



Turning Excessive Entitlement on its Head: Beginning with Self



On April 24, 2025, Dr. Cheryl Craig opened her AERA session, “Turning Excessive Entitlement on its Head: Beginning with Self,” with Oliver Sacks’s reminder that “it is a privilege when people let you into their inner lives.” She explained that narrative inquiry, at its heart, is an ethical practice of deep listening—what she terms “listening others into being.”

Drawing on decades of field-based work, Dr. Craig wove together three core ideas: experience, understood as how individuals make sense of education and life; narrative, borrowing Michael Connelly’s concept of how lived experience becomes known; and the best-loved self, a term from Joseph Schwab that Craig extends to mean the aspirational identity all scholars seek to embody.

In Dr. Craig’s view, excessive entitlement arises when scholars assume they have “the right to the music” simply by virtue of grants, publications, or disciplinary prestige. She spoke candidly about the collision of power dynamics in academia: on one side, established faculty who guard resources and influence so tightly that junior colleagues feel compelled to exchange unpaid labor for inclusion; on the other, early-career researchers whose professional initiation was disrupted by COVID-19, leaving them uncertain of unspoken norms and respectful boundaries.

Dr. Craig also highlighted a significant shift in many curriculum departments, where classroom teachers are now vastly outnumbered by sociologists, anthropologists, and historians. To address these challenges, she pointed to her co-authored chapter on conferring—small, structured conversations in which participants rotate speaking and listening roles, name instances of entitlement, and support one another in enacting their best-loved selves.

She concluded by urging attendees to begin with self-reflection and to pilot conferring circles within their own departments. The session drew sustained applause, and as one participant said, “Dr. Craig gave us both the language to name privilege abuse and a clear practice to address it.”