To Be Tutored: Exploring How Female-Identifying Undergraduates Experience Tutoring

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To Be Tutored:
Exploring How Female-Identifying Undergraduates Experience Tutoring

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Leadership
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

By

Samantha Barbara Weiss
May 2024

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the students I have tutored. Thank you for teaching me so much and inspiring me to keep learning!
Acknowledgments

While I am the author of this paper, it wouldn’t be exaggerating to say that without the help, love, and support of an amazing network of people, this project would never have been finished. I would love to thank everyone by name, but I don’t know that I have the page space for that, so I want to pay special attention to a few groups of people, without whom I wouldn’t be here today!

Thank you to Big Hero 6! Whatever force was responsible for putting all of us together clearly knows its stuff. This cohort has weathered so many storms, celebrated so many milestones, and supported each other in so many ways that I couldn’t imagine going through this with anyone else! I will continue to treasure the time, advice, stories, vulnerability, and love that circulated in this group, and I hope that we all stay in touch as we move forward to take on new challenges and accomplish new dreams.

Thank you to the professors in the EDD program! From day one, their commitment to the success of every student has been quintessential in the journey from “baby doctors” to real ones. I don’t know if words can properly express how grateful I am for the pep talks, constructive feedback, and the quick responses to the (likely) overwhelming number of panicked emails I sent! Thank you to Dr. Staulters, Dr. Hodes, Dr. Kruger-Ross, Dr. Mohajeri, Dr. Riley, Dr. Chiarelli-Helminiak, Dr. Mallot, Dr. Wheeler, and Dr. Backer for your time and compassion throughout this journey. A special shout-out to Dr. Staulters, Dr. Kruger-Ross, and Dr. Manigo for serving as my committee, answering my late-night emails, and helping make this paper a reality (and a pretty strong one, if I do say so, myself).

Thank you to the bookstore girlies! Whether it was planning vacations, practicing presentations, or packing boxes, I knew that I could always count on you all to be there for me.
The past three years have been a rollercoaster of emotions and the group chats, coffee breaks, dinner dates, and work shifts have kept me going through it all.

Thank you to my family! Your ongoing support has been the cornerstone of my success!

After 21 years of schooling, it is finally done. Thanks for being there for me as I surprised you with travel plans, pivoted in my career, moved many, many times, and ultimately put this dissertation together.

It is hard to believe that the two years, ten months are finally over! I have grown so much as a person and a scholar because of the people mentioned here. I am incredibly grateful for what I have learned from each of you and how my life has been enriched by your gifts. In the words of my favorite musical, “Because I knew you, I have been changed for good.”
Abstract

Tutoring, an academic support offered by colleges to their students, has been shown to increase academic grades (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Fryer & Howard-Novack, 2020; Nelson-Royes, 2013), improve attitudes toward school (Arco-Tirado, 2020; Elbulok-Charcape et al., 2019; Nadia et al., 2023), and support retention (Primary Research Group, 2020). Some of these benefits can be traced to the individualized attention and flexibility that tutoring offers (Chin et al., 2011; Nadia et al., 2023). However, this research lacks detailed, qualitative data that focuses on how students experience tutoring. In addition to a lack of attention to lived experiences, in general, there is even less research that considers the impacts of gender on one’s tutoring experiences. Feminist phenomenology is a field of inquiry that centralizes gender because it is crucial to all of one’s experiences (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Using feminist phenomenology to explore the experiences of female-identifying support students in mid-Atlantic colleges and universities. The five participants engaged in interviews and journal entries. After conducting two rounds of coding, an initial deductive and subsequent inductive round, several themes were developed: there is a complex interplay of factors affecting feelings of safety among support students, environments that encourage use of supports destigmatize tutoring, collaboration produces positive learning outcomes, tutor as a knowledgeable resource, and limited integration of the body into learning. These themes highlight some of the areas that tutoring organizations can focus on to better the experience of their female-identifying students. Additionally, this area of inquiry opens doors to more gender-focused research in supplemental education.

Keywords: tutoring, embodied learning, feminist phenomenology
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Chapter 1

With a history much longer than the common schools of today (Nelson-Royes, 2013), it is surprising how little is definitely known about the educational practice of tutoring. Tutoring stretches back to ancient Egypt, where royal tutors were prized members of the court (Zinn, 2012). Tutors were employed to educate individuals or small groups of boys, typically, though there is some evidence that girl children occasionally had the chance to be tutored as well (Zinn, 2012). In Western civilizations, tutoring was the primary form of elementary education until well into the 11th century. Tutors were often employed by individual families to work with their students inside their homes on subjects including philosophy, arithmetic, reading, and writing (Szuba, 2020). Starting with Greek civilization in the West, and continuing until the 1850s, both tutorial and classroom education was largely reserved for male children from wealthier families (Szuba, 2020). Despite that history, the current ratio of students in the United States shows that more females receive education, especially beyond the secondary level, than males (Reeves & Smith, 2022). This trend continues in tutoring, with more female students receiving additional support (Primary Research Group, 2020). While there is no comprehensive explanation for this difference in tutoring usage, it has been found that women are given more positive feedback when they share that they are seeking help than their male counterparts and they are more motivated to ask for help in order to meet expectations from others (Brown et al., 2020). In my experience, female students are also more highly encouraged to seek help, express more comfort with additional practice, and accept the delayed gratification associated with tutoring.

Tutoring today is focused on providing extra learning outside of the classroom and is usually associated with struggling students (Robinson et al., 2021). Using Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development, tutoring often acts as additional scaffolding to help students
excel with more complex information (Aleksandrova et al., 2015). The focus on struggling students has created a stigma surrounding tutoring in the United States, which impacts who uses tutoring and how they use it (Elbulok-Chapcape et al., 2019). In higher education, tutoring has additional benefits beyond academic support: contributing to positive psycho-social growth among students (Rothman & Henderson, 2011) and lessening college drop-out rates (De Ra et al., 2022).

College dropout rates in June 2022 reached 32.9% across the United States (Hanson, 2022). Of that population, the most likely to drop out are students from lower income families, first-generation students, American Indian/Alaskan Native students, Black students, and students with disabilities (Hanson, 2022). Females are more likely to persist to graduation, which some attribute to higher use of educational supports, like tutoring (Carr & London, 2017; De Ra et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2020).

Many colleges and universities offer tutoring by other students, called peer tutoring. While the tutors are not direct peers, they are of a similar age as the support students (SS) they are working with, and typically have either previously taken the course they are tutoring on or sit with the students in class (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2022; Breslin, 2014). Peer tutoring can involve one-on-one or group learning and has a strong record of positive impacts on students of various ages (Colvin, 2007). Additionally, tutoring available at universities varies based on the fixedness of the schedule; some students see a tutor at specific times each week, and others attend drop-in hours when they need to work on a particular area (Hyacinthe, 2018). While these programs differ based on the resources of the college, type of tutoring provided, and accessibility of providers, among other elements, they share goals of improving student performance in their courses and increasing retention of those at-risk.
Overall, the use of tutoring services has increased over the past five years across several types of colleges (private and public) and high usage in math and science fields remains consistent (Primary Research Group, 2020). While exact figures on the use of college tutoring facilities are hard to come by for several reasons, researchers have been able to see generally positive trends within college tutoring settings (Acro-Tirado et al., 2020). Some of the reasons that specific usage data for college tutoring centers is hard to access include that only public institutions must report their data, demographics that are collected are often presented as aggregate data, and institutions use a variety of supplemental resources and often do not differentiate them in reports.

Primary Research Group (2020) notes that of their sample, public institutions averaged 3463.17 students served in the 2017-2018 school year and 3660.62 students served in the 2018-2019 school year. Currently, the United States college population is 16.9 million students, with women making up a small majority of those students, at around 58% (Education Data Initiative, 2023). Of the college tutoring centers surveyed in 2018 about their center usage, women made up the largest group of support-seeking students (Primary Research Group, 2018). Similar findings in 2020 suggest that female-identifying students seek tutoring more often than male students do (Primary Research Group, 2020). However, a discrepancy exists - little research on the largest group seeking tutoring – which impacts both research and practice in the field and, by extension, affects female-identifying learners at higher rates than their male counterparts. By focusing on this gap in research, the study seeks to better understand the interface between gender and tutoring. Since gender heavily impacts the bodied experiences of a student, it is also important to centralize the body in this study.
Embodied learning scholars agree that people don’t have bodies, they are bodies (Macedonia, 2019; Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). This means that an individual is always engaging with the world through their body and that socio-political realities regarding bodies always apply. For instance, beliefs about the impact a women’s clothing has on male peers in learning situations has an effect on the woman, whose body is being viewed and policed. Likewise, beliefs about the presentation of learning differences can impact who does and does not get diagnosed, limiting who has access to support. Diagnosis of ADD/ADHD (Skolgi et al., 2013) and autism (Halliday et al., 2015) are more common in male children, despite no research supporting sex-differentiation related to these learning differences. Fewer female-identifying students getting the support they need interferes with their ability to be successful and advocate for themselves.

To better serve SS, more needs to be known about their particular experiences, including how gender interacts with learning. As female students are more likely to engage in tutoring at the college level (Primary Research Group, 2018), it is essential that the experiences of this group be considered more explicitly. Questions about how living in a female body impacts the ways that learning occurs allow for the development of more nuanced knowledge about the lived experiences of female-identifying SS. While this study does not seek to test the application of its results (but add knowledge to an area that needs more research), the data could be used by tutors and centers to provide services tailored to the needs of those individuals.

**Rationale for Research**

In this study, I sought to bring together the disparate topics of tutoring, gendered bodies, and embodied learning into one project. Investigating how and why these topics are intertwined, yet often ignored in relation to each other, offered a chance to consider tutoring from angles that
are largely unrepresented in the literature. Since research indicates that gendered body experiences impact learning in traditional classrooms (Aguillon et al., 2020), question-asking behaviors (Brown et al., 2020), and help-seeking actions (Juhrud & Reynolds, 2016), it follows that this would also be true in tutoring. The majority of available research regarding tutoring is quantitative in nature, examining the impact of tutoring on grades and attendance (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Fryer & Howard-Novack, 2020; Nelson-Royes, 2013), but research about tutoring is lacking in studies that acknowledge the impact that gender has on the participant experiences. In seeking to expand on this knowledge, the goal is to fill several gaps in tutoring research and start a conversation about embodied methods in tutoring spaces. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine the ways that the body is and is not called into tutoring and how those experiences impact how students perceive the learning process, specifically for female-identifying students. For example, this study asked questions about the types of movement that is allowed in sessions, how bodily needs are handled, and the ways that the presence of other bodies impacts an individual’s ability to learn.

By using phenomenological interviews and journal entries, I explored the bodied experience of tutoring with a group of female-identifying undergraduates receiving tutoring at mid-Atlantic public universities. The focus on female-identifying students is two-fold: female-identifying students are more likely to seek support services and tutoring research has largely neglected the gendered-body experience (Grosz, 1994; Young, 2005). Approaching the data with a feminist phenomenological lens can create a space for exploration into the lived experiences of gendered bodies, hopefully opening the field to more research which centers, or at least considers, gender as a factor.
Significance of the Research

While the body is innately involved in the learning process, it is often neglected and mistreated, to the detriment of the learner and the learning (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). The modern Western education system follows the Cartesian tradition, which argues that the body is less valuable than the mind, especially in regard to learning (Batacharya & Wong, 2018). Contrary to this belief, embodied learning acknowledges the role of the physical self in the process of knowledge acquisition, regarding it as equally important and inherently connected to the mind. In embodied learning scholarship, the body-mind divide is refuted, in favor of a holistic approach (Batacharya & Wong, 2018; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Little has changed in traditional classrooms or tutoring centers, despite the wide breadth of research about the benefits of embodied learning (Oliver & Lalik, 2001). Research into embodied learning has spanned dozens of fields, including but not limited to medical care (Cooke-Cottone, 2015), dance (Bang et al., 2023; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003), management (Curameng, 2023), and education (Alerby, 2014; Nguyen & Larson, 2015).

