

# Defining Success in Indian Youth: Diverse Perspectives



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Ph.D. in Social Work and Social Research Seminar

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Graduate School of Social Work

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# Workshop Objectives

- To demonstrate how the relational worldview model can be used as a framework for evaluation
- To discuss the results of a focus group study of the strengths, challenges, and indicators of success of urban American Indian youth
- To engage in dialogue about the findings of the study and recommend next steps

# Project Overview

- Practice-Based Evidence: Building Effectiveness from the Ground Up
- Five-year collaborative effort between the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), and the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health (RTC)
- Purpose – to explore strategies for documenting the effectiveness of NAYA's services
  - 2005-2006 definition of youth success

# Partners

- National Indian Child Welfare Association, Portland, OR
- Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health, Portland, OR
- Native American Youth and Family Center, Portland, OR

# National Indian Child Welfare Association

## Mission

NICWA is dedicated to the well-being of all American Indian children and families.



# NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association

*Protecting our children • Preserving our culture*



# Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health

## Mission

The RTC is dedicated to promoting the well-being and full community participation of children, youth and families affected by mental health difficulties. Research is designed to increase knowledge of supports, services and policies that:

- Build on family strengths;
- Are community based, family driven, and youth guided;
- Promote cultural competence; and
- Are based on evidence of effectiveness.

# Research and Training Center

This project is one of 6 research projects in the Research and Training Center.\*

- Increasing youth participation and voice in service planning;
- Helping families with young children make the transition from Head Start to kindergarten;
- Exploring youth/family perspectives about community integration;
- Transition planning for older youth;
- Issues that families face in the workplace as they try to meet the needs of their children with mental health challenges; and
- Practice-based evidence with tribal youth and families.

\*Jointly funded by the Center for Mental Health Services (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; SAMHSA) and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR);

# Native American Youth and Family Center

## Our Mission

...to enhance the diverse strengths of our youth and families in partnership with the community through cultural identity and education.



# Cultural Arts and Sports Program



# Educational Programs

Middle School  
Program

Tutoring Center

High School  
Program

High School  
Summer  
Institute

Spring, Summer,  
& Winter Camps



# Youth and Family Services

Foster Care Program

Pathways

Independent Living  
Program

Healing Circle

Housing and  
Employment  
Programs



# NAYA's Challenge

- To demonstrate the effectiveness of agency-wide services and the organization as a whole.
  - Accelerated by state and federal requirements for evidence-based practices.



# Project Goal

- To increase knowledge about research methods that are appropriate for the evaluation of practice effectiveness for culturally specific and community-embedded services, with attention to research strategies that may also be more generally applied



# Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

- Definition: Knowledge obtained through scientific methods about the prevalence, incidence, or risks for mental disorders, or about the impacts of treatment or services.... (Hoagwood, Burns, & Weisz, 2002, p. 329).
- Advantages:
  - EBP is one way of increasing the likelihood that services will be effective;
  - EBP should be cost effective – services that are provided are known to be those that work;

# Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

## Concerns:

- ❑ EBP often do not reflect the complicated lives and needs of many children and families;
- ❑ The determination of “evidence” is narrow and focuses on linear cause-effect relationships (Webb, 2001);
- ❑ Most EBPs exclude newly developed interventions, traditional healing practices, and therapies developed by specific cultural groups (Espiritu, 2003; Huang, Hepburn, & Espiritu, 2003).
- ❑ EBPs often neglect the cultural and contextual influences on children and families (Espiritu, 2003; U.S. Public Health Service, 2000, Friedman, 2004);
- ❑ There is often a lack of attention to family choice (Brannan, 2003; Huang, Hepburn, & Espiritu, 2003).

# Practice-Based Evidence (PBE)

- ❑ **Definition:** PBE is information gathered from service providers, families, and youth used to identify effective interventions and areas for program or practice improvement. Participatory research methods are integral.
- ❑ **Advantages:**
  - Information about desired goals and outcomes come directly from the people receiving services;
  - Cultural factors can be explicitly included in outcomes and interventions;
  - Effectiveness can then be measured according to these outcomes.

# Practice-Based Evidence (PBE)



## ❑ Concerns:

- Developing practice-based evidence is a “ground up,” lengthy process;
- Establishing evidence of effectiveness is challenging because it must be accepted as legitimate by
  - The cultural community that is involved
  - The scientific community.

