



INTRODUCTION

The three team members have differing educational and professional backgrounds, leading to a diverse overall skillset.

- **Nikole (supervisor):** psychology graduate and MPH candidate. Strong background in mental health, reproductive health, and substance use.
- **Brooke:** Biology and MPH graduate. Strong background in childhood education and food access.
- **Devin:** Psychology, MPH, and Spanish MA graduate. Strong background in research, higher education, and direct support.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

David Kolb's **Theory of Experiential Learning**: learning is a holistic process that cycles through four interrelated processes (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

- Traditional classroom experiences often don't allow for active experimentation, causing the cycle to break (Hu et al., 2018).
- Internships, tabletop exercises, and volunteer work allowed for engagement in the full cycle before full-time employment.
- The experiential learning cycle is never complete.

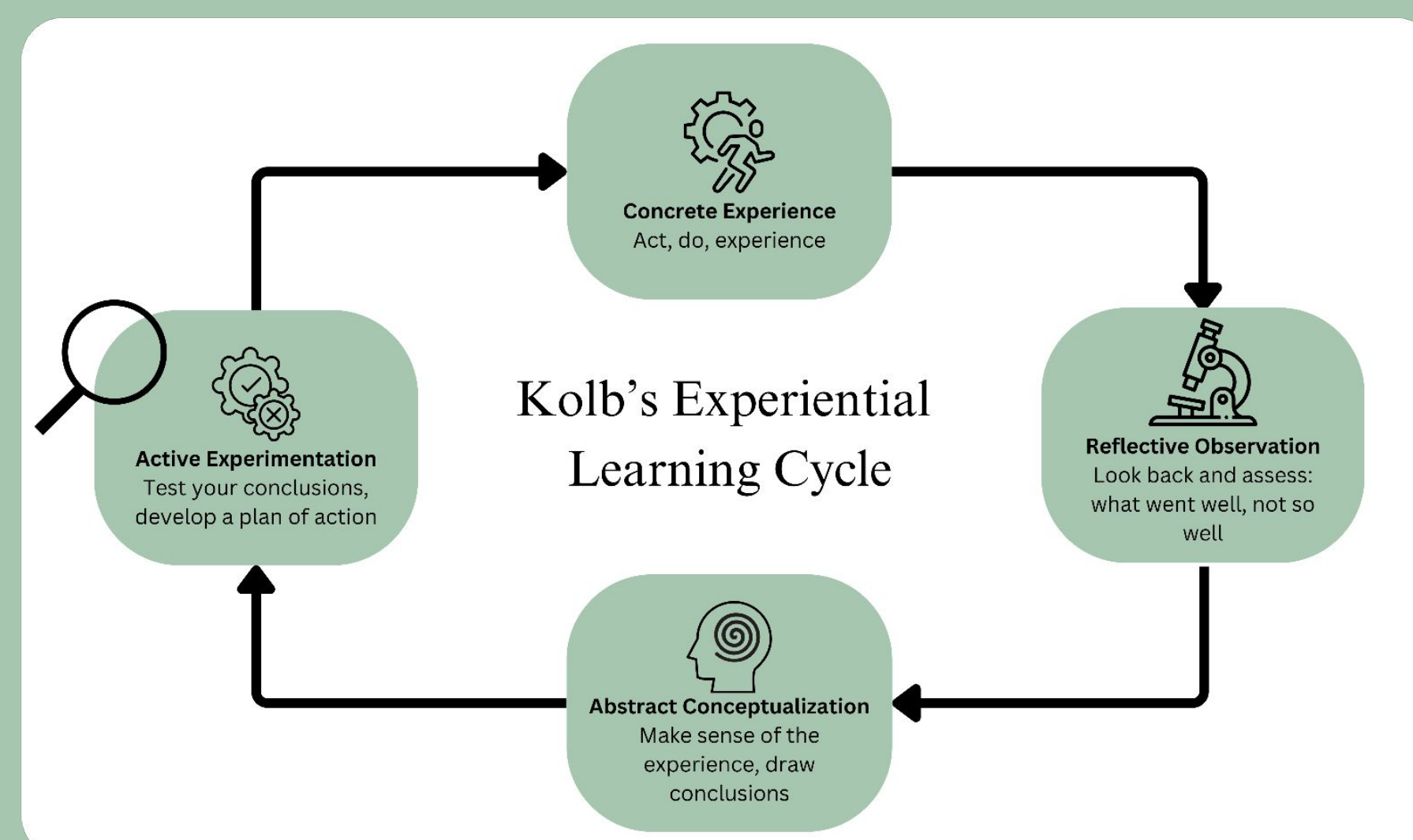


Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from Toronto Metropolitan University, n.d.

PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

Without active experimentation in the relevant field, several challenges may arise when entering the workforce:

- Accepting assignments outside of scope of expertise.
- "Learning the hard way".
- Interpersonal relationships:
 - Reversed power dynamics.
 - Building trust as an outsider of the community you're serving.
- Restrictions, political considerations, and administrative processes.
- Lack of established training protocols.
- Dissonance in implementing public health fundamentals and values.
- Absence of resources used in educational programs.

Local Health Department staff attribute knowledge, skills, and confidence to experiential learning opportunities.