These divergent looks at embodied learning all come to varying conclusions about its function and focus, but they share some notable similarities. The research suggests that embodied learning has four important elements - connection to space (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 16-17; Freiler, 2008, p. 37; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 337; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Thornburn, 2014, p. 115), meaningful movement (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Macedonia, 2019, p. 5; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 33; Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 304; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 9), collaboration (Alerby et al., 2014; Freiler, 2008; He, 2016; Nguyen & Larson, 2015), and a relationship to fulfillment (He, 2016, p. 38; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021; Thornburn, 2012, p. 124). By centering these four
features in the investigation, I investigated the body’s role in tutoring and begin to fill gaps in the literature about tutoring and embodied learning.

Table 1

*Embodied Learning Features and Studies*

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<tr>
<td>Meaningful movement</td>
<td>Estola &amp; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Macedonia, 2019, p. 5; Nguyen &amp; Larson, 2015, p. 33; Oliver &amp; Lalik, 2001, p. 304; Reeves &amp; White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Alerby et al., 2014; Freiler, 2008; He, 2016; Nguyen &amp; Larson, 2015; Walker, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship to fulfillment</td>
<td>He, 2016, p. 38; Nguyen &amp; Larson, 2015; Oliver &amp; Lalik, 2001; Reeves &amp; White, 2021; Thornburn, 2012, p. 124; Walker, 2017</td>
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In addition to expanding the reach of the available scholarship, this study’s findings have several potential practical applications. First, tutoring centers could employ findings to better their services for female-identifying SS. Research which focuses on the female experience can be used to tailor methods, train tutors, and identify gender-specific concerns among learners. Second, embodied tutoring methods could become more commonplace in college tutoring centers. In a society that actively discourages attunement to one’s body and emotions (McBride, 2021), creating spaces that support and encourage self-development of this type is likely to have positive impacts on social and educational outcomes. For example, offering students with learning differences the ability to utilize their whole selves can allow them to access knowledge more efficiently and effectively (Osborne et al., 2007). Likewise, the development of the space and situation of learning, which are central foci of embodied learning research, can improve outcomes for students (Feldges, 2021). Finally, the additional information on how students use their tutoring services can support targeted growth. If centers have a more precise understanding
of what female-identifying students want and need from their sessions, in addition to what they hope to avoid, centers can develop in tandem.

**Problem Statement**

Embodied learning has been a topic of research interest in the West since the 1980s but has been known to Eastern and indigenous research for hundreds of years (Batacharya & Wong, 2018, p.172; Yunkaporta, 2019). Research has shown that embodied learning has positive impacts on both academic and social-emotional learning for students of all ages, especially those in need of additional support and marginalized groups (Batacharya & Wong, 2018; Godbee et al., 2015). The lack of qualitative research about the topic of embodied learning is counterintuitive to the area of study (Bonyadi, 2021). Of the research that does examine experience, there are no data, to my knowledge, which looks specifically at the lived bodied experiences of female-identifying students or that of students in tutoring environments. The qualitative research that is available delves into the perceptions of learning gain (Almulla, 2018) and feelings of the tutors (Burchell, 2008; DeFoe & Capras, 2014). Filling this gap helps connect the needs of the students with the services being offered by centers. Additionally, it encourages development of more body-focused learning methods within tutoring settings.

**Research Questions**

In order to get a fuller picture of the bodied experiences of female-identifying SS, one phenomenological research question has been devised, that focuses on the lived experience of engaging in peer tutoring in the college setting. The goal of this question is to understand the elements that make up the essence or sense of this phenomenon. The research question for this study is as follows:
What is it like to be a female-identifying undergraduate support student (SS) in a college tutoring space?

By centralizing the experiences of female-identifying students, this research question seeks to understand how tutoring is felt and lived in the body. The collected responses create an image of what is like for female-identifying support students, which can be employed to multiple ends: improving tutoring services, developing further research, or creating new tutoring methods.

**Rationale for Methods**

The methodological approach taken in this study is feminist phenomenology, which aims to understand experiences through the lens of gender. For this study, I utilized interviews and journal entries to investigate lived body experiences for female-identifying SS, so that the participants were able to give voice to their thoughts and experiences directly. The overarching aim of phenomenology is to depict the essence of a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26). The choice to use a phenomenological design focused on the goals of phenomenology, which line up with those of this research project: to investigate lived experiences in-depth (Badil et al., 2023; Čopelj & Reynolds, 2022), particularize (rather than generalize) (Gershon, 2011; Jackson et al., 2007; Sionti et al., 2018), and to engage with one specific phenomenon (Quotshi, 2018). Quotshi (2018) writes that phenomenology is used to “explore the complex world of lived experiences from the actors’ (those who live it) point of view” (p. 220). This study seeks to engage with the complex interactions that exist in tutoring spaces. Additionally, feminist phenomenology encourages viewing phenomena and the context in which they occur with attention to the power structures behind them (Al-Saji, 2020; Shabot & Landry, 2018). To investigate female bodied experiences in tutoring settings, one must grapple with the historical,
social, and political implications of living in a female-identifying body, receiving academic support, and the structures of tutoring.

In addition to the alignment of these goals, the lack of attention to the lived experiences of a gendered body in traditional phenomenology made it imperative that the approach come from a feminist lens. The field of feminist phenomenology, which has sought to rectify this omission, pays particular attention to the experiences of women and the ways that those experiences may reflect the historical marginalization of women as a whole (Shabot & Landry, 2018). It is valuable to note that identifying and naming the elements of a tutoring experience for a female-identifying body has implications beyond an expansion of scholarship. Feminist phenomenology offers a space for activism that is typically not associated with phenomenology; rather than just detailing experiences, this approach provides opportunities to resist (Shabot & Landry, 2018). From increasing scholarship for, by, and about women, to creating space where all voices can be heard and believed, the political possibility of feminist phenomenology further justifies this methodology.

Positionality

As a child, I was eager to please, quick to memorize, and happy to perform. All of these qualities prepared me to take part in what Fried (1995) calls the game of school (p. 93), but none prepared me to learn. I was especially good at sitting still, could regurgitate information easily, and enjoyed showing off my skills, but I wasn’t pushed to think critically (and in some ways was actively taught not to), and challenges were presented as more work rather than deeper work. I was the ideal student in many ways, and I took pride in these talents because I often felt that I was not welcomed in the educational system otherwise.
Obedience proved a double-edged sword though. As an anxious kid, prone to nail-biting, I was required to sit on my hands in class as I got older to stop the habit. A young teenage girl at the time, this requirement did not teach me not to bite my nails, but it made me aware of the size of my thighs and the differences between my body and those around me. It encouraged a negative association with my body and made me more critical of how I moved in the world. As women are already constrained by societal expectations and negative messaging, I found connecting with my body more and more difficult as I grew older. While I managed to move through school without this impacting my grades, it did impact my mental and physical health.

Continuing into high school, playing by the rules (being a part of the dominant culture of my area) and working hard factored into my success through high school more than any study skills or academic prowess. Fortunately, college, and specifically tutoring, required more of me and forced me outside my comfort zone in multiple respects. I was no longer judged on my ability to memorize facts but rather on my ability to use information in practical ways. I was no longer forced to sit on my hands but could comfortably position myself when learning. I was no longer celebrated for always raising my hand first but challenged to engage more deeply with material.

While I was initially abashed by the suggestion that I attend tutoring - I was an A student after all - it proved to be a turning point. In the one-on-one space of peer tutoring, many of the rules that had gotten me through high school did not apply, and I was allowed to exist as a body and a mind. Studying was no longer a solitary act of reading until I could repeat the text back, but it was a conversation between two people in which stock answers were not enough; doing homework was no longer something I needed to do while seated upright at a desk, and learning was no longer something that I practiced only in my head. I was allowed to use my body to
practice material, question the way something was presented, and try different methods until I found ones that worked.

Now, as an adult and a tutor myself, having worked with students aged four and up in a variety of contexts, I have seen tutoring both help and hinder learners, based on its structure. In formal tutoring settings, the tutors were largely required to focus on the behavior of the students and their ability to sit still. While these reminders were often made with the intention of helping the students learn, they really did little for their learning ability. In most cases, these students needed more flexible rules, increased focus on executive function skills, and multisensory approaches to the material, rather than the reminders to behave or focus. In informal settings, I saw immense growth among students of all ages who were allowed to learn while using their bodies, eating a snack, or even standing on their heads. The one-on-one nature of the tutoring setting allowed me to make choices based on the needs the students presented, rather than my plans as a tutor. Aside from providing students with freedom of choice, it also encouraged learners to use whatever they need to learn.

For too many students, tutoring hasn’t or can’t open these doors, because they mimic the methods used in K12 education, which value the abilities to listen and repeat more than to truly create and develop knowledge. In researching the lived body experiences of female-identifying SS, the goal was to learn how the body is and is not called into learning in the tutoring space. This research sought to understand how gender and bodied realities impact the ways that learning happens in tutoring.

Definitions

Some of the terms used in this study are exclusive to this work, while others are more general or have been adopted from other researchers. To fully understand the details and
implications of the study, a list of important terms is included below. Abbreviations are also included with the definitions.

**Embodied Learning**

Embodied learning is that which joins the body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge creation (Nguyen & Larson, 2015) within the bounds of a historical and cultural context (Agostini & Francesconi, 2021).

**Female-identifying**

Female-identifying students are those students who regardless of sex at birth, identify as women. For this study, students were not be asked to explain their gender identity beyond confirming their identification as a woman if they do not want to do so.

**Feminist Phenomenology**

Feminist phenomenology is a critical feminist approach to phenomenological inquiry, which considers the sociocultural setting to account for marginalization, barriers, limitations, and privileges afforded to a person (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Simms & Stawarska (2013) locate the start of this branch of phenomenology with the writings of Edith Stein in the 1930s, but the name feminist phenomenology did not develop until the end of the century. In the 1960s, the writings of women like Simone de Beauvoir responded to the treatment of the male body as the normative experience, which thus cast the female body into an othered position (Al-Saji, 2020). Accounting for power structures and creating avenues for change, this variation of phenomenology deviates from the singular goal of deeper understanding, to include, in some cases, societal change (Al-Saji, 2020).
Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is tutoring in which the tutor and support student are both students (i.e. not experts or teachers) at approximately the same level in their education (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2022). Common in colleges, peer tutors often tutor for classes that they excelled at in the recent past. Some models of peer tutoring embed the tutor in the classroom, so they are involved in the learning process at each stage (Breslin, 2014).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to phenomena that focuses on consciousness and the objects of experience. Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre are four of the men who are well-known for their work in phenomenology. They represented various areas of focus within the field (“Phenomenology,” 2013), but this research leaned heavily on the phenomenology of the body and lived experiences that is often attributed largely to Merleau-Ponty.

Phenomenological Reduction

In Husserl’s approach to phenomenology, the phenomenological reduction is the suspension of judgements about a given perception (Shabot & Landry, 2018). This reduction is the first of three that he explains are necessary for phenomenological inquiry.