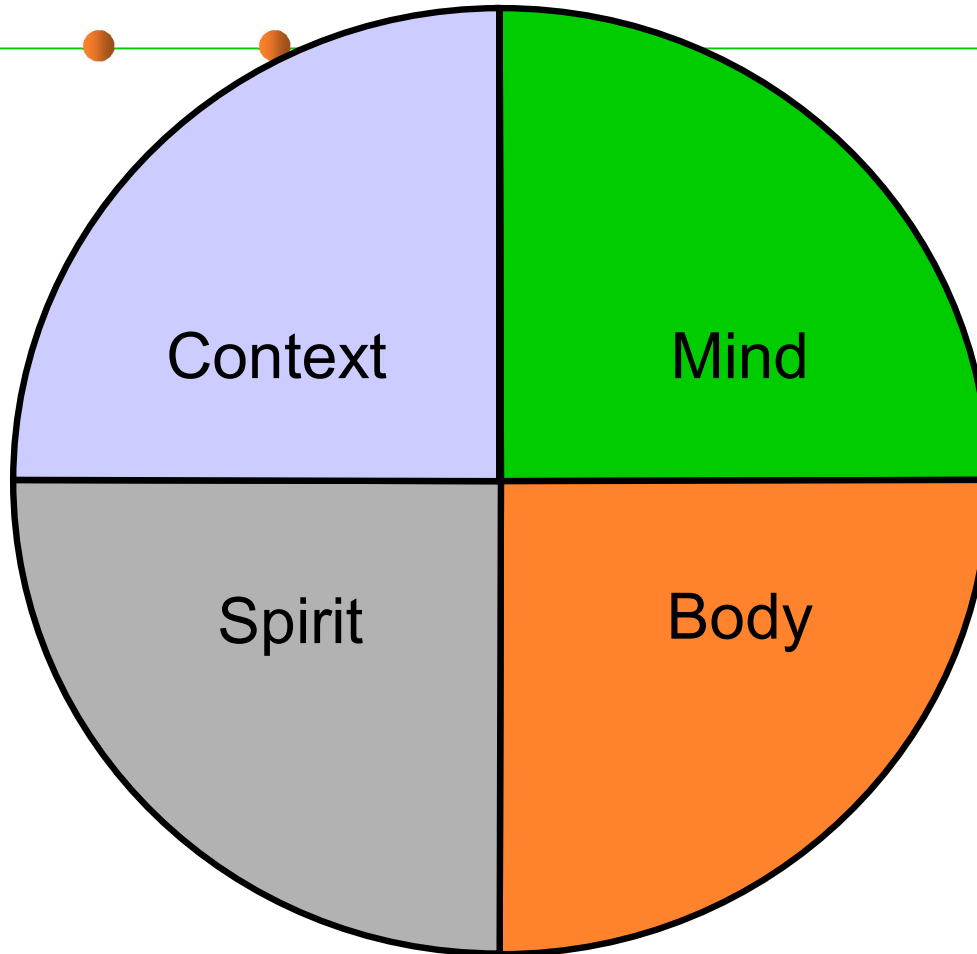
# Participatory Research

- Research is collaborative
- Researchers partner with communities in determining research questions, design, methodology, data collection, protocol, and ownership of data
- “Studies that practice participatory research with American Indian/Alaska Native communities are also likelier to succeed among American Indians/Alaska Natives” (David & Reid, 1999)

# Relational Worldview Theory of Change

- Change is a constant, inevitable, cyclical, and dynamic part of the human experience that occurs in natural, predictable patterns.
- Change can be used as a resource for promoting desired and measurable outcomes.