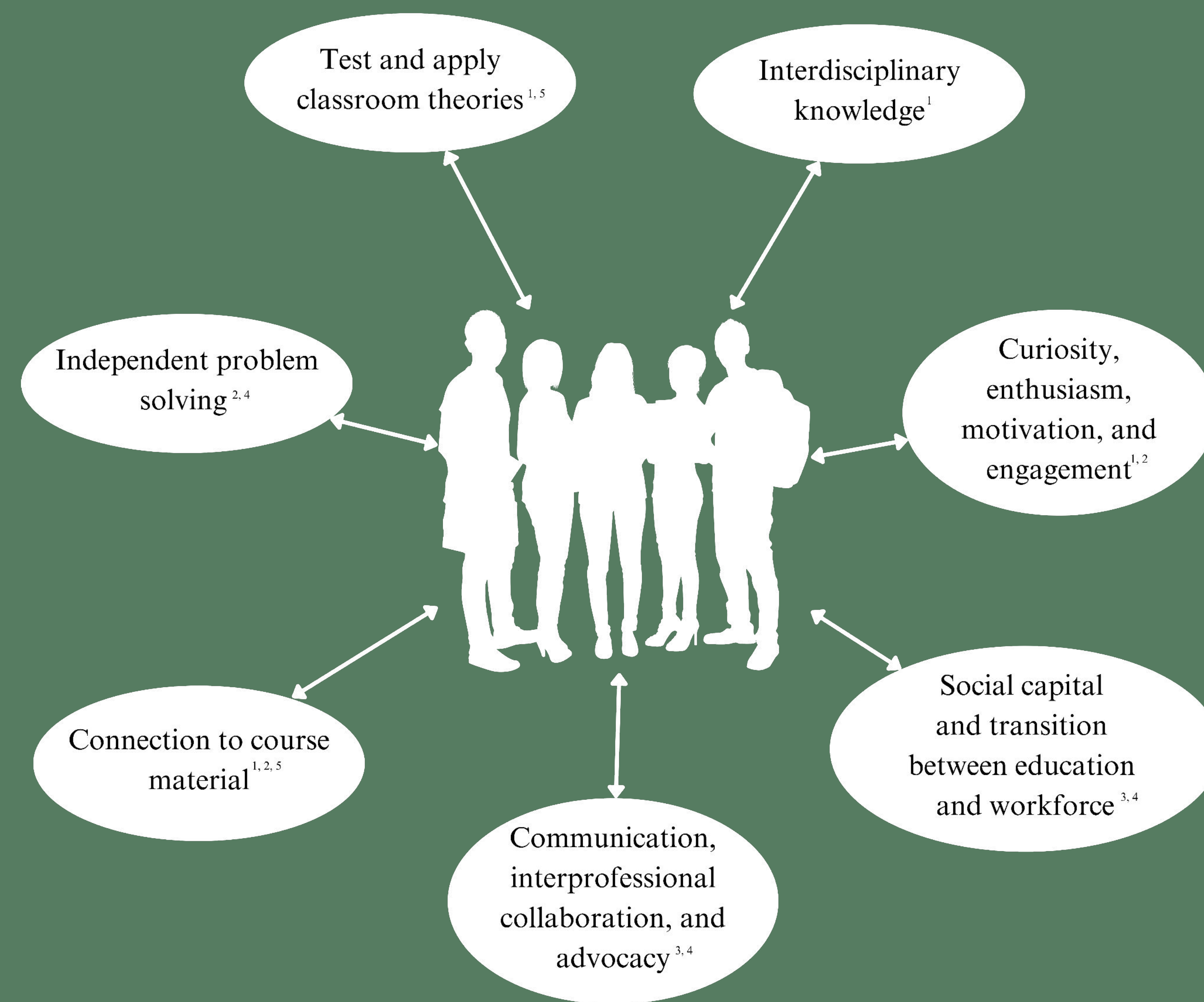


Figure 2: The benefits of experiential learning opportunities for students.

1. Molina, 2007 via del Prado Camancho Alarcón, 2021
2. Romero Ariza, 2010 via del Prado Camancho Alarcón, 2021
3. Wright, 2000
4. Gronski and Pigg, 2000
5. Mason and Dunes, 2019

EDUCATION

Proficiencies gained through course curriculums lead to important foundational knowledge and transferable skills that can be tested and applied in the workforce.

- Most used competencies:
 - **Research:** data collection and analysis, media literacy, critical thinking, ethical considerations.
 - **Interprofessional communication:** fundamentals of public health, leadership, collaboration, adaptability, audience tailoring, cultural competence/humility.
 - **Organization:** file management, timekeeping, division of responsibilities.

EMPLOYMENT

Professional experiences provide the opportunity to apply, test, and build on:

- Existing skills, knowledge, and practices.
- Relationship building and community engagement.
- Infrastructure, resources, policies, and procedures.
- Feedback, guidance, and professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Current Students:

- Take part in as many hands-on opportunities as possible.
- Focus on gaining skills, not just content knowledge or grades.

For Recent Graduates and New Hires:

- Ask questions and ask for help.
- Build a strong network - reach out to people you don't normally talk to.
- Find creative ways to take on new projects, but make sure your priorities are in order.

For Supervisors:

- Team consisting of various experiences leads to diverse perspectives and strengths.
- Be transparent and humble: recognize the strengths and weaknesses of your team, including yourself.

CONTACT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY



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