Reflexivity

An accounting of what one knows, how they know it, and how one responds to it (Stewart, 2010). In phenomenology, reflexivity often takes the form of a journal, in which the researcher engages with the data from the participants and their own experiences.

Support Student

Support student (SS) was used in this study in place of the word tutee to avoid confusion with similar words that appear frequently in the text. For the purposes of this research, support
students must attend the tutoring program offered by their college or university on a consistent basis.

**Thick Description**

Deep, detailed descriptions of events, situations, and individuals, intended to increase the believability of a report by providing the reader with rich imagery and attention to detail (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I explained a problem that exists in tutoring - lack of awareness and inclusion of the body - and the rationale for this study and the chosen methodology. Additionally, I provided my context within my positionality and a glossary of terms that are relevant throughout the remainder of the paper. An embodied learning approach to tutoring opens doors in tutoring to account for the needs of different students, to consider areas of marginalization, and to help students determine their preferred learning methods, but little evidence of its use exists in college tutoring centers. Moreover, studies that consider the role of gender in the learning process to SS are also limited. In this study, a feminist phenomenological approach was taken to account for the lived body experiences of the female-identifying participants, with the goal of understanding the phenomenon of tutoring for individuals of the aforementioned group.

This dissertation will be organized as follows: Chapter two is an in-depth literature review of college tutoring, embodied learning, and feminist phenomenology; Chapter three will outline the parameters and procedures of this study; Chapter four will detail the findings of the study; and chapter five will be a discussion of the implications of the study.

The collection of interviews, journal entries, and researcher notes used in this research attempted to bridge the gaps in literature and offer new approaches to practice. Investigating the
lived body experiences of female-identifying SS offers researchers and tutors an opportunity to more fully understand the challenges and benefits that tutoring can pose to the learning of this group. Meeting these goals can bolster student success, support tutoring organizations, and increase positive impacts for colleges.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In school, students are often asked to ignore or neglect their bodies while in the classroom (Nguyen & Larson, 2016; Oliver & Lalik, 2001). The expectation that students ignore bodily needs can take on many forms, from expecting perfect stillness at a desk to forcing students to wait to use the bathroom while taking a test. These expectations are built on the notion that the mind (the learning entity) can be separated from the body (the being entity) with no consequences (Grosz, 1999). These practices are devoid of connection to reality, according to Merleau-Ponty (1945), as one is a unified entity that consists of body and mind. Research has shown that a connection to the body is essential for real learning to occur, across age groups and subjects (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 12; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 697; He, 2016, p. 38; Kiefer & Trumpp, 2015, p. 16; Kosmas et al., 2019, p. 61; Macedonia, 2019, p. 2; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 337; Nunez et al., 1999, p. 46; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 3; Thornburn, 2014, p. 115; Wilcox, 2009, p. 104).

Tutoring spaces, which have the ability to facilitate more innovative approaches to learning, often use school learning as their model. From varied seating options to the flexibility to test learning methods with individual learners, tutoring centers have an opportunity to build on the research about the embodied nature of learning and help students understand how they learn. For students who need to seek out additional support, the focus on short-term gains (improving grades on an assignment or memorizing facts for a test) using the school model often has fewer positive effects than more innovative tutoring approaches that focus on long-term goals (study skills and time management) (Chin et al., 2011). Since tutoring also affords learners more direct attention from the instructor, the pair can explicitly and rapidly address the specific needs of the
learner. However, by using classroom learning as a model, tutoring often falls short of its transformative potential.

This literature review engages with three separate topics and their interfaces for the sake of this study: peer tutoring, embodied learning, and feminist phenomenology. This chapter also includes a theoretical framework which combines embodied learning and feminist phenomenology. While this chapter explores embodied learning in relation to specific student experiences, it does not include empirical data about the methods of instruction that these students have experienced, meaning no surveys or other numerical data was assessed.

**Tutoring**

Tutoring is defined as an individual or small-group form of educational support that can be carried out using various means, both inside and outside of a traditional school setting, the goal of which is helping students learn to help themselves in school (Chin et al., 2011; Gordon, 2007). Most tutoring programs are known for providing academic support to students who are struggling or at-risk (Arco-Tirado et al., 2020). This approach follows the deficit model, which blames the student and their background for the shortcomings. Yosso (2005) advocates for the viewpoint that everyone has something to bring to the table, even if it is not what is traditionally valued in academia. Using the asset model (opposite of the deficit model) has been the subject of tutoring research (Connor & Gray, 2023), but few connections have been made between the asset model and an embodied approach to tutoring. Research has shown that tutoring can also provide advancement for students who need additional challenges or students who need help with particular learning skills but aren’t showing signs of struggle in their grades (Birsch, 2011).

Tutoring for K-12 and post-secondary students exists in various formats, based on the location, needs, and resources of a student, their family, and their institution (Gordon, 2007). For
college students, it is typically a service provided by the institution, though some families also hire tutors outside of the college (Primary Research Group, 2018). Of the available formats, one that has extensive research is peer tutoring, though much of it relates quantitative data about performance enhancement (Arco-Tirado et al., 2020; Elbulok-Charpace et al., 2019; Melnikova et al., 2020; Nadia et al., 2023).

Tutoring can take many forms, including class-specific sessions, writing workshops, and homework help, to name a few (Primary Research Group, 2020). The locations for the varied types of tutoring are equally as varied, with some colleges offering all services in one location, different services in different locations, or multiple options for different services, based on the campus population and need (Primary Research Group, 2020). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools have also turned heavily to online or virtual tutoring, which researchers believe will remain popular going forward (Gregg & Shin, 2021). While the research about college tutoring effectiveness is as varied as the locations at which it is offered, there is a general acceptance that having the services can be beneficial to a wide range of students (Kohlmeyer, 2020).

Public colleges and universities saw higher instances of tutoring use in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years (Primary Research Group, 2020). The size of institutions also factored into how well-used the services were, with larger schools having higher instances of use. For most institutions, regardless of size or type, writing and STEM classes were the most common courses that students requested tutoring for (Primary Research Group, 2020).

**Peer Tutoring**

At the college level, it is common for this tutoring to be offered by other students or peers, rather than professionals (Primary Research Group, 2018). Tutoring done by students
accounts for the majority of services offered, across a range of different types of institutions (Primary Research Group, 2020). 44.51% of those who went to tutoring through a public college had peer tutoring (Primary Research Group, 2018). The students who serve as tutors have often taken the class that they are tutoring in or sit in on the course to make sure their tutoring is relevant to the support students. The work done in tutoring sessions can range from reviewing a topic that a student is uncomfortable with, to completing homework, to studying for an exam, to working on a paper, among other tasks. Peer tutors are often trained in a variety of methods and to support students across multiple tasks (Boquet, 2002; Chin et al., 2011). Some colleges even require tutors to undergo a training course, which prepares them to provide their students with quality support (Boquet, 2002).

In addition to helping students in their academics, peer tutoring can help increase motivation (Nadia et al., 2023; Srivastava & Rashid, 2018). Arco-Tirado (2020) and Elbulok-Charcape et al. (2019) found that peer tutoring was especially useful with first-year students, to support their adjustment to college. Srivastava & Rashid (2018) found that peer tutoring had a significant impact on the performance of students’ academics, as well as their communication skills and motivation. Being able to individualize lessons has been noted as one of the reasons tutoring has generally positive effects (Chin et al., 2011; Gallagher-Mackey et al., 2022). Six explicit benefits to support students that have been identified in peer tutoring literature include inspiring students, helping students become more independent learners, facilitation, personalization of lessons, respect for differing abilities, and inviting students to be involved in their own learning processes (Nadia et al., 2023). Chin et al. (2011) note that helping students to become independent learners and be active in their own education are hallmarks of a successful
program. For students who find classroom learning difficult for a variety of reasons, the small-scale nature of the tutoring environment can create more opportunities for learning.

The benefits of peer tutoring do not just extend to the students who get tutored, but also to those who are teaching (Seo & Kim, 2019; Srivastava & Rashid, 2018). Aside from increasing a tutor’s mastery of a topic, it allows them to practice speaking skills, take on a leadership role, and improve their collaboration (Seo & Kim, 2019). These transferable skills are often the soft skills that are harder to teach explicitly and require more hands-on practice (Srivastava & Rashid, 2018). For those tutors, who intend to work in fields in which they will need to lead or teach others, peer tutoring experience offers a chance to increase their skill set and test various approaches. Some research even questions whether tutors or support students see more measurable gains from the experience (Seo & Kim, 2019).

Nadia et al. (2023) warns that there can also be disadvantages to peer tutoring, including incorrect feedback and lack of tutor expertise (p. 91). Incorrect feedback and lack of expertise can lessen the usefulness of tutoring and reduce the social benefits. Poor relationships between student and tutor can also impact the level of learning (Chin et al., 2011). With such information available, it is important to consider how it is used. Primary Research Group (2020) reports that there is a great deal of variation between schools about the use of data to drive programs, with 11.29% saying they don’t engage with data at all and 20.97% said they use a great deal of data. For those that engage with data often, the information attained from students can be used to make changes to the programs, as needed.

**Post-secondary Peer Tutoring.** Public colleges and universities often offer free tutoring to students as an academic support and retention tool (Primary Research Group, 2020). For many colleges and universities, tutoring has been an offering since the schools opened, but for others,
such support programs are more recent additions. At many public colleges and universities, tutoring is housed under the student success center or a similar department, aimed at helping more students matriculate. Students who are classified at-risk or those with learning differences may also be assigned mandatory tutoring as a preventative measure (Wells, 2012). Research which questions the validity and value of mandatory tutoring or supplemental instruction (SI) has existed nearly as long as the practice of requiring students to attend supplemental services, and most of the research points to positive results (Wells, 2012). Writ large, post-secondary institutions have been moving away from mandatory services over concerns about racially biased tracking and discriminatory placement (Friedlander, 1981). Wells (2012) argues that personally and anecdotally, there were also many other reasons why individuals refuse to mandate additional education services. Some of these concerns include one’s own beliefs about learning centers (Wells, 2012), mistaken views of tutoring (Grey & Hoyt, 2019), and whose responsibility it is to get help (Lloyd, 2019). Current beliefs about the harms of mandatory services are often derived from personal experiences with the practice, rather than engagement with the literature about its possible impacts and outcomes (Wells, 2012). While there is an abundance of research into the effects of tutoring and SI, there is a paucity of research concerning student, faculty, and tutor experiences related to different forms of tutoring. These services may be supplemented by external programs that the college buys into or professionals, who come to campus to offer services (Primary Research Group, 2020).

**Students Responses to Tutoring**

Studies into several tutoring models and factors that impact success have been conducted in order to answer questions about the overall effectiveness of tutoring on academics, but the results are inconclusive. The variety of types of tutoring, different measures of success, and the
ways tutoring is providing make it difficult to compare studies directly. Various studies have resulted in statistically significant outcomes, highlighting the usefulness of tutoring (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Osborn et al., 2007; Rothman & Henderson, 2011). Nelson-Royes (2013) brings attention to the impact tutoring has on low-income children through a meta-analysis of tutoring research. Allen & Chavkin (2004) designed an experimental study and compared the grades of middle school students who had tutoring and students who did not. This study focused on the minimal preparation of the tutor, to emphasize that even non-professional, volunteer tutors have the ability to create change for students (Allen & Chavkin, 2004). Similarly, action research comparing the reading performance of elementary school students after working with tutors to that of students who were not working with tutors, found that the tutored group outpaced the non-tutored group in six months (Osborn et al., 2007). Rothman & Henderson (2011) saw similar results amongst students engaged in a school-based tutoring program on standardized tests. Prior to the tutoring, all of the students who were offered support had received failing grades in the subjects they would receive help with (Rothman & Henderson, 2011). The differences between these studies are likely due to populations examined in each, as they range in age and learning differences.

