In the beginning of the analysis of the attempts of the two young children, Laura and Ryan, to join in the meal with Charlene, the stage is being set with the Caretaker calling Charlene to the table. Charlene and two other children, Ryan and Laura, come to the table even though only Charlene has been called. Both Laura and Ryan are denied seating at the table as the Caretaker utters the same sentences to both of the children, "You two will have snack in a little while. You already had a big breakfast." However, at that point Ryan, who presumably is a boy, wanders off crying and Laura, who is presumably a girl, sits quietly by the table after being rejected in the exact same manner as Ryan.

My question is, did gender have any role in the difference of reaction to the rejection of the Caretaker? After all Ryan, the boy, wandered off crying and Laura, the girl, sits down at a nearby table quietly after being rejected.

In their article, “Formal Structures of Practical Tasks: A Resource for Action in the Social Life of Very Young Children,” Lerner, Zimmerman, and Kidwell investigate the social interactions in which very young children participate. While language is the primary method of social interactions, Lerner focuses on children who have not yet developed linguistic skills, and therefore must participate in these interactions through other forms of communication. The article focuses most heavily on the subject Laura, who is left out of a meal time routine, and her initial attempts to be included in the meal as well as later attempts to show dissatisfaction at being left out. The authors argue that the sequence of the meal provides various opportunities for Laura to participate in this social interaction, and that she does indeed participate during these opportunities. In addition, during the third retrieval, Laura did not make any appeal to be included. The authors argue that this was because there was no opportunity for her to do so. If this is their argument, than my question is what implications does this kind of information have for parents and caregivers? More specifically, could parents manipulate social interactions in such a way as to elicit (or deny opportunity for) certain responses or behaviors in their very young children?

In the article ‘Formal Structures of Practical Tasks: A Resource for Action in the Social Life of Very Young Children’, Gene H. Lerner accurately describes how ‘the observable conduct of others- and in particular the formal sequential structure of that conduct- furnishes very young children with the interactional resources for participation in the social life of the species before their own language use has become the dominant mode for communicative interaction’ (2). In other words, I believe Lerner is stating that young children are able to interact with the people around them, not through linguistic connections, but based off of others actions and the particular sequence in which those actions are carried out. I feel that Lerner did an excellent job demonstrating this through the example of the Caregiver feeding one child and not the other, and
how the other child reacts to the sequence of steps in which the Caregiver goes through to feed the first child. What may be some other key examples of how children learn through the study of the ‘activity context’ of others in order to emphasize the point of interaction with out the knowledge of language at such an early age? At what point in a child’s development do you feel the shared ideas and experiences between the child’s cognitive self and the interactional self come in to play and work together in their social interactions?

I felt that your essay, Formal Structures of Practical Tasks: A Resource for Action in the Social Life of Very Young Children, spoke a lot about the timing of the child, Laura, in her attempts to be included in the activity (the meal service) as well as how these attempts turned into expressions of displeasure. Would you say that similar tactics and reactions are continually used by a person in various situations as they grow, but in more discrete ways, or do people develop alternative methods as they grow, interact and socialize? Could a similar analysis be applied to a context involving adolescents and adults?

I was a little confused by the “wait and see” anticipatory action that Laura expressed upon the closing of the transition space between the caregiver’s actions. Is Laura waiting to see if the caregiver will give in to her attempts to draw attention to herself or is he caregiver waiting to see to what extent Laura will go to gain access to the food? How exactly does that concept work? Also, what action or interaction caused Laura to switch from sequence? prospective to sequence? retrospective conduct? She has, at only sixteen months old, clearly already developed some sense of her ‘me’, whereas Ryan, at only fourteen months, has not. At what moment did her ‘me’ consciously decide that the first strategy was ultimately going to be unsuccessful and that she should attempt another method to produce the desired response from the caregiver.

In a chapter of your paper you focus entirely upon the infant and the responses that infant takes to the habit of eating and the social interactions/steps that take place during such a mundane event. My question for you is regarding your opinion on this statement. Early childhood habitual occurrences (such as trying to get the attention of you caretaker in order to receive a meal) can be clearly viewed throughout much of the later stages in life such as adolescence or adulthood. How do you feel the interactions between children at infancy shapes/defines their outlook upon their social place in the world?

1. Is Laura learning from her mistakes and therefore demonstrating that young children become more adept at receiving what they desire through trial, error, and learning from that error? For instance, throughout her series of appeals, she points at the Cargiver, objects, and food more frequently and is more persistent and distressed.

2. Are Laura's actions regarding waiting until a task begins or ends to appeal evidence of her ability to recognize "turned" structure, or in other words an
ability to respect practical order?

Alt. Question: Is there perhaps a sense of jealousy Laura feels with regards to Charlene enjoying the Caregiver's attention and food? If so, does that jealousy contribute significantly to Laura's impatience and distress?

What are other examples of daily life to which these concepts apply?

Lerner claims that early forms of communication found in toddlers can be understood through their body behavior. It is their way of expressing their desires before they learn to talk. How would you explain the different sound effects that Laura utters? Is it a natural sound effect or does it originate from day to day sounds that she picks up? Also, Ryan walks away crying when he is physically barred from sitting on the chair. What did he do while the Caregiver was preparing the routine to eat breakfast? Was he observing from afar?

In the article ‘Formal Structures of Practical Tasks: A Resource for Action in the Social Life of Very Young Children’, Gene H. Lerner accurately describes how ‘the observable conduct of others- and in particular the formal sequential structure of that conduct- furnishes very young children with the interactional resources for participation in the social life of the species before their own language use has become the dominant mode for communicative interaction’ (2). In other words, I believe Lerner is stating that young children are able to interact with the people around them, not through linguistic connections, but based off of others actions and the particular sequence in which those actions are carried out. I feel that Lerner did an excellent job demonstrating this through the example of the Caregiver feeding one child and not the other, and how the other child reacts to the sequence of steps in which the Caregiver goes through to feed the first child. What may be some other key examples of how children learn through the study of the ‘activity context' of others in order to emphasize the point of interaction with out the knowledge of language at such an early age? At what point in a child’s development do you feel the shared ideas and experiences between the child’s cognitive self and the interactional self come in to play and work together in their social interactions?