and equitable PE through applied research and sharing best practice. This particular research began as an endeavor to establish a research agenda that would focus on creating more (i) confident inclusive PE teachers in Japan, and (ii) inclusive PE content and curriculums in Japan. To do this, we needed to understand the current knowledge base of inclusive PE in this country. What has already been published? What policy and curriculum documents shape practice? We therefore designed a research study that would involve a scoping review of all English and Japanese language publications related to disability and Japanese PE. A conceptual representation of our initial design is presented in [Figure 1](#). The objectives of this research were to (1) establish the current knowledge base of inclusive PE in Japan, (2) identify gaps in teaching and learning practice, and (3) propose a longitudinal research agenda to address these gaps.

Developing a cultural praxis approach

In the following section we present how we developed our approach. We share our key decisive moments that built our research process from (i) a foundational scoping review, to include (ii)

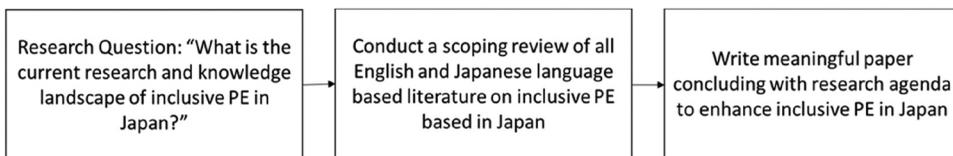


Figure 1. Initial research plan.

pluralistic analysis, (iii) a cultural praxis paradigm, (iv) reflexivity, (v) rigor, and (vi) nuances of language.

Foundational scoping review

The first step of our process was to conduct a scoping review. Scoping reviews lack a unified definition but are typically used to (i) map key concepts underpinning a research area (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), (ii) synthesize and analyze a range of informational material (research and non-research based) to gain greater conceptual clarity, and (iii) use wide-ranging, heterogeneous sources rather than purely "best practice" evidence to better capture wider policy and application. The development of inclusive PE in Japan is still in its infancy (relative to other countries) with a cultural shift to integrated schools occurring 15 years ago. There are a limited number of publications exploring this phenomenon, and to craft a future research agenda it was necessary to include all information and knowledge currently available to scholars and practitioners. We followed the framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and improved upon by Levac et al. (2010) that outlines steps to (i) identify the research question, (ii) identify relevant studies, (iii) select studies, (iv) chart the data, and (v) collate, summarize, and report the results.

Scoping review stage 1: Identify the research question

The first stage of a scoping review requires consideration of the question that will provide a shape and roadmap for subsequent stages (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The question should be broad, but clearly articulate the target population and contextual scope to ensure an effective search strategy (Levac et al., 2010). To identify our research question, we reflected on our study purpose, and envisioned our desired outcome of an in-depth and appropriate research agenda. Our question was "What is the current landscape of inclusive PE in Japan?"

Scoping review stage 2: Identify relevant studies

The second stage involved developing a plan for where to search, which search terms to use, time span, team roles, and inclusion criteria (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Levac et al. (2010) further advised that the research question should inform decision making around the study's scope, and that a team of "experts" regarding content and method be assembled (Levac et al., 2010). Our multicultural team from the UK and Japan specialized in inclusive PE in Japan, qualitative analytical methods, and CDS. Researchers that spoke English as a first language (Emma, Cindy) conducted a scoping review of relevant studies written in English, and researchers that spoke Japanese as a first language (Shinichi, Shigeharu) did the same for studies written in Japanese. The addition of Japanese language publications added knowledge beyond previous reviews in this area as these focused only on English language papers (e.g., Qi & Ha, 2012). We decided on an inclusion criteria where publications must (i) be written in English or Japanese, (ii) be published in 2007 or later reflecting the time when disabled and non-disabled children began

being educated together – thereby reflecting contemporary education structure, (iii) focus on PE, and (iv) focus on disability. We did not exclude any population or impairment type. We used Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, CiNii, J-Stage, Pubmed, Scopus and Science Direct as our first search engines. Other research techniques included specific journal searches such as the “International Journal of Disability, Development and Education” and the “Japanese Journal of Adapted Sport Science,” government documents, conference presentations, book chapters, and reference lists. Search terms were (initially) ‘Japan*ese; physical education; adapted physical education; disabil*ity*ities; adapted; inclusi*ve*ion; impair*ment*ed*s.