Others have resulted in statistically insignificant outcomes (Hickey & Flynn, 2020) which warrant more in-depth study. While the experiment carried out by Hickey & Flynn (2020) showed trends that the 15-week tutoring program has better outcomes in math and the 25-week program had better outcomes in language and reading, the results between the two were not significant. They did find that overall, the students who received tutoring had academic gains (Hickey & Flynn, 2020). Additionally, some studies found some statistically significant results and some that are not statistically significant within the same study (Fryer & Howard-Noveck,
2020). Qualitative research conducted about the effectiveness of tutorial programs has also been done, in which the findings cannot be grouped into one of the aforementioned groups (Chin et al., 2011; Gordon et al., 2007). Wiseman (2020) notes that scholars have continuously critiqued the concept of private tutoring due to the inconsistency with which it affects students’ academic scores. Despite the wide range of results, the prevalence of tutoring programs shows a general belief in the practice.

Finally, despite not setting out to test for social-emotional impacts, many have found that noticeable gains are often made in traits that are not specifically academic, like executive functioning, self-confidence, and school attendance (Fryer & Howard-Noveck, 2020; Hickey & Flynn, 2020; Nelson-Royes, 2013). Increased self-confidence and motivation are amongst the non-academic impacts seen most often in studies of tutored students (Nadia et al., 2023; Srivastava & Rashid, 2019). Since the data also suggests that lower reading scores in elementary school often correlate with negative health and well-being outcomes in high school and beyond, researchers have argued that increasing both academic and non-academic skills early has wide-reaching impacts (Nelson-Royes, 2013). Zipperer et al. (2003) suggested that small peer groups (peer tutoring), integrated technology, various forms of messaging, and a generally more positive approach to reading are all measures that improve student acceptance and accomplishment, post-elementary school (p. 8). The understanding that non-academic improvements may impact school performance amongst tutored students is widespread, but additional research on the non-academic impacts is limited, especially with older students.

**Current Frameworks**

The majority of the body of tutoring literature is made up of quantitative studies which portray and discuss the impacts of several specific elements of the educational intervention of
tutoring. Differences in program types can be identified based on several criteria: professionality of tutors, student to tutor ratio, location of delivery, and type of instruction. Research into the effectiveness of a tutoring intervention is usually focused on one of these four areas. Based on the type or purpose of the study, the results vary, leading to a lack of consensus about the effectiveness of tutoring as an intervention strategy.

The lack of qualitative research regarding the experiences of support students leaves tutoring centers, researchers, and support students at a loss. While empirical data about the impacts of tutoring methods has clear value, it does not account for how support students live through their tutoring. Understanding their subjective experiences is an equally valuable area of research that requires more attention. Approaching tutoring from a qualitative perspective provides a new angle from which to view and evaluate tutoring practices, based on lived experiences.

**Embodied Learning**

Despite the growing acceptance of the body as a site of knowledge creation and storage, research into embodiment and embodied ways of knowing has come and gone in waves in Western scholarship, but correlating actions based on the research are limited. Between 2005 and 2021, a vast body of work examining embodied ways of knowing in teaching and learning has found (through both qualitative and quantitative data) that the body is central in the process of learning and there is a correlating need for additional research into embodiment in educational spaces (Alerby et al., 2014; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; He, 2016; Kiefer & Trumpp, 2015; Kosmas et al., 2019; Macedonia, 2019; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Nunez et al., 1999; Reeves & White, 2021; Sionti et al., 2018; Thornburn, 2014; Wilcox, 2009). Batacharaya & Wong (2018) note that in indigenous cultures and Eastern belief systems, embodied ways of knowing are
centralized. Eastern spiritualities and philosophies are often focused on unity and holistic entities, which all inherently reject the separation of body and mind (Batacharaya & Wong, 2018; Yunkaporta, 2019).

Embodied learning has varied definitions, based on its use and co-optation in different fields. Even within fields the definitions and utilization can be contested. Scholars generally agree that embodied learning in Western culture is an open rejection of the Cartesian dualism - the binary system of organization that separates such entities as body and mind, man and woman, moral and evil (Grosz, 1994). For this study, the definition provided by Nguyen & Larson (2015, p. 352) served as the base of understanding: “learning that joins the body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction.” Agostini & Francesconi (2018) assert that it is necessary to think of the body as culturally, temporally, and spatially situated and to include intuition, emotion, and feeling into the understanding of the body and mind. The inclusion of spirit in this consideration comes from Eastern traditions but does not imply religiosity of any sort (Batacharya & Wong, 2018, p. 230). Each of these aspects was factored into discussions of the body in this study. Using these two elements, the definition employed in this study is learning which joins the body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge creation (Nguyen & Larson, 2015) within the bounds of a historical and cultural context (Agostini & Francesconi, 2021).

**Cartesian Dualism**

The belief that students can displace their bodies while learning echoes conceptions of ghosts in Western society, which are often characterized by a floating consciousness, outside the now deceased human form, which may or may not resemble the being while it lived. In education, the human form is considered a vessel for the brain (in essence a machine), which
while not deceased, needn’t be attended to (Macedonia, 2019). Though this image is a regular appearance on modern children’s cartoons, the idea that the human mind (the thinking entity) can be separated from the human body (the doing entity) is not new (Grosz, 1994). Likewise, the idea that the body, without the mind, is useless, has historical roots in classical Western philosophy (He, 2016). Dating back to ancient Greece, philosophers have separated the human into two distinct halves - the body and the mind. Separating humans into body and mind allowed for theorizing about one or the other, without discussing the interactions and the connections between the two. The two halves were considered independent of each other, with the mind serving as the active and the body as the passive part. The differences between the mind and the body according to this framework included but were not limited to thinking vs. sensing and feeling vs. acting. Philosophers including Aristotle and Plato considered the body less than the mind and believed it should therefore be given less attention and consideration than its counterpart (Grosz, 1994, p. 5). This separation and hierarchy were extended in the Christian tradition to explain the difference between mortal (body/sinful) and immortal (mind/godly). As this understanding of the body was normalized in philosophy, the superiority of the mind became widely accepted. Similar rhetoric is used when removing politics from a discussion that is both impacted by politics and has political implications.

The mind-body dualism was formalized by Rene Descartes, who deemed the body a “self-moving machine” (Grosz, 1994, p. 6; Macedonia, 2019, p. 2) and the mind a thinking entity that could remain objective. The mind-body split has been connected to other opposite pairs, such as reason/passion, male/female, and ahistorical/historical, among others. The separation often explains the devolution into reductionist thinking about the two and the correlated opposing pairs that have developed. This distinction can be seen in nearly all major Western
philosophical traditions, including the earliest branches of phenomenology - the study of lived experiences. The belief that humans can separate the body and mind when experiencing a phenomenon is most clearly visible in the work of Edmund Husserl, who suggested that bracketing preconceptions allowed one to be fully present in an experience, and therefore gain true insight (Stoller, 2017). In following the work of Descartes, who believed that truth came from the mind, phenomenology, through studying the lived experiences of individuals and groups, privileged the consciousness as the ultimate expression of human understanding, despite the intentional focus on the lived experience.

When using this model of thinking, the embodied experience and the embodied knowledge - knowledge held in the physical self, rather than the mind - gained from the experience are disregarded or rejected entirely (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 306). Oliver & Lalik (2001) conducted a narrative study, which asked students to tell stories about how they experienced their bodies in their classrooms. The researchers determined that the failure to focus on bodies in the curriculum had a negative impact on the four middle school girls they studied for several reasons: it caused feelings of discomfort with bodily topics, relegated body concerns/feelings to the back burner, and created an environment hostile to body knowledge (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, pp. 304-305). Despite this inattention to body knowledge in the classroom, sports (and the associated muscle memory, which is a form of body knowledge) are often glorified. This disconnect further complicates the issue for students whose embodied knowledge is not valued in their learning. By cleaving the mind and body apart, especially in respect to schooling, the latent lesson is that the body should be ignored or disciplined, while the mind should be enriched (Yuan, 2017, p. 68). The consequences of such messaging are varied,
with some influencing extreme conditions, such as eating disorders and anxiety (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 304).

As Western education is largely organized around the principles of Western philosophy, dualism was the dominant narrative in schools until the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Spinoza is known for actively rejecting the Cartesian dualism, arguing that the mind is an extension of the body and the body of the mind (Grosz, 1994, p. 12). The general agreement in modern educational research is that dualism is both impractical and inaccurate (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 12; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 697; He, 2016, p. 38; Kiefer & Trumpp, 2015, p. 16; Kosmas et al., 2019, p. 61; Macedonia, 2019, p. 2; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 337; Nunez et al., 1999, p. 46; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 3; Thornburn, 2014, p. 115; Wilcox, 2009, p. 104). Despite that agreement, educational practice founded on the separation of mind and body is still common (Nguyen & Larson, 2015).

These critiques are supported by scholars outside the education field, as well, in disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, geology, and physical education/yoga. The Cartesian dualism has been critiqued by Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) for its sublimation of the body to the mind (p. 698). Kosmas et al. (2019) explains that both body and mind are able to create knowledge, directly refuting the claim that the body is not involved in meaning-making processes of the brain (p. 61). Alerby (2009) explains that in accordance with Merleau-Ponty’s theory of the lived body, a human body inhabits the world in such a way that the experience of the world (body) and the understanding of it (mind) cannot be separated (p. 3). Since the 1970s, it has been demonstrated that action and gesture can be used in schools to improve learning (Macedonia, 2019, p. 5). Through experiments, surveys, interviews, and observations, researchers have concluded that situating learning in the body helps to improve overall
understanding, as well as increase confidence and general wellness in school settings (Macedonia, 2019; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). In spite of this research, Western education remains heavily focused on the mind, while neglecting the body.

Meanwhile, in Eastern philosophy, unity is often considered the highest goal and, thus embodied knowledge is more highly valued, because it demonstrates unity between the mind and body. In a comparison of the works of Confucious, Makaguchi, and Dewey, He (2016) explains that unity with a conception of Heaven, nature, and other people is considered the key to good living (p. 37). This unity, in turn, increases one's ability to cultivate the self and achieve contentment or happiness (He, 2016, p. 37). The value placed on unity of mind and body extends beyond education specifically to culture, writ large. He (2016) explains that full unity between body and mind is highly sought after in Eastern belief systems. Despite the cultural value placed on body-mind unity, Yuan (2017) describes how the belief does not always translate to Eastern classrooms either. While teaching in China, he noted that in spite of the belief in unity expressed in Eastern philosophical thought, education in that country deifies the mind and sanctions the body regularly (Yuan, 2017, p. 69).

In an effort to expand the understanding of the body and how it can be leveraged to support learning, it is crucial to understand if and how embodied learning is currently perceived, executed, and assessed. By asking what is known of embodied learning in the current zeitgeist, future decisions about embodied curriculum - materials and methods of teaching a topic based on people's experiences can be made (Kridel, 2010, p. 332).