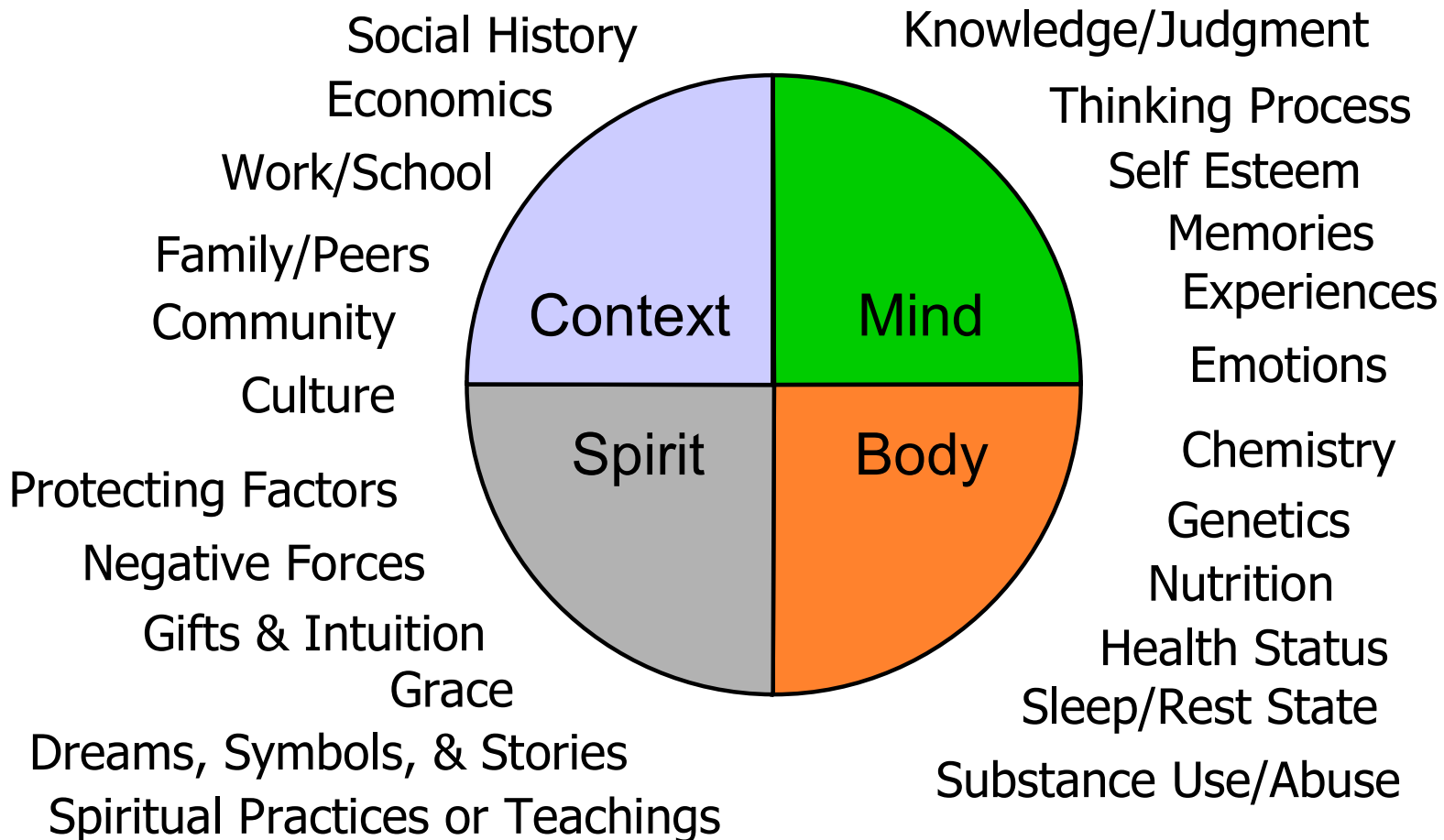
# Relational Worldview Model – Individual & Family Level



**BALANCE**

# Relational Worldview

## Individual and Family Level



# Relational Worldview Model

## Change is:

- Constant: Complex interactions between the quadrants are going on all the time, influenced both by experience and perceptions of experience and the balance states that have come before.
- Inevitable: The human organism has a natural tendency to seek harmony and balance, to heal, or adjust, relieve stress, and reacts to the stimuli by changing (flight-fight, etc.).

# Relational Worldview Model

## Change is:

- Cyclical: Change in harmony and balance follow patterns of natural cycles of the days, months, seasons, and life span.
- Dynamic: All change is multi-dimensional. Nothing in any quadrant can change without every other aspect of the other quadrants being effected. Changes are a combination of linear and multi-causal, multi-effect relationships.

# Desired Outcomes

- Balance = an adjustment pattern that represents the best, most basic attempt to incorporate stimuli and response
- Harmony = various aspects of life are in a complementary relationship and taken together produce wellness, beauty, growth, success, the capacity for joy and the ability to thrive

# Relational Worldview Model

## Practice and Evaluation

- A change agent joins with the natural forces, and with purposeful intent, impacts the quadrants to restore balance and promote harmony.
- Interventions do not necessarily target symptoms but rather impact balance and facilitate harmony, and are frequently designed to impact multiple quadrants.
- Change can be measured by observing key indicators of balance and harmony and recording change across time in relationship to the intervention(s).

# Defining Youth Success

- Focus groups with nine diverse stakeholder groups
  - middle school youth
  - high school youth
  - foster care youth
  - family members
  - elders
  - community partners
  - NAYA program managers, staff, and board members



# Process

- Individual recruitment of youth, families, elders, and community partners
- Human subjects approval and consent process
- Food, transportation, and meeting space
- Facilitator and notetaker



# Focus Group Questions

- What does success look like for Native American youth?
- What is necessary to help support youth in achieving success in their lives?
- What are the conditions that hinder a youth's progress toward success?
- How do NAYA Family Center services contribute to a youth's success?
- Are there other things that NAYA could be doing that would be helpful?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not talked about?