Scoping review stage 3: Study selection

The third stage required searching for and evaluating whether an article should be included (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). This is an iterative process involving refining the search strategy, reflecting on inclusion criteria, and continually searching for literature (Levac et al., 2010). Searching for literature lasted approximately 1 month. In total, the English-language search generated 10 studies and the Japanese-language search generated 14 documents (Table S1).

Scoping review stage 4: Charting the data

This stage required extracting data from the studies and organizing this into chart form (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). To do this stage rigorously, the team collectively developed the chart and decided what information should be gleaned from the studies to answer the research question (Levac et al., 2010). We agreed upon a data chart that included the title of the article, authors, journal name, the study location, study design, population under exploration, type of impairment, school level, any intervention, outcome/findings and conclusions. Stage 5 required authors to collate, summarize and report results, but before this stage our first critical moment changed the direction of our research.

‘Critical Moment’ 1: Avoiding Ethnocentrism

When stage 4 of the research was complete, we were struck by how often interventions, analysis and whole research designs were underpinned using Western, Global North theories and concepts. For example, many studies were based on Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior seeking to improve self-efficacy of Japanese PE teachers. We argue this is not appropriate as previous authors did not consider Japan’s culture. Japan is a collectivist culture where the needs of the collective or group is prioritized over the needs of the individual (Miller & Kanazawa, 2000). This perhaps renders ‘self-efficacy’ and Ajzen’s theory as invalid. The Western way of working leaves much more room for initiative, creativity, decision making and independence to adjust behavior and/or action to achieve a certain outcome. Japanese employees (including teachers) have far less autonomy in their work as decisions are almost exclusively made by a higher authority. Workers have very little scope to manoeuvre beyond constraints of the assigned behavior or action. Thus, while Western PE teachers may have freedom to show initiative to go to a certain training or adopt an approach to improve their self-efficacy, Japanese teachers are bound by what is given to them. For example, the Gakushu Shido Yoryo (GSY) is the standard by which Japanese PE teachers are governed. A person in a higher position of authority created this ‘gold standard’ and teachers must now follow this guidance, even if they disagree.

The trap of ethnocentrism was also apparent in our team meetings where Emma often proposed interpretations based on her cultural background. For example, she suggested using models of disability as a theoretical framework to show different ways disability may be understood. However, she was informed by colleagues that disability meaning different things to different people (Spencer et al., 2020) is an inherently Western idea, and that Japanese language does not align or lend itself to these models being meaningfully transferred from countries like the UK to Japan. We explore language nuances at different points through this narrative. Such discussions led to our first pivotal decision regarding the development of our cultural praxis approach; we must avoid ethnocentrism.

We recognized that without critiquing the lenses used in published literature, we would be guilty of merely reporting Western theories used to interpret Japanese experiences rather than problematize findings towards a meaningful research agenda. To avoid this, we discussed the importance of maintaining cultural sensitivity and problematizing our findings within a Japanese PE context. As such we decided to incorporate pluralistic analytical lenses of cultural studies and CDS that would help guide culturally sensitive interpretations.

Pluralistic analysis through cultural studies and CDS lenses

As we reflected, publications identified in our scoping review had not considered the cultural nuances of Japanese education, disability, and social norms as a whole, thus we could not simply report findings as outlined by scoping review guidance. Instead, to ensure our goal of creating a research agenda that fit within Japanese cultural norms, educational structure, and teachers' practice, and was therefore more meaningful to scholars and practitioners, we adopted pluralistic analytical lenses of cultural studies and CDS. This helped us contextualize and critique our findings within the boundaries of Japanese education and values, while still embracing an empowering and transformative lens toward disability. Pluralistic data analysis involves the application of two or more techniques, thereby affording the opportunity to create a more complex, nuanced, and multi-layered interpretive process that embraces complicated research contexts (Clarke et al., 2015). The adoption of pluralistic lenses also encourages theoretical eclecticism, which allowed us to analyze data beyond the ethnocentric theories that had been previously used. Further, this approach encourages researchers to consider implications from different perspectives (e.g., teachers, students, policy makers) and provide recommendations that could be useful for more than one party. Readers can then choose the implications or findings most relevant to their practice to guide action. This synthesizing of experiential and theoretical knowledge can help generate new ways of understanding reality that transforms inquiry from theory to praxis (Schinke et al., 2012). This in turn provided an opportunity for us as a research team to produce not just something that was intellectually interesting, but something that could be significantly transformative (Freire, 1970, 2007) for inclusive PE in Japan as a whole.