**Features of Embodied Learning**

The literature suggests that learning as an embodied experience is made up of several features - connection to space (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 16-17; Freiler, 2008, p. 37; Nguyen &
Larson, 2015, p. 337; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Thornburn, 2014, p. 115), meaningful movement (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Macedonia, 2019, p. 5; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 33; Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 304; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 9), collaboration (Alerby et al., 2014; Freiler, 2008; He, 2016; Nguyen & Larson, 2015), and a relationship to fulfillment (He, 2016, p. 38; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021; Thornburn, 2012, p. 124) - and can be achieved through intentional pedagogical choices with positive outcomes for students learning. These features can be incorporated into learning at any level to increase engagement and help students learn more deeply (Nguyen & Larson, 2015).

**Connection to Space.** Connection to space is referred to in the literature as an awareness of the space and context in which learning is occurring and modifying the space to achieve the best results. Merleau-Ponty explains that since the lived body exists in a space, it is connected to it and experiences all moments contextually (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 13). Due to the contextual nature of experience, the space in which an experience occurs is often considered essential to the experience itself. Though not all embodiment discussions include information about the connection a student feels to the learning space, the physical space and current context is discussed in detail to set the stage for the research. There are several explicit research studies targeting the importance of space in the learning process as a facet of an embodied experience, which can be turned into an intentional choice in the development of an embodied curriculum. Five such studies discussed the discursive implications of a classroom, asserting in each that where one learns is a facet of their ability to inculcate information and create new knowledge (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 16-17; Freiler, 2008, p. 37; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 337; Reeves & Larson, 2021, p. 2; Thornburn, 2014, p. 115). In one case, the classroom in question was the
Scottish Highlands, which were being used as a field of outdoor learning (Thornburn, 2014, p. 115). In this understanding, the space itself is an embodied element of the moment in which the students find themselves that interacts with and impacts the experience of learning. Extrapolating on these studies, one can argue that space is of equal importance in a tutoring setting.

Since the body exists in a physical space and time, interactions are necessary to make meaning. However, "in a traditional (Western) classroom, time, space, body, and relations have often been—and still are—strictly regulated, and education, teaching, and learning, are often strictly controlled within the physical room" (Alerby et. al, 2014, p. 16) lessening the impact of the environment on the learners’ knowledge creation process and conversely the impact of the learner on the environment. Additionally, the socialization of the spaces directly impacts the way the body behaves in it (Ngyuen & Larson, 2015, p. 339). As Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) explain, when a classroom (the traditional learning space) is mentioned, it often brings to mind an image of desks in a row, facing in the direction of a board or podium, with a teacher somewhere in the room, but little attention is paid the effects the space and the physicality of the teacher on the learners (p. 697). The students in this imaginary classroom are all expected to sit still and focus on the lesson being taught from a person of authority. In their study, they asked teachers to reflect on their own actions in the room in order to draw attention to the body in the teaching process. In their narrative study, they collected stories from two teachers in different teaching settings and found that “the voices of the bodies and bodily positions” of the teachers were altered by the classroom, but also had an effect on it (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2014, pp. 714-715). Involved in this body-space dialogue were considerations of how teachers stood at the board and how they arranged the classroom space to which voice they used where, among others. Moje (2000) experienced a similar impact that she had on a space while observing a teacher; she
explains that her presence changed the power dynamic in the room and physically shifted the way the classroom behaved (p. 32). Moje (2000) reflects on her experience as a researcher in a K12 classroom and how her position as a professor impacted her ability to work with the classroom teacher. She explains that everything from how she dressed to how she spoke impacted the way she was embodied in the classroom and the other teachers’ comfort. Teachers in a reflective research study also noted in their interviews that the context of the teaching informed the practices they utilized to encourage action (Powell & Lajevic, 2011, p. 40). Both employed sensory or sensory-motor activities to build mental bridges between action and content. The case study that Powell & Lajevic (2011) produced shared the importance of place on the preservice teaching experience of 11 student teachers.

Thornburn & Marshall (2014) extended the research about the importance of space on learning to include the outdoors (p. 127). Thornburn promoted the use of outdoor spaces for learning, based largely on the research of four papers published between 2012 and 2013, who collectively expressed that learning in nature is beneficial for cognitive and physical development, in learning skills, content, and behaviors (Thornburn & Marshall, 2014, p. 116). This lends support to the earlier work of Barab et al. (2007) who found that by connecting embodied situations to content formalisms, students are better able to draw conclusions and truly learn (p. 779), which has been observed across disciplines. Thornburn & Marshall (2014) found that the lived bodily experiences can also cultivate skills, such as reasoning, which are not always supported in traditional learn-to-test methods of teaching (p. 122).

Whether learning takes place inside a classroom or outside in nature, the organization of the space has an implicit and explicit relationship with the learners. Separate desks seated in rows communicate the expectation of working silently and in a fixed position, while group tables
encourage interaction with other students. Windows open or blinds pulled up allow for interaction with the outdoors. In a similar fashion, the availability of adaptive seating signals a space that students are allowed to use in flexible ways. Likewise, the organization of learning spaces has implications for their use (Alerby et al., 2014). Using simple solutions, like creating a circle, rather than rows with the desks; allowing learners to sit on the floor; moving the teacher space from the front of the room; or having students switch seats regularly/occasionally, the dynamic of the room shifts and students experience the moments differently.

**Meaningful Movement.** With space as the backdrop against which learning occurs, the next feature of embodied learning - and possibly the most important feature - that emerges from the literature is meaningful movement, located in a physical place. Meaningful movement has had several names, including, but not limited to somatic learning, bodily learning, integrated learning, spatial learning, bodily-kinesthetic and spatial intelligence, among others (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 33). Such movements can include nearly anything, but for the movement to be beneficial to learning, it must be purposeful. Meaningful movement is described as movement that serves a distinct, intentional purpose. The goals of these movements are to draw the learner’s attention to the content and attach something meaningless such as letters to something meaningful, like a word. For example, the difference between tapping one’s foot on the floor subconsciously while reading in class and using foot tapping as an embodied movement is drawing attention to the tapping and using it to help a reader pace or break down words. If the learner is to learn how to use their body, “thoughtful awareness of one’s own body, space, and social context” is required (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2). It also requires deliberate, positive treatment of the body movement by the teacher, as negative attention - attention meant to regulate or punish - results in adverse outcomes (Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021).
By drawing attention to the body, without the often-negative connotations of it, students are able to better connect their body and mind knowledge, as well as build knowledge about the body (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 304). This body-based knowledge can also invite a cyclical growth in students, in which their increased positive bodily attention can support increased awareness of needs and subsequently allow them to advocate for themselves.

Meaningful movement has been embraced in education in the realm of early literacy, though it is regularly referred to as multisensory learning in this context (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). This iteration of embodied learning, though intentionally designed, is sometimes missing the meaningful element, because the motions can become rote. As the name implies, multisensory learning asks students to engage in two or more senses while learning a topic to better remember it later (Birsch, 2011). For example, the Wilson Reading Program asks children to tap the sounds while saying them aloud and spell the words aloud while skywriting - writing the letters with one’s finger in the air (Wilson, 2011). Typically, such movements are a result of a teacher's instruction. However, some researchers observed such movements developing organically during studies. Without direct instruction, several students, participating in a study of the impact a learning game had on students’ memory and language skills, engaged in multisensory (or embodied) actions to help them learn the material to play the game, which ultimately resulted in higher outcomes on the post-test (Kosmas et al., 2019, p. 68).

Fidgets, songs, and deep breathing are among the techniques that can serve as embodied learning in the classroom, when used appropriately to help the student digest the information at hand, by occupying intrusive thoughts or providing a physical canvas to connect to the information (Alerby, 2009; Freiler, 2008). When using embodied techniques in a classroom, the expectation that the movement be meaningful would require discussion with the students, so they
can engage in an ongoing process of meaning-making. Unlike the traditional approaches which support a top-down adoption of meaning, embodied techniques allow for, and even encourage, a personal and physical involvement with the material, supporting a bottom-up meaning-making process (Alerby, 2009, p. 8). This connection has been shown to help students in content-specific tasks, as well as generalized tasks (Barab et al., 2007). While these techniques are often used for students who are behind their peers, growing evidence suggests that such learning techniques are beneficial to everyone, including already high-achieving students (Macedonia, 2019, p. 5; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 9). Their usefulness with both populations is another indicator that embodied methods would be well-suited to tutoring.

Embodied learning is often associated with language learning, as gestures and charades are regularly used to assist in the learning of new sounds, words, and phrases. In language learning, a technique of gestural learning was developed in the 1960s in the form of a learning system called Total Physical Response (TPR) (Macedonia, 2019, p. 3). This language learning method encouraged the use of physical movement as a means of word association. While TPR is less popular today than other language learning systems, one feature has proven effective repeatedly: gestures improve long-term word recall (Macedonia, 2019, p. 5). For instance, demonstrating the word sit while doing the action can help someone recall the word later. In an earlier study, Feibush (2018) found that the more embodied behaviors - hand movements, facial expressions, eye contact, and centering the frame - a tutor performed with an online student, the better the student did (p. 42). Especially when confronting a new or complex idea, it was beneficial to students to tie it to the physical motions of the tutor or create their own (Feibush, 2018, p. 36-37). While the ethnographic study of online tutoring included several confounding factors, such as screen delay and technical issues, it also suggested that animated speech is easier
to learn from. This conclusion seems obvious when one considers that it is often easier to learn from a teacher who is physically and vocally engaged than one who lectures from a single location in a monotone voice. More recently, Reeves & White (2021) conducted a study to investigate embodiment in the context of a yoga class and noted that when the instructor’s teaching involves both mind and body, the students are more likely to be made aware of their own body and mind and the connection between the two, which created a safer space (p. 2). Like Feibush (2018), Reeves & White (2021) found that students were more involved in the class when the instructor was more physically present (p. 3). Additionally, the study highlights four yoga components - voluntary breathing, purposeful movement, mindful meditation, and relaxation - that could be used to bring embodiment into the everyday classroom experience, without extensive planning (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2).

While some subjects clearly offer places for the inclusion of embodied techniques and methods, others are less obvious. Despite this, evidence has shown that embodied techniques improve cognitive function across subjects, including science (Barab et al., 2007, p. 27; Wilcox, 2009, p. 105), writing (Feibush, 2018, p. 37), music (Keifer & Trumpp, 2015, p. 15), languages (Kosmas et al., 2019, p. 69; Macedonia, 2019, p. 4), math (Macedonia, 2019, p. 6; Nunez et al., 1999, p. 60-61), art (Powell & Lajevic, 2011, p. 40), and physical education (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3; Wilcox, 2009, p. 118). Subjects like science and art, which offer ample time for hands-on activities, fall into a category of subjects with inherent physicality (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, pp. 334-335). These subjects are easy to thread embodiment into, because they lend themselves to such activities, while subjects with socially based content and subjects with implied spatial qualities pose more difficulty for teachers (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, pp. 336). History and social work fall into the former, while mathematics is grouped into the latter. Role-
playing is suggested for socially based content, while technological solutions are posed for those whose content only implies spatial qualities like math (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, pp. 336). For lower-level math, simple techniques like tapping a physical number line and gestural movement were enough to increase retention and recall (Macedonia, 2019, p. 5).

Such methods represent only a fraction of the techniques available to educators, and since most movements can be meaningfully incorporated, teachers have freedom to experiment with different types. However, since meaningful movement is only one of four elements of embodied learning, simply adding movement to a classroom is not enough. It is crucial that the other elements be involved as well, in order to foster a truly embodied experience. Alerby et al. (2014) describes the use of the body in learning as a body run, which she explains as the information or knowledge taking a lap through the body, in order to be ingrained in the learner. Such a method fully integrates all four elements of embodied learning.