# Findings to Date: Youth Success

## Culture/Cultural Connections

Finances

Employment

Education

Housing

Safety

Positive Behaviors

Avoid Risky Behaviors

Physical  
Health

Emotional Health

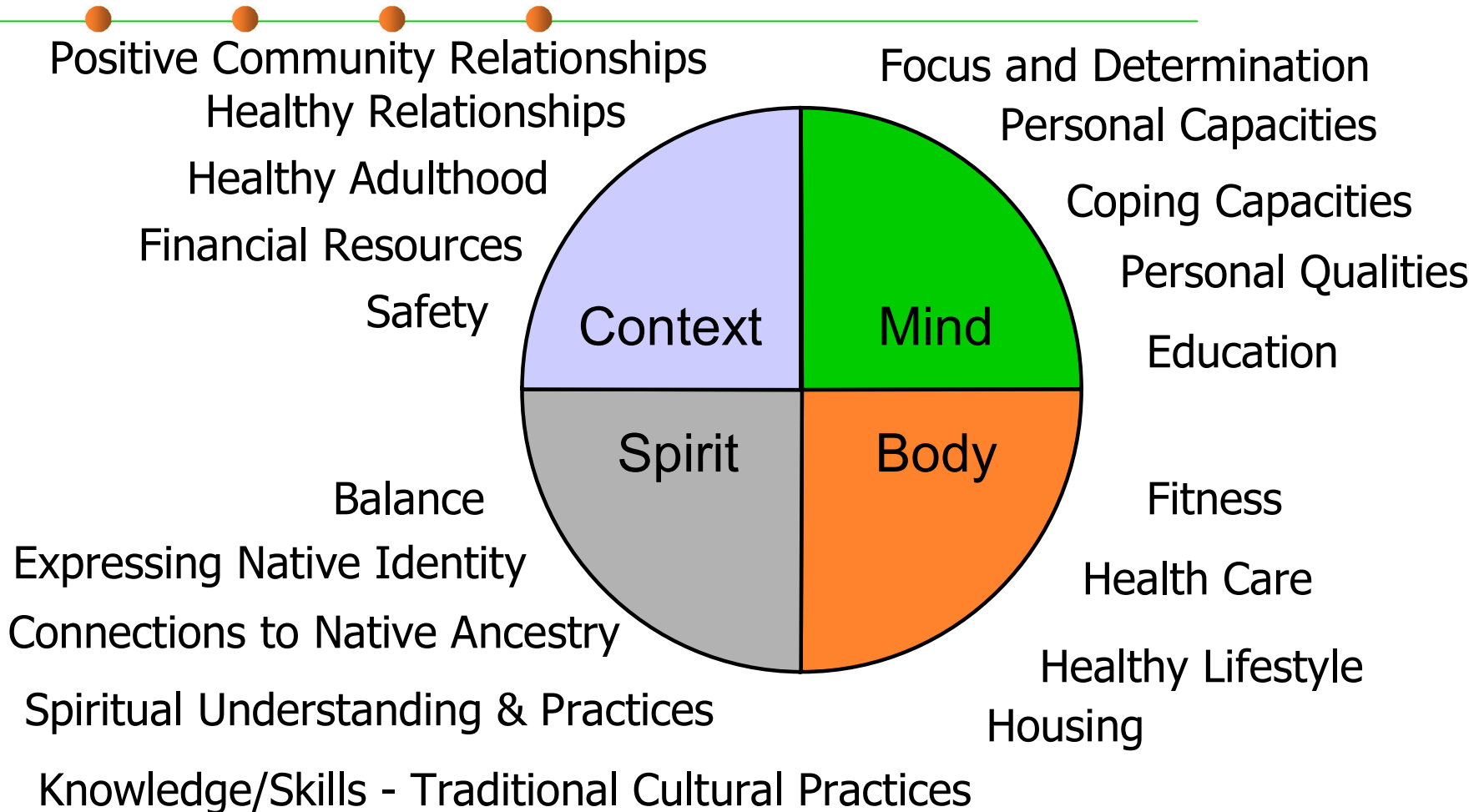
Healthy  
Relationships

Family, elders, peers

Positive Community Relationships,  
Contribution

Spirituality

# Findings to Date: Youth Success



# Next Steps

- Combine outcomes with responses to other focus group questions
  - Necessary supports
  - Barriers to success
  - Refining current programming
  - Additional programming needed?
- Community forum to share findings and get feedback



# Questions for Discussion

- How are these findings similar or different than what you might find in your community?
- Are there major ideas that you can add to what we have shared with you?
- Do you have ideas about how these findings can be used for program changes?

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