Cultural studies

Cultural studies explores how a society shapes the meaning and lived experiences of a phenomena (such as disability) through politics, power relations, history, values, norms, ways of doing and being, and symbols (Waldschmidt, 2017). Disability is lived and structured through culture and, vice versa, disability also restructures culture and understandings (Waldschmidt, 2017). Culture is therefore central to shaping disability and the lived experiences of individuals that identify as part of that community (Riddell & Watson, 2007). However, though a "cultural turn" in disability studies has been advocated (Garland-Thomson, 2002), a key argument made by numerous authors (e.g., McRae, 2018; Meekosha, 2004, 2011; Nguyen, 2018; Waldschmidt, 2017) is that this cultural element is too narrowly applied, or viewed merely as a periphery to the disabled experience rather than a central piece; some key arguments to this point were presented earlier in this paper. Cultural studies therefore provided an essential lens to critique how Japanese values, norms, and language of disability and education shaped teachers' perceptions and experiences of inclusive PE. This led us to further analytical theories we could more meaningfully utilize such as Eastern Philosophical ideas, the theory of conformity, and Confucianism.

CDS

CDS is a space where we can craft political, theoretical, and practical advancements for progressive social change (Goodley, 2017). We do this by disrupting commonly accepted norms, perceptions, inequalities, inequities, and oppressions of disabled people and communities by centering disability in local, national, and transnational contexts (Meekosha &

Shuttleworth, 2009). We further consider disability as complex, culturally and socially relative, intersecting with other identities, and requiring social, psychological, cultural, and critical theories to try and understand (Goodley, 2017). Authors can extend CDS to a more geopolitical, socio-culturally appropriate context that respects unique cultures to create new, transformative agendas for social justice (Goodley, 2017). It is apparent there are numerous intersections regarding cultural studies and CDS, particularly with commitments to reflection, complexity, social constructionism, and transformative, emancipatory research (McRae, 2018). Forging links between these lenses may therefore open a door to more culturally specific, sensitive appreciations of disability, and direct us toward adopting a more culturally specific research paradigm.

Critical Moment 2: Cultural Praxis

We experienced anger, disbelief, shock, sadness, excitement, and happiness when engaging in the published research (in particular qualitative testimonies), and the stories of participants in these papers got under our skin such that we became determined to serve this population to the best of our abilities and privilege. As we continued to engage in cultural and CDS, specifically as we learnt more about Japanese history, language, values, PE curriculum, policy history, and current practice, we reflected the need to invest in cultural specificity in our research as a whole, not just through analytical lenses. We were moved therefore to change the objective of our research from setting a curiosity inspired research agenda to a meaningful, transformative, praxis-based agenda driven towards social justice in Japanese PE. To do so, we explored writings around social justice and exclusion within education settings that could give us direction and purpose throughout the research process. We decided to adopt a theoretical underpinning of cultural praxis that would facilitate reflection on our own cultures and privileges and ensure our 'end' product of a research agenda was embedded within social justice, relevant problem-solving research, and transformational action (Freire, 1970, 2007). The trigger for this decision is shown within team meeting notes written by Emma:

Team Meeting 24/1/22.

Very cathartic meeting today! Main discussion: general impressions and stories of testimonies and findings in qual papers. Each person presented findings and then were drawn together. Very similar but different perspectives/layers of richness. Lots of discussion around frustration of teachers being constrained between what they want to do and what they have to do. Feelings and emotions conveyed in our presentations as we moved from findings in a table to saying them aloud. I couldn't hold back anger and frustration at how ableist practice is and feel bad for teachers and children. Led to cool stories from Shinichi about his experiences as a teacher and how he felt. Led to v. cool moment where our findings complemented each other, added different layers. All agreed we needed to do more than a standard report. Felt really excited as things seem to come together – a lot more work than anticipated! Paper becoming a lot more than scoping review. Next meeting set for 2 weeks time – Shinichi and Shige tasked to explore narrative of quant papers, Cindy to find Japanese terms and translate to English, I'm to dive back into Freire as PoO (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) may be useful underpinning if memory serves me.