**Collaboration.** The third, and least examined, feature of embodied learning is collaboration, which takes on several forms in an embodied curriculum. While literature touches on the collaborative nature of learning several times, there are fewer resources dedicated to developing this aspect of embodied learning. Collaboration in education typically means two or more students working together, but this is not the only use of it in embodied learning literature. The literature explains that there is collaboration between students, between disciplines, and between the students and their surroundings, including people who are not students, spaces, and materials (Alerby et al., 2014; He, 2016). Collaboration is considered essential to embodiment, because it is through interactions that learning occurs (Alerby et al., 2014). Since experience is highly connected with interactions (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), collaborative moments in learning are quintessential to the acquisition of information. Freiler (2008) explains that experiential learning
in higher education is often connected to “embodied learning with affect in social processes” and advocates for collaborative inquiry as a method of meaning making (p. 42).

Collaboration between students is the simplest form of collaboration described in embodiment literature. This type of collaboration is two or more students working together to meet a common goal or accomplish a task. Additionally, collaboration across disciplines is an ever-developing area of study. Nguyen & Larson (2015) suggest that interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary thinking and learning fosters a deeper body/mind connection (p. 339). The final form that collaboration takes in embodied learning is between the student and their surroundings, which can include the tutor, the environment, and/or the learning materials. This is directly related to the first feature - connection to space - because it requires a spatial awareness and understanding of how one exists in and interacts with the learning space (Alerby et al., 2014; Nguyen & Larson, 2015) In this form of collaboration, Merleau-Ponty’s explanation of incorporation is also brought to light (Alerby, 2009). Merleau-Ponty explains that the tools one uses become an extension of the person using them and the two must collaborate to work successfully (Alerby, 2009). This connectedness, to people, places, or things, is notable, because it forces an individual to develop more self-awareness and self-efficacy (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Increase self-awareness and self-efficacy can then have positive effects on a student’s use of meaningful movements and feelings of fulfilment.

He (2016) explains that connectedness and the development of these connections is central to embodiment (p. 38). Like the relation to fulfillment, collaboration - or a quest for unity, as it is termed - is one of the primary values of holistic Eastern philosophical and religious traditions (Freiler, 2008; He, 2016). In classroom settings, fruitful collaboration is often a goal or learning objective for students. Using embodied approaches, collaboration is central to the
learning process and should therefore be included automatically. Collaboration is best fostered in a space in which the tutor actively engages in the three important pedagogical features of embodiment - developing safe spaces and comfortable relationships, self- and spatial awareness, and willingness to change. When teachers foster spaces and relationships where students feel comfortable, collaborating is a safer endeavor for those involved.

**Relationship to Fulfillment.** The final feature of embodied curriculum is its relation to fulfillment, which is developed most clearly in the works of He (2016), Nguyen & Larson (2015), Oliver & Lalik (2019), Reeves & White (2021), and Thornburn & Marshall (2014). In these works, fulfillment has several names including happiness (He, 2016, p. 38; Thornburn & Marshall, 2014, p. 124), enjoyment (Thornburn & Marshall, 2014, p. 116), and self-cultivation (He, 2016, p. 38), but each expresses a similar ideal. This ideal focuses on a holistic approach to the person, in which their education helps to make them more fully actualized, and therefore fulfilled. While one might not readily think of fulfillment as a characteristic of learning, it is unsurprising that a learning program which places student satisfaction at its center has better outcomes in the happiness category. The unexpected result is that educational spaces which center student satisfaction often have better outcomes in academic categories, as well (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2). Thornburn & Marshall (2014) posit that by “organising learning around the intrinsic (subjective) enjoyment,” one can develop a more refined educational experience, which can be explained as a more well-rounded, holistic approach to education (p. 116). Such an approach has more robust goals than a more traditional version, which situates a narrow interpretation of academic success as the ultimate objective of education. Oliver & Lalik (2001) saw this play out in their study, in which the participants were excited to follow their interests in
discussions, and the researchers noted that this in turn increased the participants’ knowledge of their own bodies and the topics they discussed in reference to their bodies (p. 324).

In each of these iterations of relation to fulfillment, the relationship fluctuates between a goal and process. While one can achieve happiness once a topic is mastered, the fulfillment can also be seen or experienced during the inculcation process. In several Eastern philosophical traditions, happiness is gained through balance (He, 2016, p. 50), which can be seen in several practices such as yoga, tai chi, and medical practices like cupping and acupuncture. He (2016) also argues that the pursuit of fulfillment or self-actualization supports a more complete society in the long run. Oliver & Lalik (2001) also express that, if done well, embodied learning can empower students - the focus of their study was middle school girls - to critique the cultural norms of body discussions and develop better senses of self (p. 330).

In education, Eastern influence can be seen in yoga-derived techniques, which privilege the unity of a human. Such practices encourage students to seek out fulfillment and approach their learning in ways that create that satisfaction for them. It is argued that such techniques can and should be brought into educational settings to foster a holistic learning experience for students, leading to increased happiness and better outcomes, and with some this is easily accomplished (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2). He (2016) explains it succinctly, saying that education should foster a total experience that centers happiness, not knowledge acquisition (p. 50), with the understanding being that knowledge develops after, though not as a direct result of, happiness. Given the locus of emotion in and on the body, Eastern philosophies, such as those of Confucius and Makiguchi, explain that in order to educate holistically, the body, mind, and spirit must all be involved in the process (He, 2016, p. 38).
In conjunction with connection to space, meaningful movement, and collaboration, relation to fulfillment rounds out the features of embodied learning. However, embodied learning cannot take place without specific pedagogical choices made by the teacher. This is one of the many challenges of embodied techniques, because it requires buy-in from teachers, administrators, students, and depending on the age of the students, parents, as well. Despite this challenge, research has suggested that when made, these choices are instrumental to helping students succeed (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Freiler, 2008; Moje, 2000; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3; Thornburn, 2014, p. 118; Yuan, 2017). The pedagogical techniques that appeared consistently in the literature include creating comfortable/safe relationships (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Moje, 2000; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3; Yuan, 2017), developing one’s awareness as a teacher (Freiler, 2008; Moje, 2000; Olver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021; Thorburn & Marshall, 2014), and being willing to change (Moje, 2000; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021; Thorburn & Marshall, 2014).

**Pedagogical Features**

Learning as an embodied experience is focused on the person receiving or hearing new information, but the literature suggests that it can only happen successfully when the teacher is actively engaging with specific pedagogical techniques. Three themes - comfortable/safe relationships (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Freiler, 2008; Moje, 2000; Yuan, 2017) teacher awareness (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Moje, 2000; Reeves & White, 2021), and a willingness to change (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Moje, 2000; Reeves & White, 2021) - of pedagogical approach emerged from the literature as the most common, but several other pedagogical features were also mentioned in isolated cases.
In addition to these pedagogical choices, another theme emerged. Researchers have found that people have a difficulty in expressing the process of embodied learning/teaching (Freiler, 2008, p. 38; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3; Thornburn, 2014, p. 118). While this is not a choice made by the teachers, it does require some level of comfort with the lack of language. Most described their understanding as a sense, rather than an action and often were unable to explain how they encouraged or developed body knowledge in their contexts. In the case of the yoga class, the instructor explained that he knew it was time to engage with a new movement because he “felt agitation in his body” (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3). In his context, he then shared that understanding, saying that the students should also move in accordance with their feelings.

**Comfortable/Safe Relationships.** One of the themes that arose most frequently was the creation of comfortable and safe relationships within the learning space (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Feibush, 2018; Moje, 2000; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3; Yuan, 2017). Both the act of creating spaces that were safe and nurturing appropriate relationships in those spaces fell into this category. This includes relationships between students and between teacher and students since all interact in a classroom. When relationships were not safe or comfortable, unequal power dynamics were exploited, directly impacting the individual who perceives themself as having less power (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 670; Moje, 2000, p. 27; Yuan, 2017, p. 67). In situations and environments that allowed for the development of safe and comfortable relationships, students were able to better express their thoughts and needs, as well as perform in their classes (Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021).

In their exploration of a yoga class, Reeves & White (2021) saw the creation of comfortable spaces across several of their themes, including “inviting experience, connecting, and personality of the teacher.” In their study, Oliver & Lalik (2001) shared that the participants
expressed themselves most clearly in their written journals, which they considered private correspondence between themselves and the researcher. In a pertinent example of the effects of creating safe spaces, whether in person or via some external medium, one student wrote:

Some of these things I wrote in this journal I can’t believe I wrote for someone to see that I didn’t really know at first. I usually don’t express what I have to say around grown-ups. I don’t even tell my mother how I feel. In this journal I have expressed a lot of my feelings and said what I needed to say. I’m glad I said some of these things to get them off my chest. I wish I could do this more often (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 327).

The researchers explain that “creating safe spaces for alternate views” was central to the girls’ willingness to engage and level of engagement (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 323). The effect of these safe spaces was that students were able to move outside their comfort zones, engage in classroom decision-making, and express concerns/needs. The opposite impact can be seen in relationships where one or more parties did not feel comfortable (Moje, 2000). Similarly, in schools where bodily autonomy is circumscribed, students and teachers are less likely to take risks, due to fear of reprisal, but the relationships created within the classroom may be what empowers teachers/students to engage in subversive practices, like Yuan (2017) did when he introduced unconventional techniques - using real-life objects and gesturing - into his structured English classes that he taught in China.

In all instances, regardless of the type of relationship that is developed, the physical expression of it is a form of embodiment. One might act stand-offish if they are feeling undervalued or uncomfortable, and those that embodied a welcoming personality were more approachable than those who did not (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003). Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) explain that teachers reacted to the real and perceived assessment of their value through
the relationships enacted with others. For example, if a teacher feels undervalued by an administrator, they might live down to that person’s expectations. Likewise, Nguyen & Larson (2015) that relationships are performative and have in-class consequences. The teacher that feels undervalued may not perform as well as they otherwise would have, which impacts their learners. Students have similar reactions when feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable, and all of those embodied emotions are brought into the classroom (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003).

**Teacher Awareness.** A feature that was described frequently was the awareness of the instructor in a given situation; those who were cognizant of the needs/feelings of individual(s) they were working with had more successful learning situations (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003; Moje, 2020; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Reeves & White, 2021). This type of teaching is neither new nor uncommon, but it is crucial when learning to recenter the body. Since the body has been ignored or negated for so long, body focused learning and pedagogical choices need to be made consciously and carefully. Due to the ways that society impacts relationships with bodies, especially among young women, any body-focused work needs to take care to help the students understand and manage emotions and reactions. Teaching that is aware of student needs and classroom changes moves away from the teacher as stoic lecturer that is common to traditional teaching (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). In addition to helping in the creation of safe and comfortable environments, being aware of one’s position and actively making choices based on the needs expressed can be a way to lessen power struggles (Moje, 2020).

Being aware as a teacher requires careful attention to detail. This may include being aware of one’s own presentation in the classroom and how that impacts the environment (Moje, 2020), pivoting from planned lessons (Reeves & White, 2021), or more deeply engaging with the contexts of the students (Yuan, 2017). Changing the cadence of one’s voice or deciding to situate
desks in a circle with the teacher included, rather than at the front, are examples of being aware of one’s presentation. An example of pivoting a lesson might be talking about a historical topic as it relates to the modern students in the room. Understanding the backgrounds of the students is an example of being aware of context. It has also been argued that knowing these contexts may not be enough, and that rather being actively engaged with systems/organizations working to dismantle oppressive forces is required of educators. In this, embodied learning offers several tools to turn learning into activism (Wilcox, 2009).

