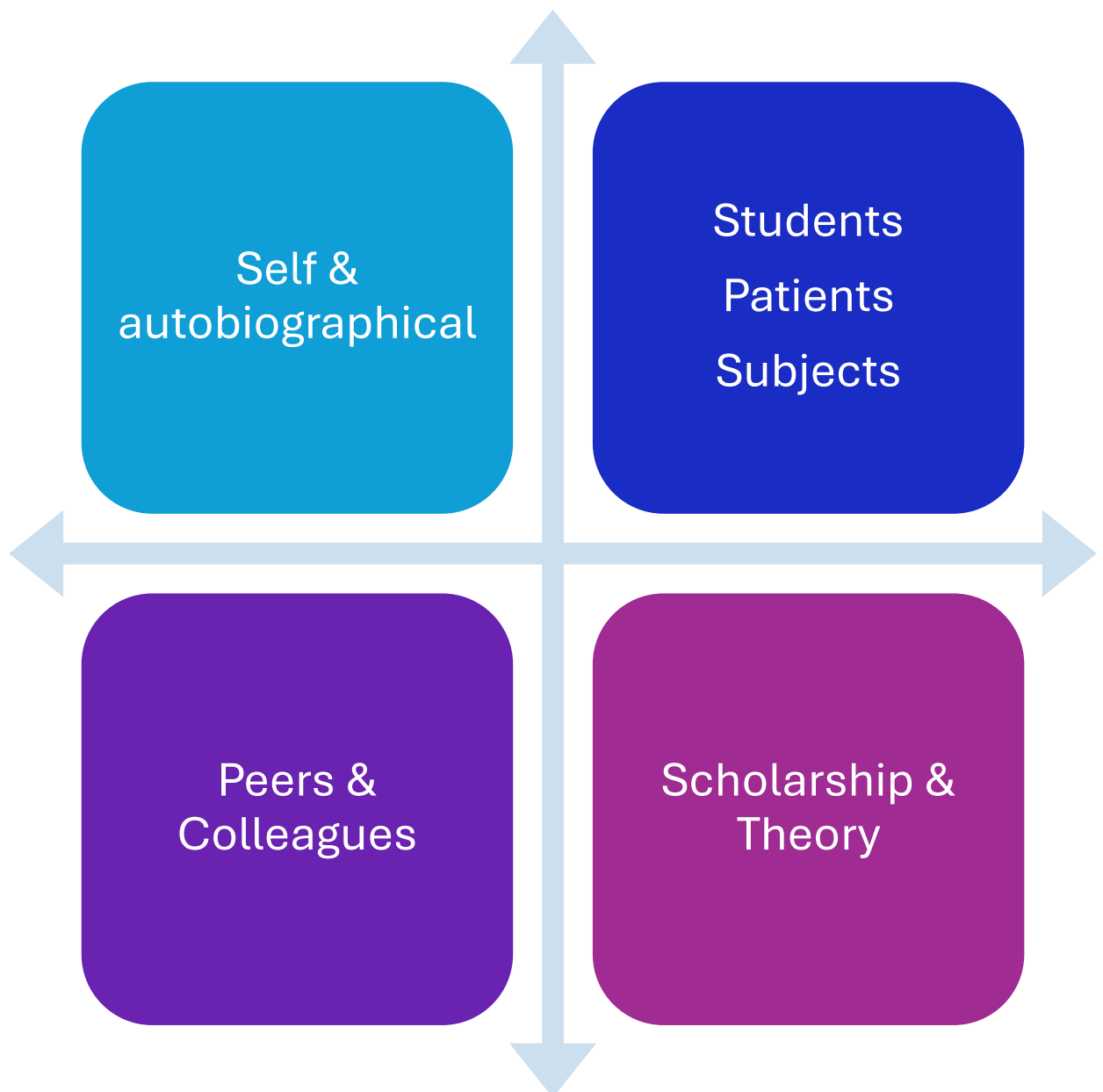


## Brookfield's (1995) Four Lenses of Reflection

Brookfield, S.D. (2017) *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield (2017) created a reflective model with which to view and evaluate practice. Indicating that “critical reflection is, quite simply, the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions” (Brookfield, 2017, p. 3). Whilst the four lenses were designed to reflect on teaching practice, they can be adapted beyond that situation as indicated by our suggestion of students/patients/subjects below.



## Students/Patients/Subjects

Student/patients/subject feedback indicates the view and experience that can help a practitioner to become aware of their own impact and assumptions. Sometimes this will confirm that a method is appropriate, alternatively this could indicate a need to change approach. Both are valuable insights. However, there is a need to be aware of any power imbalance within the relationship, meaning an individual may be cautious about giving honest feedback, anonymous feedback is advised.

## Colleagues/Peers perceptions

Brookfield (2017, p.66) uses the term “critical friend” to introduce the idea of colleague feedback. Within the workplace, a critical friend may be someone with valuable experience who can prompt you with insightful suggestions and probing questions. As a student your critical friend may be a peer who offers this valuable perspective. A conversation about your own practice may help you “check, verify or reframe” your own assumptions about a situation (Brookfield, 2017, p. 67). They may highlight that they too have had the same experience, they may confirm or have come to a different understanding about the circumstance or outcome. Communities of practice, mentors or informal chats can all offer colleague and peer feedback.

## Personal experience

Personal experience about an incident or situation will be specific to the individual yet have some shared elements with others. For example, we all experience nerves when driving a car for the first time, but that will feel different to each person. Reviewing your own personal experience may help you identify your own unconscious bias and why you work in a certain way. It is useful to examine our choices as both a practitioner and as a learner.

## Theory/Research

Reading theory, frameworks and newly published research is the foundation of all academic assignments. In reflective writing it can help you understand your own experience and suggest ideas for the future; you may be able to challenge current practices backed up with evidence from the literature. New ideas can contest your own held views and expand your options in the workplace.

## Useful Questions

The below prompts offer some useful questions that you might consider for each Lens:

### Students/Patients/Subjects:

- How did the individual(s) involved experience this incident?
- What impact did it have on our relationship with them?
- What impact did it have on their attitudes?
- What impact did it have on their learning (in an educational setting)?
- How could I find out their perspective?
- Would it be helpful to hear their perspective?

### Colleagues and Peers

- Who can provide me with useful insight into this experience?
- How will I invite their feedback?
- Can I share my story with colleagues and allow them to ask me questions that help to reveal my assumptions?
- Invite colleagues to give alternative interpretations of the events you describe

### Personal

- Are there any reasons why I might have felt/behaved in this way?
- Have I experienced anything similar in the past?

### Theory and Research

- Are there other ways of approaching this issue that I could investigate?
- Can I find a useful book or article to help?
- Is there anyone who can help to direct me towards alternative resources?
- Reading theory can suggest different interpretations of familiar events and other ways of working

These questions are adapted from University of Hertfordshire (2018) *Reflecting on your own story*. Available at:

[https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/287675/Reflecting-on-your-own-story.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/287675/Reflecting-on-your-own-story.pdf) (Accessed: 07 April 2026).