Utilizing a cultural praxis approach

From Paulo Freire's seminal work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970, 2007), praxis refers to a dynamic, dialogical, and cyclical process of critical "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36). In other words, we reflect on current social injustices and suggest transformative action based on those critical reflections. This approach requires researchers to critique instances such as (dis)ableism, intersectionality, oppressed identities, and socio-culturally shaped marginalization and transform these into empowering, reflective, critical, co-produced knowledge. More than merely producing knowledge, however, cultural praxis calls researchers to challenge identified inequities by striving for social justice and advancing an agenda of positive change – something which strongly aligned to our desire to create a transformative research agenda. Ensuring engagement in cultural praxis throughout our process, and underpinning this transformative research agenda, were a cultural praxis paradigm, ontological relativism, and epistemological constructionism.

A cultural praxis paradigm

The underlying paradigm of this work became cultural praxis. Put simply, this worldview holds that there are injustices, inequalities, power differences, hegemony, and oppression of individuals that are deemed “other,” and that these oppressions are socio-culturally constructed, and reinforced through interactions with others and wider society (Freire, 1970, 2007). Cultural praxis allows researchers to undertake an active, reflective role by blending theory, culture, and social action together to challenge hegemonic ways of being and broaden the epistemic spectrum of a particular field (Ryba et al., 2010). The ultimate objective is to craft an agenda of positive change and social justice by highlighting oppressive socio-cultural issues within everyday life and broaden appreciation of difference to include alternate cultural identities, sites of belonging, and competing notions of “normalcy” (Ryba & Wright, 2010).

Ontological relativism. Ontological relativism holds that reality is multiple, fluid and ever changing, and rejects that culture or disability is something static or singular (Cluley et al., 2020). Instead, our perception of reality or “truth” is shaped by intersecting and overlapping discourses surrounding gender, sexuality, nationality, physicality, disability, and race, and which local, social, and cultural groups one has membership to (Ryba & Wright, 2010). We embrace the multiplicity and fluidity of identity and value different world “truths,” understanding such “truths” to be products of socio-cultural narratives and discourses (Blodgett et al., 2015). This relativist stance also situates “truths” and ways of being as things that can be challenged toward more inclusive and empowering realities. Relativism aligns to Freire’s (1998b) own ontological argument regarding praxis; “human nature is expressed through intentional, reflective, meaningful activity situated within dynamic, historical, and cultural contexts that shape and set limits on that activity” (cited in Glass, 2001, p. 16). As such, this underpinning gave us support and direction through our research endeavor.

Epistemological constructionism. Epistemological constructionism holds that knowledge is subjective and socially, culturally situated (Krane, 2001). Further, this understanding of knowledge considers that researchers and the practice of research *produces* rather than reveals evidence (Willig, 2019). In other words, what we “know” about a phenomenon (e.g., inclusive PE in Japan) is constrained within the limits of its context and the beliefs of both the researchers and the participants involved in the research. In our practice, we considered that knowledge produced about inclusive PE in Japan was bounded by the cultural, structural realities of this country and context. In this way, knowledge of a phenomenon is itself a cultural artifact (Ryba et al., 2013), offering us meaning and opportunities to resist ethnocentric knowledge that oppresses colonized or unrepresented cultures and moves toward more empowering ways of knowing. This understanding of knowledge aligned to a cultural praxis paradigm, as Freire (1998a) highlighted when people can reflect upon oppression within their culture and how it is crafted, they have the power to change it. Moreso, through rigorous reflection of how and why reality “is,” this can embolden a critical consciousness within a person or group to challenge what reality “can be” (Freire & Faundez, 1992); considering knowledge as something malleable and flexible provides space and opportunity for praxis-based transformation to occur. The adoption of cultural praxis as our paradigmatic

underpinning again evolved our research design and gave us guidance to ensure we embraced cultural and contextual specificity.

Critical Moment 3: Reflexivity

Discussion between team members highlighted the various cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and norms that shaped our different perceptions, interpretations, and understandings of disability, PE, research, and the world in general. We recognized that objectivity for this research would be neither possible nor desirable as this would reduce complexity of findings, contradict our cultural praxis and relativist underpinnings, and potentially result in us falling into the ethnocentrism trap. We further reflected that the multicultural research team brought with them different skills, perspectives, and backgrounds that significantly enhanced the depth and rigor of the research. In particular Cindy, being half Japanese and half American, and Shigeharu being Japanese but married to a British citizen, were invaluable challenging different notions of Japanese and Globally West, Northern language and theories. Their in-depth exposures to different cultures brought a critical consciousness such that taken for granted notions were questioned, knowledge and expertise were shared, and different cultural viewpoints were debated that would not have been possible within a research team from the same or similar culture.