**Willingness to Change.** Closely related to awareness was a teacher’s willingness to change when the situation demanded it, because knowing there was a concern, but failing to engage with it does not support student growth. The ability to pivot appropriately and easily when the situation demanded was regarded by students as beneficial (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 316-317; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3). Similarly, this includes an openness to criticism and suggestions, which can allow for a healthier, more fruitful relationship (Moje, 2020).

In the example of pivoting from a planned lesson based on student disengagement, willingness to change would guide the teacher to a different set of actions, which could even include the students as creators of the classroom content (Thornburn & Marshall, 2014, p. 125). In fact, Thornburn & Marshall (2014) argue that the more students are given the option to provide active feedback about their learning (and see the results of that feedback), the more refined and useful the feedback becomes for the teacher. This could also include allowing students to engage with various learning methods, based on what works for them, when possible. For example, if students have voiced (or otherwise expressed) their discontent with a PowerPoint-driven lecture about the cell structure, a class in which students construct or deconstruct a cell model could be employed to support learners who need a different approach.
However, teaching this skill remains difficult, as students and teachers involved in embodied learning studies had difficulty describing how they went about using their methods (Freiler, 2008; Reeves & White, 2021). Having trouble explaining these methods verbally suggests that more hands-on and body-focused training is warranted regarding embodied learning. One individual called it agitation in the body (Reeves & White, 2021, p. 3), while others described it as “a perceptive sense” (Freiler, 2008, p. 37) but had little other language for it. Reeves & White (2021) noted that when the instructor felt the agitation he mentioned, he voiced it, encouraged the students to listen to their own bodies, and moved accordingly (p. 7). The yoga instructor’s suggestion of voicing the agitation aloud and suggesting students do a bodily inventory is exemplary of a teacher’s willingness to change, based on personal or student needs. By demonstrating this skill, the teacher is also passing on a useful skill to the students, who can employ it in their own learning.

To embrace embodied learning from an instructor’s point of view, one must be willing to continue learning about themselves and make room for change, as these characteristics were required for the development of safe learning spaces. For the learner, embodied learning can have many meanings or iterations. First, using embodied techniques when studying or doing homework can improve personal learning and promote a more holistic style of learning. Second, having embodied methods integrated into one’s educational spaces can promote different, and possibly more successful learning, especially when there is additional focus on self-awareness and bodily affect. Third, in this study, embodied learning is a lens through which to view the experiences of the participants to understand how, when, why, and to what extent students feel connected to their bodies when learning.
Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical and methodological approach that seeks to understand the essence of individual phenomena (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). The goal of phenomenology is to look at the phenomena as they exist pre-consciously or as they are experienced in the world (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). Underlying this goal are the philosophical assumptions that there is not one universal Truth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), that subjectivity is a strength (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and that all lived experiences are complex - built from interconnected elements of an individual’s life (Quotshi, 2018). In contrast to empiricist (knowledge is based on sense data) or intellectualist (knowledge can be determined through introspective thought) views of the world, phenomenology relies on a first-person point of view and does not attempt to be an objective science, according to Merleau-Ponty (1945).

Early in the development of the field, Husserl believed that phenomenology could become the ultimate objective science, with the ability to define all individual experiences encyclopedically (Abram & Jardine, 2000). Later phenomenologists veered away from this belief and feminist phenomenologists rejected it outright, instead embracing the singularity of experiences and the universality of the emotions behind them. Methodologically, phenomenology seeks to find and explore those experiences, as shared through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (van Manen, 2013).

Phenomenologically informed methodologies evolved concurrently with philosophy (Badil et al., 2023). As a methodology, there is little consensus on the proper way to conduct a phenomenological study, but most are done through direct interactions with participants, such as interviews (van Manen, 2013). While each phenomenologist may alter specific elements of the process, it is generally accepted that bracketing, analyzing, and describing are essential to the
process (Badil et al., 2023; van Manen, 2013). Bracketing, according to Husserl, is the practice of setting aside preconceived notions, but Merleau-Ponty approached the practice differently. Because the human brain transposes previous knowledge onto new experiences, Merleau-Ponty (1945) argues that one’s previous understanding of the world always influences new experiences. For Merleau-Ponty (1945), bracketing cannot separate the embodied subject from the world in any way. For example, trying to bracket one’s feelings about a past experience when considering a larger phenomenon can’t honestly be done. Rather Merleau-Ponty (1945) suggests acknowledging that feeling, so you can engage with it later. Analyzing is the practice of breaking something down into its constituent parts to try to understand it (Creswell & Guetterman, 2016). Like separating a word into its prefix, root, and suffix to determine the meaning, analyzing data is the practice of finding meaning within the language. Describing is the process of sharing the information gathered from participants (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). It is necessary to allow the reader to engage with the details of the phenomenon, as the participant experienced it. Phenomenologists rely on rich descriptions, the detailed and comprehensive descriptions of setting, situation, and quotations from participants when writing reports of their research (van Manen, 2013). The composite description that results should be a comprehensive retelling of the experience as the participant lived it and an examination of the researcher’s beliefs and biases about the phenomenon in question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This rigorous approach to qualitative data is then evaluated by measures of validity such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 239).

**History**

Edmund Husserl is known as the originator of the field of phenomenology, and he sought to study lived experiences at the level of conscious thought (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). It
should be noted that the work of Franz Brentano and Carl Stumpf focused on intentionality in the early 20th century set the stage for the development of phenomenology (Badil et al., 2023). Husserl’s student Martin Heidegger broke with his teacher on many elements of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956), but became the next leading scholar in the field (Badil et al., 2023). Heidegger (1927) is known for his work on temporality and existentialism. Merleau-Ponty (1945), Jean-Paul Sartre (1943), and Gabriel Marcel (1951) became the leaders of the third or French phase of phenomenology’s development, which focused on embodiment (Badil et al., 2023).

In the French phase, the turn towards the body included a new view of consciousness, perception, and experience. Sense data - information obtained by the senses - was previously considered objective truth, but Merleau-Ponty (1945) problematized that understanding, noting that one’s previous experiences and interactions with the world inherently color the data that is perceived. Known for his argument that one is always already in their body, in the world, Merleau-Ponty (1945) explained that the body cannot ignore the world when taking in new information.

**Critiques of Early Phenomenology**

The approaches of early phenomenologists met resistance from radical movements in the 1960s, which focused on critical approaches to race, gender, and sexuality (Grosz, 1994). One branch of critical phenomenology that developed during this period was feminist phenomenology, which questioned the assumptions of the male leaders of the field (Al-Saji, 2020). Falling between the first and second wave of feminism, this era focused heavily on post-war politics, civil rights, and contraception (Pruitt, 2022). Publications by famous feminist thinkers including, but not limited to, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem (Pruitt, 2022), and Francis
Beal (Roth, 2003) called for changes across society to improve the lives of women and women of color. Simone de Beauvoir, the wife of phenomenologist Sartre, is often credited for founding the feminist branch of phenomenology (Al-Saji, 2020). The main critique that feminist phenomenologists raised was the lack of attention to gender, as it relates to an individual’s experiences (Young, 2005). Merleau-Ponty (1945) who is well-known for arguing that the body cannot be ignored in experience, treats the male subject as if he is neuter (meaning that gender has no impact on his experience) and believes that separate study of the female subject isn’t required. The generalization that all experience is the same is inherently antithetical to his original point, that experience is colored by bodily reality. For instance, a woman and a man living in a patriarchal society are likely to explain an identical job interview with different language, based on their lived experiences. Failing to consider the implications of gender encourages the belief that the male experience is universal and that the female experience doesn't require study (Grosz, 1994). This universal also came to be treated as the “norm,” creating the opportunity to pathologize all differing experiences. These critiques led to the discussion and eventual development of feminist phenomenology, which centered the unique experiences of the lived experiences of women. However, it is also important to note that phenomenological research focused on gender can petrify, rather than expand upon the binary of male-female difference, if the researcher is not careful (Godbee et al., 2015).

**Frameworks and Theories that Inform this Research**

Built on the combined foundation of feminist phenomenology and embodied learning, this research seeks to utilize both to explore and describe the lived body tutoring experiences of female support students. Feminist phenomenology was called a framework in the course of this research, as a theory is often a discrete idea that can be defined and applied to a situation.
Feminist phenomenology was used in dual capacities throughout this research as a conceptual lens and methodology. The theory of embodied learning, an offshoot of the theory of embodied cognition, was used to frame the lived body experiences that the female-identifying students explain. Embodied learning can be described as the joint use of body and mind in the act of knowledge creation and learning within a specific context.

The two theories were organized sequentially, with feminist phenomenology acting as the overarching framework, within which embodied learning (and its compositional parts) are located (Figure 1). These two levels of theory are used in the design of the data collection tools and again for the data analysis. The four components of embodied learning help guide the question writing process to assure that discussion is focused on the body’s role in learning. The choices of methods - interviews and journal entries - are also guided by both feminist phenomenology and embodied learning. Additionally, the strong response of female students to journal writing in previous studies informed the use of this second line of data (Oliver & Lalik, 2001). Finally, the responses were coded and read from a feminist phenomenological lens.

**Figure 1**
*Frameworks and Theories that Inform this Research*
The combination of feminist phenomenology and embodied learning allows for a depth of study into the lived body experiences of female-identifying support students that wouldn’t be possible with one or the other alone. Despite their differing aims and focuses, it is their overlap that make them a valuable combination for this framework; the dialectic relationship between individual and world, and attention to the taken-for-granted are two central elements of this project. This study can bridge gaps in several research fields, while also providing information that can be used for the transformation of tutoring spaces for college students.

**Feminist Phenomenology**

The scholars most known for the development of feminist phenomenology include, but are not limited to, Edith Stein, Simon de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Iris Manion Young (Al-Saji, 2020). Each of these feminist scholars approach their critique of phenomenology differently, but together their perspectives build the basis of feminist phenomenology. The women who produced this work saw it as a rebuttal to the normative experience being expressed as male (Andermahr et al., 1997), what Beauvoir termed the “apparently genderless subject” (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Merleau-Ponty, who championed the relationship between the body and perception, spoke only of the artificial body - described in traditionally male ways - in his work, for which he is highly critiqued (Grosz, 1994). The lack of consideration about the ways that gender impacts experience resembles a similar ignorance in other scientific and philosophical fields.

Feminists also bring to the field attention to oppression and power structures which impact daily life for individuals (Al-Saji, 2020). These scholars argue that the socio-political implications are already present at the pre-reflective stage of experience (Al-Saji, 2020). Since humans always already exist in a social, historical, and political context, the ability to judge
experience without considering gender is inherently impossible (Shabot & Landry, 2018). By confronting the male-as-norm perspective, feminist phenomenologists have been able to challenge the assumptions of the field. For example, a woman who is undergoing the experience of visiting a doctor must contend with male-bias in medicine within that experience. Beliefs about female emotionality and truthfulness play a role in the quality of care that women receive from medical professionals before, during, and after an experience. Similarly, male-biased research has led to the under-diagnosis of girls and young women with ADHD and autism, impacting their abilities to function in academic settings (Slobodin & Davidovitch, 2019).

