Age identity refers to age-related traits associated with one’s identity, which may or may not align with chronological age. As with gender and race, previous sociolinguistic studies identified static age traits, which influenced intergenerational communication. More recently, interactional sociolinguists have argued that identity changes depending on context, and discourse analysts show how age identity is co-constructed in conversational turn-taking. One study revealed ageism against a young employee because older coworkers constructed age as experience (Angouri, 2012). And whereas previous studies had portrayed caregivers as ageist because they used “patronizing speech” with seniors, discourse analysts found in interactions that both caregivers and residents used terms of endearment as a way to build meaningful relationships in an eldercare home (Marsden & Holmes, 2014).

Using previously unanalyzed data from the last study, this presentation will suggest that the co-construction of residents’ positive age identities results from the caregiver’s responses to residents’ age-indexing cues.