Embracing reflexivity

We wanted to ensure transparency and celebrate reflexivity in our work and did so by (1) critically reflecting on our own backgrounds, and (2) utilizing reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to support reflexivity throughout analysis.

Critical self-reflection using pluralism and cultural praxis

To achieve cultural praxis (and do culturally sensitive research), researchers must critically reflect on their own values, biases, cultural background and immersions, and self-identities to establish how these may impact and influence the research process, and interpretations of data (Schinke et al., 2012). We presented this earlier in the paper, however the addition of pluralism and cultural praxis helped ground our reflexivity not just at the beginning of our work but throughout the entire process. Pluralism and cultural praxis ask researchers to question different methods, theories, and purposes of doing research to recognize why they have used particular tools, how they influenced findings (North, 2013) and, in turn, this can problematize the ethnocentric focus of CDS. That is, by reflecting on one's positionality while adopting a cultural praxis lens, researchers can sufficiently shift their own perspective to embrace different and multiple ways of knowing which expands their knowledge from known to unknown – such as drawing upon theories from Eastern Philosophy, Confucianism etc. Pluralism complements cultural praxis by drawing upon theories and lenses that “fit” within the context culture, or belief system of the community being explored thereby embracing diversity, authenticity and analytical dialogue required to do culturally respectful work. Thus, we chose to adopt an analytical framework that was rigorous and would help guide our multicultural, geographically distant team, while also embracing the importance of researchers as tools in the research process; reflexive thematic analysis (RTA).

Adopting RTA

RTA is achieved with researchers at the heart of the analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019) as researcher subjectivity is a resource for knowledge rather than something that must be contained (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). The aim is to conceptualize shared meaning patterns across a data set with an organizing concept (e.g., cultural praxis) (Braun et al., 2016). We chose this approach as it “fitted” the purpose of our research, our philosophical assumptions, complemented other

research methods (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Willig, 2019) and allowed us to do reflexive, analytical work ascertaining the current state of inclusive PE in Japan. Further, the flexibility of this approach meant we could embrace different framings of language rather than be constrained by one definition (Braun & Clarke, 2021a) (such as differences between Japanese and English language conceptions of disability). We used a deductive, semantic approach to our analysis. Deductively, we used existing research (Braun & Clarke, 2021a) generated from the scoping review as our data. We adopted a semantic lens to establish more surface level understandings of themes to capture the data, this then provided the focus for us to apply our pluralistic analytical lenses of cultural studies and CDS. We did this analysis by following the iterative and recursive 6 stage guide recommended by Braun et al. (2016) and Braun and Clarke (2021a).

Steps 1 to 4 (immersion, coding, theme generation, reviewing themes) were done iteratively with the team divided into two; those who spoke Japanese as a first language analyzed the Japanese papers and those who spoke English as a first language analyzed the English language papers. Coding and theming were applied to the results and discussion sections of the selected papers. Individually, we coded and themed those papers then met fortnightly via ZoomTM to discuss and reflect on our progress. When we had each created a thematic map, we combined these to create an overall story that encompassed the current knowledge of inclusive PE in Japan and completed (our first!) naming of themes. These names changed repeatedly as we wrote, read, and reflected on our analysis as writing too is analysis (Richardson, 2000).

Critical Moment 4: How do we maintain quality in the complexity?

At this stage, we were wary of ensuring rigor and high-quality scholarship whilst juggling different methods at the same time. Many aspects of our design were overlapping (e.g., stage 5 of scoping review and RTA), and the iterative nature of our approach did add to the difficulty and complexity of the methodological process. We began to feel overwhelmed and concerned that in utilizing a pluralistic methodological approach to embrace cultural and contextual sensitivity, we would forget steps or do something inaccurately such that our efforts towards transformative action were undermined by poor scholarship. We therefore decided to adopt different techniques to ensure we remained true to the integrity of each different stage.

