

# Conceptualizing Native Americans with Type 2 Diabetes as a Vulnerable Population



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## Background

- Vulnerability is “a universal, inevitable, enduring aspect of the human condition that must be at the heart of our concept of social and state responsibility” (Fineman, 2008).
- Factors influencing vulnerability include one’s physical environment, social status, historical context, physical health status, mental health status, and relationship with the healthcare system.
- The Native American (NA) population living with type 2 diabetes (T2DM) is a vulnerable to poor health as **they live at the intersection of resource scarcity, minority population status and chronic disease.**

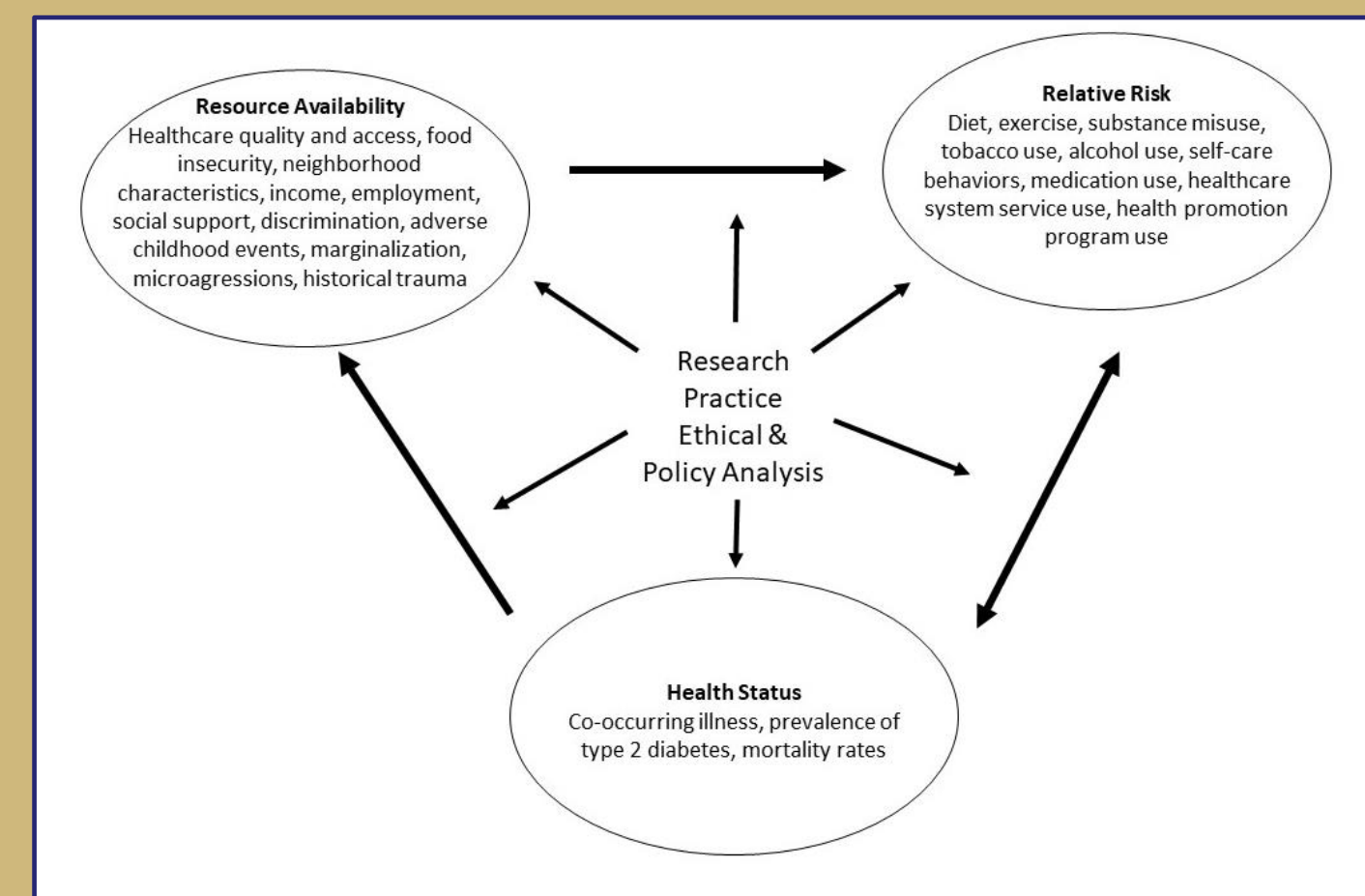
## Purpose

*Present the environmental, historical, and intrinsic factors that influence health among Native American individuals with T2DM and the relationships between these factors and provide a holistic understanding of vulnerability and health status among this group.*

## Methods

- The framework of Flaskerud and Winslow’s Vulnerable Populations Conceptual Model (1998) was used.
- PubMed and CINAHL were queried using search terms regarding Native American/American Indian and T2DM
- Original research published in the United States from 2017-2022 were included.