Ensuring rigor

To help guide us and ensure we maintained a high level of scholarship, we (i) adopted a methodological framework that complimented our pluralistic approach, and (ii) set relativistic rigor parameters that helped us ensure we maintained the highest standards of scholarship possible.

Genzen's methodological framework

The research framework we chose to help structure our complex methodology was Genzen's (1984) systems approach. This is a methodological framework to investigate a complicated phenomenon considered to have different elements, structures, influences, and perspectives (Genzen, 1984). This approach has previously been used to explore cultural praxis in sport and exercise psychology (e.g., Ryba et al., 2013), and we believed was an appropriate framework for our research purposes. This approach is divided into 3 steps; (i) rough synthesis providing a holistic, detailed, overview and surface level description about a particular phenomenon, (ii) analysis focusing on the patterns, complexity, diversity, influential factors, and nuances outlining

why a phenomenon is perceived a certain way, and (iii) synthesis of a higher level whereby new knowledge is crafted that provide more variations, nuances, and different ways of meaning and being than previously supposed. The steps of Ganzen's model aligned to our pluralistic methods; a scoping review as a rough synthesis, RTA to establish patterns and complexity, and further analysis shaped by cultural and CDS lenses to add a higher level of synthesis. This framework helped structure our approach and manage multiple analytical elements.

A relativist approach to rigor

A relativist approach to rigor embraces the different purposes, methods, analysis, and assumptions that underpin research to apply criteria that are appropriate for that research context (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Researchers suggest characteristics by which they believe their research should be judged (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In this way, researchers can reflect on the nuances of their work, its integrity, and alignment with research purpose and methods. We strove for substantive contribution, coherence, and transparency. Substantive contribution relates to the impact that work may have accorded to understandings of a phenomenon, and how new knowledge contributes to a social science perspective (Richardson, 2000). By situating our work within a cultural praxis paradigm and the various intricate and interconnected ways we used different analytical techniques, we hope to have substantially contributed knowledge surrounding one potential way of doing disability research that is culturally and contextually specific, as well as working toward social justice in inclusive PE in Japan. Coherence in research seeks to present a complete and meaningful picture of how the work was conducted, and how it fits within wider research and practice (Lieblich et al., 1998). We sought to achieve this through our detailed paper outlining how we conducted our research, showing evidence of our process and providing reflective insights regarding how and why our process changed. Finally, we sought transparency by holding each member of the team to account, keeping detailed notes of meetings, ensuring each stage of analysis was conducted with integrity, documenting and sharing analyzes progress in a shared team folder and presenting our findings to two critical friends (Prof. Yukinori Sawae and Lerverne Barber) as theoretical sounding boards (Tracy, 2010). We hope these standards of quality are apparent throughout this paper and in our empirical paper (under review) where we present our findings.

Critical Moment 5: Language Nuances

As noted by Spencer et al. (2020), the language and discourse of disability is historically, culturally, theoretically, and politically motivated. There is a plethora of resources regarding language and disability paradigms in primarily English-speaking countries (e.g., Botha et al., 2021; Peers et al., 2014) that illuminate how disability scholars perceive disability. Such resources highlight the nuances of the English language (e.g., UK social model v US person first) and have contributed to what may be termed an extensive CDS glossary where 'disabled,' and 'impairment' have important differences. These differences are rarely translated to Japanese culture where translations of 'disability,' 'impairment,' or 'handicap' etc., are dominantly made to one word; 'shougai.' This is a further example of why ethnocentric disability studies (such as UK social model language citing important differences between 'disabled person' and 'a person with an impairment') are not compatible with other countries and why we engaged in language nuances throughout our work.

Respecting language and nuances

To respect the important differences of language, we adapted our research design in the following ways. First, during searching for articles in the scoping review stage, the Japanese

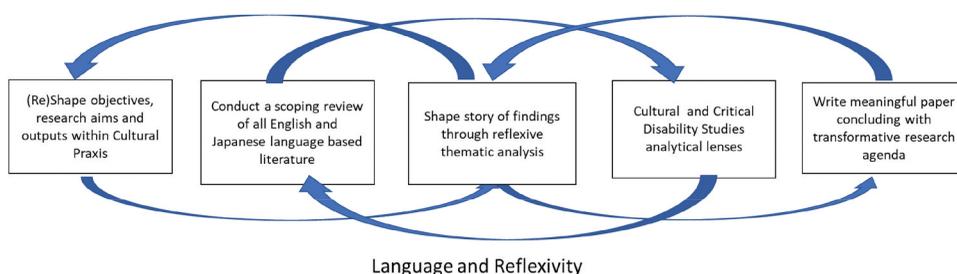


Figure 2. Final research design.

team noted that cultural reflexivity was required to amend some more Western search terms to Japanese discourse to find as many relevant studies as possible. Second, we openly stated our biases and backgrounds as researchers as well as the disability language we each use in the Supplemental Materials of this paper. Third, in our empirical paper, we did not change or translate any Japanese phrases or words. Finally, (also linking to cultural praxis underpinnings) we actively sought more holistic and/or culturally relevant theories and concepts to interpret results. Our final research design is shown in [Figure 2](#).

Concluding thoughts and contributions

To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to address ethnocentrism in CDS by providing a method to do more culturally sensitive and contextually specific, respectful disability scholarship. Further, we hope the rich detail we provided outlining why and how our research process and design evolved offer some transparency of the research project as well as clarity of how such an approach may be employed in other work. Indeed, Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) stated work seeking transformative praxis needs to *show* how this may be done rather than merely telling. By sharing the evolution of our process through our various “critical moments” we showed how our approach may be a useful method to do culturally sensitive, socially-just work within CDS, and in particular in the context of inclusive PE. We emphasize this is *one way* of engaging in cultural praxis-based work, we do not believe this is the only way. To achieve our last objective, we share some final reflections and implications of using this method going forward.

How ethnocentric is this method?

It did not elude us that the methodology we chose to do our cultural praxis approach may in itself be a Western, colonized way of doing things. Reflecting upon the methodological choices, as Emma led the research endeavor and was more embedded within CDS and qualitative inquiry than the rest of the team, her suggestions and background may indeed have led us to fall into the ethnocentric trap we so desperately wished to avoid. Throughout the development of this method, we did reflect on and discuss tension that scoping reviews, RTA, and analytical lenses of CDS and cultural studies were, and are, mainly used within the ethnocentric areas we highlighted. Through intense self and methodological reflection, we decided to still use these methods for the following reasons. First, the flexibility of RTA as a method and its embracing of author reflexivity does lend to a more cultural praxis-based

research approach as authors (the majority in this case identifying as Japanese or being exposed to Japanese culture) can include their own cultural background and interpretations within the reflexive process and subsequent findings. We cannot be free from individual perspective (which though unstated is exhibited through ethnocentric underpinnings in previous literature), but in this paper we are trying to be honest about, and reflexive of, our biases and the RTA gave us a collective framework to do this. Rather than limiting or shaping interpretations to an ethnocentric belief system, RTA instead provided a platform for us to critically reflect on our cultural influences, lived experiences, and the area under investigation. Thus, our Japanese colleagues could embrace their Japanese heritage and apply Japanese cultural lenses onto a Japanese context. Further, we strove to explore more culturally specific interpretations using our analytical lenses such as being informed by collectivism, Confucianism, and more holistic disability theories that can be shaped and applied to different contexts. We also embraced cultural norms and roles of teachers and students in general, and how disability has been interpreted throughout Japan's history, particularly after their own industrial boom of the 1950s. Thus, while we wrestled with using methods developed in a Globally North, Western countries, the flexibility of these methods allowed us to embrace the cultural-sensitivity and reflexivity required to engage in cultural praxis. We do however note that cultural praxis and cultural-sensitivity may be advanced utilizing methodological approaches, frameworks and underpinnings that are specific to the culture being explored, and strongly support decolonizing research methods (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021) as a way forward in CDS.