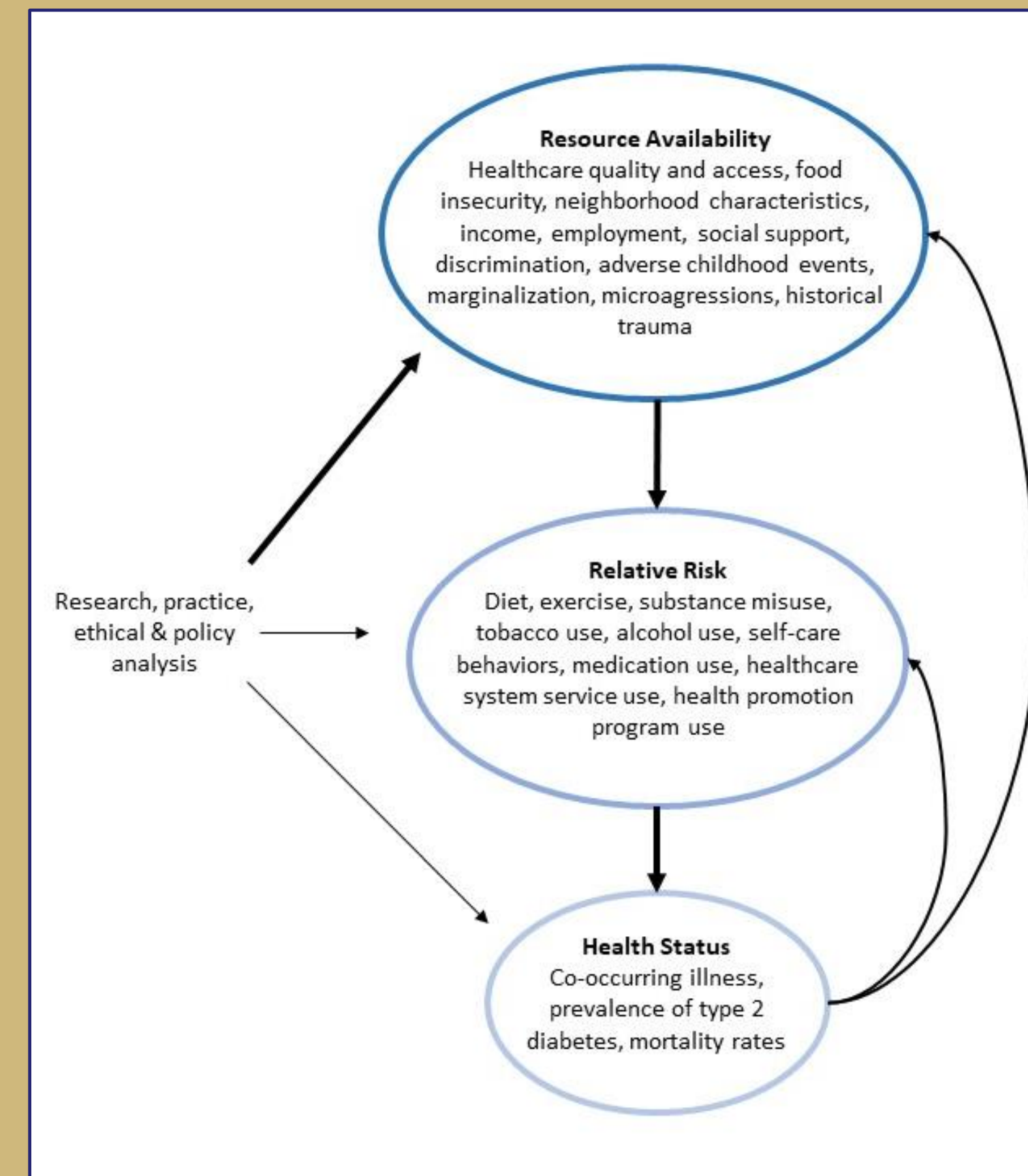
## Results



*The Vulnerable Populations Conceptual Model applied to NA Individuals with T2DM. From “Conceptualizing vulnerable populations health-related research,” by J.H. Flaskerud and B.J. Winslow. Adapted with permission.*

Concept	Theoretical Structure	Empirical Referent
Resource Availability	Environmental Resources	Healthcare Quality and Access
		Food Insecurity
		Neighborhood Characteristics
	Human Capital	Income/Poverty
		Employment
	Social Connectedness	Social Support
Discrimination/Marginalization		
Adverse Childhood Events		
Microaggressions		
Social Status/Power	Historical Trauma	
Relative Risk	Lifestyle Behaviors	Diet and exercise
		Substance Misuse
		Tobacco and alcohol use
		Self-care behaviors
		Medication use
	Use of health-promotion services	Health promotion program use and retention
Health Status	Morbidity	Co-occurring illness
		Prevalence of T2DM
	Mortality	Mortality rate

*Empirical referents for VPCM model constructs.*



*The Updated Vulnerable Populations Conceptual Model applied to NA Individuals with T2DM.*

## Main Takeaways

- This analysis demonstrates that **upstream factors shape health outcomes.**
- Instead of a focus on disease self-management, the updated VPCM shifts focus to the **environmental and social resource availability that shapes health behaviors.**
- This work models **the multifactorial and complex nature of vulnerability** among Native Americans living with T2DM.
- We must create interventions that **address population-level barriers** to achieving health equity for Native Americans living with T2DM