Theoretical, research(er) and applied implications

The addition of a cultural praxis approach adds theoretical significance to the field of CDS by contributing a new research approach that seeks to amplify disability experience within specific contexts and cultures. Our approach provides a more specific, flexible, and contextually nuanced addition to other lenses of disability that seek to challenge ethnocentric and hegemonic ways of being and knowing (e.g., Goodley, 2017; Meekosha, 2011; Nguyen, 2018). By situating this lens within a cultural praxis agenda, we also showed how a review or exploration of disability experience may be motivated by more than curiosity or knowledge finding, but transformative action toward social justice. In this way, theory to practice gaps may be bridged as an adoption of praxis in CDS can move scholars and practitioners closer to collaboration and partnerships (Schinke et al., 2012). By using the same social justice agenda as a roadmap, and focusing on different points of that agenda, scholars and practitioners can work toward inclusion and positive change in meaningful ways within their respective disciplines. Further, by adopting an approach embedded within other disciplines (cultural praxis originating within education), there are opportunities for inter, cross and multidisciplinary collaborations urgently needed within CDS (Ellis et al., 2019). Bringing together partners from education, sport, geography, policy, culture etc., under a transformative lens for social action can create a powerful network of skills, expertise and influence that progresses social justice efforts forward and more meaningfully than single disciplines alone (Watson & Vehman, 2020). Linked to this, bringing together research partners from different cultures also has significant implications for research, and researchers as essential tools of research, particularly in CDS (McRae, 2018).

From our experience, we highly encourage other researchers to create teams with different cultural backgrounds. We found this to be not only enlightening for the research process, but a thoroughly enjoyable, rewarding, and meaningful experience as people. The multicultural background of the team allowed taken-for-granted Japanese terms, policies, values etc., to be questioned by the non-Japanese members, and vice versa Japanese members could challenge potentially ethnocentric, hegemonic values and ideas proposed by the members from the Global North/West. We reflect that the depth, rigor, and complexity of our work would not have been possible without a research team that could supportively challenge each other's assumptions, interpretations, worldviews, and frameworks in a way that embodied cultural praxis as not only a method but a way of being. Going forward, the adoption of a multicultural team has implications for CDS and the need for further methods and lenses to do culturally and contextually nuanced work. As noted in this paper, the method presented is not *the* way, but a way of doing CDS in a more culturally specific way. By adopting cultural praxis (or other lens that embraces cultural respect), researchers can propose and show methods, theories, measures of rigor, interpretations and agendas for praxis that are embedded in their backgrounds, languages, faiths, social norms, cultures and social structures. This will expand knowledge of disability to a more global scale than dominant Northern or Western lenses, and also amplify ways of knowing and doing research beyond traditional colonized methods (such that we have adopted in our approach). Indeed, "decolonizing" research methods is thankfully a growing discipline (e.g., Hollinsworth, 2013), but we would go further that researchers may also need to be "decolonized." By this we mean educated and informed of methods, rigors, techniques, theories, frameworks, concepts etc., outside their own cultural views that fit the contexts and cultures they are working within. Further, researchers can be "decolonized" by reflecting upon their own biases regarding how and why they have made certain theoretical and methodological choices. In this way, we are not advocating for Global North or Western disability researchers to stop what they are doing, but to "stop" and consider their place in the world, in CDS, in the research, and wider agendas of social justice. Indeed, those striving to do research aligning with cultural praxis must ensure their work is "socially constituted, intricate and nuanced analysis of culture, self-identity and personal experience of the researcher and participants" (McGannon & Smith, 2015, p. 80); this requires complexity.

While the bringing together of so many methodologies were complicated, difficult, and required a lot of reflexivity to manage, we encourage others to embrace complexity in their work. Methodological variation is strongly encouraged in CDS and cultural praxis, as well as critical reflections of which methodology best aligns with underlying assumptions and the purpose of the research (Ryba & Schinke, 2009). The evolution from our initial research design to our final design shows why this is necessary. Our adoption of pluralism allowed us to capture a multi-layered understanding of inclusive PE in Japan by choosing different underpinnings, methods, and interpretive lenses to achieve our goal of a transformative social justice agenda. Our findings (under review) would have been inherently different, probably ethnocentric, lacking criticality, and without transformative action had we not adopted multiple, intricate, iterative, and complex approaches. This brings us back, again, to the importance of reflection, changing design, exploring new and emerging theories, methods, and lenses, analyzing the ontological and epistemological congruence of different

methods together, and crafting a meaningful ending that serves disabled communities, scholars and practitioners through praxis.

We of course recognize the limitations to our approach – especially potentially ethnocentric methods and colonized standards of rigor – but we hope this paper is a starting point for better, creative, innovative and meaningful approaches to CDS. We encourage others to engage in cultural praxis as a paradigm for doing culturally sensitive, transformative work and share their own approaches, reflections and “critical moments” to expand discussion and knowledge that will help the movement toward socially just CDS as a whole.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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