Additionally, scholars in this field argue that the bracketing of experiences was taken too far when it ignored or intentionally neglected the ways that marginalized identities impacted one’s experience (Al-Saji, 2020; Shabot & Landry, 2018). Some feminist phenomenologists propose partial bracketing as a solution, while others suggest a more radical redesigning of phenomenological methods (Shabot & Landry, 2018). When a researcher acts from the understanding that there is a universal experience of individual phenomena, they can mask or undermine differences that exist due to power differentials. Instead, feminist phenomenologists acknowledge that power and privilege cannot be bracketed out if one truly wants to learn about an individual’s experience (Simms & Stawarska, 2013).

With this shift, another critique that arose was the lack of female-specific language (de Beauvoir, 1953). Like other philosophical and psychological practices prior to phenomenology, the male experience and the vocabulary that accompanied it were at best ignorant of women’s issues and at worst deeply misogynistic (Grosz, 1994). Helene Cixous (1976) argued that an entirely new language needed to be developed to talk about the female lived body experience, as that which worked for men was not appropriate for female-bodied experiences. Such a language
would exist outside the phallocentric system of male writing and attempt to capture the lives of the subjugated (Cixous, 1976). For instance, female-centric language might include words for days off of work due to period pain and wouldn’t be based in psychoanalysis’ belief that females represent lack (less than their male counterparts) (Grosz, 1994).

Like the other forms of phenomenology, feminist phenomenology has seen a variety of iterations and interpretations since its inception. Feminist phenomenology at present has two separate, but related, foci: a critique of traditional works of phenomenology and a rereading of phenomenological texts for feminist purposes (Al-Saji, 2000). Critiquing traditional works includes the work of questioning the biases in the works of other scholars, considering the power dynamics in situations that were previously unchallenged, and considering how the language used may have fallen short. Reading phenomenological texts for feminist purposes requires the interpretation of texts and methods for distinct uses (Ryman & Fulfer, 2013). In this way, feminist phenomenology welcomes activism into its practice in manners that traditional phenomenology does not (Grosz, 1999). For example, reading the text of a law as it impacts those with female bodies opens up space for organization around the topic at hand.

Despite the intention to expand the purview to include women, feminist phenomenology has often failed to include all women. At the time of the publication of “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Cixous (1976) was only talking about white women, whose sex assigned at birth was female. Later feminist phenomenologists note the inherent limits that focusing on only one type of woman places on the field as well. Al-Saji (2000) argues that lack of inclusivity reifies othered identities and can become exclusionary, if it does not expand to look at people with an intersectional lens, which is the worldview feminist phenomenology originally sought to avoid. Since individuals with multiple marginalized identities cannot separate their experiences, their
holistic selves need to be considered in relation to the phenomenon at hand. In the intersectional work of Black and Indigenous feminists, the ways that identities compound to form one’s world and experiences in it are considered essential to understanding what it means to be female-identifying in a variety of contexts. In this study, participants were female-identifying students, who were encouraged to reflect on how all markers of identity impact their lived experiences.

In addition to its originally limited focus, the methodological approach to feminist phenomenology has largely been applied to the rereading of past phenomenological texts, such as Oksala’s revisiting of Husserl’s explanation of birth (Oksala, 2004). Al-Saji (2000) notes that this type of critical approach includes questioning the structures of perception that have heretofore focused exclusively on male embodiment, requires attention to power structures present in participants’ lives and the study methods, and rejects the belief that one should ignore their identity to discover the essence of being. In this research, the responses of the participants were read with a feminist phenomenological lens to highlight the ways that this perspective can be used as a means of analysis in its own right (Simms & Stawarska, 2016). Simms & Stawarska (2016) define the elements of feminist phenomenology, specifically explaining how the feminist lens must be applied at the various stages of planning, data collection, and analysis.

Shabot & Landry (2018) highlight the continued need to focus on the way the female body is lived in everyday life and highly specific real and virtual settings. This study aims to develop a greater understanding of the lived body experiences of female-identifying college students who are engaged in tutoring at the college level. The research is built on a theoretical foundation which combines feminist phenomenology and embodied learning, to study the bodied experiences of female-identifying college students within the tutoring setting. The goals of feminist phenomenology and embodied learning support the intentions of the research
independently and when combined. Together, they also provide a valuable lens through which to view the lived experiences of support students who identify as female.

**Embodied Learning**

Embodied learning is based on the understanding that knowledge is “inextricably tied to patterns of [one’s] embodied experiences” (Johnson, 1999, p. 374). Embodied learning scholars include, but are not limited to David J. Nguyen, David Larson, and Celeste Snowber. Nguyen & Larson (2015, p. 352) state that embodied learning connects physical and mental aspects of knowledge construction. However, this definition is missing a vital element: the environment. Since the body and mind exist within a cultural and epistemic universe, the world must also be brought into the definition (Agostini & Francesconi, 2021; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). With this addition in mind, embodied learning is understood as learning that joins the body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge creation within the bounds of a historical and cultural context.

Within embodied learning, there are four constituent parts that emerged from the literature (Table 1). These four elements are necessary features to consider when exploring learning experiences to determine if there is attention to embodiment. Meaningful movement in embodied learning is the purposeful inclusion of the body in the act of knowledge creation, in ways that support learning. For example, associating gestures with terms you are studying can improve recall (Feibush, 2018). As phenomenology rests on the belief that the body is a central component of one’s interaction with the world, its value is clear in phenomenology too. Connection to space designates that learning environments impact the way a learner is able to interact with materials, which is a microcosm of its importance in phenomenology, since the body and the world are in constant communication. Spaces that reify hegemonic narratives can
impair students’ ability to learn by devaluing their cultural knowledge and fostering hostile environments (Alerby et al., 2014). For embodied learning, a relation to fulfillment has two meanings: learner goals are centralized so that reaching them is a measure of success and emotions play a vital role in learning, as well. Rather than ignore them, as is suggested by the Cartesian dualist approach - which places the emotions within the body and below the logical mind - this method understands and includes the emotions (McBride, 2021). Likewise, phenomenology places a large value on the emotions and mental state of those participating (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Third, collaboration refers to a synergistic relationship between the tutor and learner (in the tutoring context). A collaborative activity in a tutoring space could include an activity in which the tutor and support student engage in the work jointly, with the support student taking the lead to demonstrate mastery and find areas of needed improvement.

**Combining Feminist Phenomenology with Embodied Learning**

In order to combine feminist phenomenology and embodied learning, it is essential to highlight the ways that two methods complement each other. First, Al-Saji (2000) calls phenomenology a dialogue between the body and the world, and embodied learning is considered the dialogue of mind, body, and environment with the goal of constructing knowledge (Paniagua & Instance, 2018). The metaphor of dialogue used in both highlights one of the ways that these theories complement each other, as both involve attention to the dialectic relationship of individuals and their surroundings. Taking the environment or context into account in the definition of embodied learning provides another point of overlap between embodied learning and feminist phenomenology. In phenomenology, the background and the horizon of the world, which dictate the expanses and limits of perception are always present and must be addressed (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Likewise, in embodied learning, it is through
collaboration that valuable learning takes place. The phenomenological understanding of collaboration also allows for an expansion of the traditional definition; it can include the interactions of the body and the world (Alerby et al., 2014), the individual and their body (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), or the individual and others (Boquet, 2002).

Second, phenomenology traditionally studies the elements of life that are taken-for-granted (Pryce et al., 2014). Despite the body’s critical role in experience, Nguyen & Larson (2015) note that it is often taken for granted, so long as it functions properly, especially in school settings. It is expected that the body participates in the learning process, insofar as it facilitates sitting, hand raising, and walking, but not as a feature of knowledge creation, which requires an active engagement with the body. Both feminist phenomenology and embodied learning theories reject this notion, arguing that one’s body is a singularly important source of knowledge.

Summary

The literature indicates that in the modern learning space, the Cartesian dualistic view of a mind separate from a body has little place in learning. Aside from “separat[ing] the physical self from the mental, [this perspective] largely disregard[s] the body as a locus of learning, thereby treating it as little more than a tool or unwanted distraction to the mind” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, pp. 337). Instead, a learning environment centered on the body and allowing for the existence of a variety of ways of knowing supports the needs of students best. Encouraging students to treat learning as an active experience, in which knowledge takes a body run in order to become more fully incorporated, opens new doors for education (Alerby, 2009). With so much data available about ways and reasons to incorporate embodied experiences into the classroom, it is important that continued research be done on how students react to such methods when used in educational spaces.
The inclusion of embodied techniques in learning spaces as a means of grounding information in reality, building physical body knowledge, and improving recall shows promise for increasing overall cognition skills and student wellness. Additionally, there is burgeoning evidence that there is transformative potential in embodied ways of knowing that could be channeled toward social justice actions (Wilcox, 2009). Looking to the literature for support of embodied curriculum choices, there is ample evidence that suggests that embodied learning is a valuable pedagogical choice when all of its features - connecting to space, moving meaningfully, collaborating, and seeking fulfillment (Table 1) - are enacted thoughtfully (Alerby et al., 2014, p. 12; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003, p. 697; He, 2016, p. 38; Kiefer & Trumpp, 2015, p. 16; Kosmas et al., 2019, p. 61; Macedonia, 2019, p. 2; Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 337; Nunez et al., 1999, p. 46; Reeves & White, 2021, p. 2; Sionti et al., 2018, p. 3; Thornburn & Marshall, 2014, p. 115; Wilcox, 2009, p. 104).

Embodied learning requires an in-depth engagement with the body and the mind, which lends itself to a study using feminist phenomenology. Feminist phenomenology, a critical offshoot of traditional phenomenology, puts additional emphasis on the lived body experience as gendered bodies are impacted by societal structures of oppression (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Feminist phenomenological studies engage with experiences shared by individuals, while also approaching these experiences with a critical eye to processes that could alter the perspective of the individual. Focusing on the female lived-body experience in this study may help expand the knowledge base of tutors and tutoring centers on the experiences of their female students, as well as help individuals develop more holistic, body-centered practices.

The research in this field is diverse and interdisciplinary, but still needs to be developed in certain areas. Additional research into different learning spaces, such as tutoring locations,
would allow for a more comprehensive view of embodied learning in its current contexts.
Furthermore, this qualitative research which asks questions of the students and teachers using these methods can provide more detailed information than many of the current quantitative studies, which display significant changes, but cannot delve into why or how those changes occurred and impacted the learner. Finally, more recent research, which takes COVID and its impacts on in-person learning into account, is needed to have a current picture of the environment.
Chapter 3: Methodology

While the body is innately involved in the learning process, it is often neglected and mistreated to the harm of the learner and the learning (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Embodied learning incorporates the physical self into the process of knowledge acquisition, regarding it as equally important to the mind. Research into the uses and benefits of embodied learning has been ongoing in the West since the 1980s, but little has changed in the traditional classroom (Freiler, 2008; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Additionally, minimal embodied learning literature is devoted to tutoring spaces despite the optimal environment that tutoring provides. The majority of research regarding tutoring is quantitative in nature, examining the impact of tutoring on grades and attendance. The paucity of qualitative research regarding the nature of tutoring experiences and the ways the body can impact one’s learning can be addressed through attention to embodied learning, which has four features (Table 2).

By centering the four features of embodied learning in the investigation, I explored the body’s role in tutoring and begin to fill gaps in the literature about tutoring and embodied learning. Using a feminist phenomenological design, which employed interviews and journal entries, allowed me to collect information about the lived body experiences of female-identifying support students that can be used to understand better how interactions with the body impact the learning process when undergraduates are receiving tutoring.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways that the body is and is not called into tutoring and how those experiences impact how students perceive the learning process, specifically for female-identifying students. Both tutoring and phenomenological research lack awareness of the ways that living in a female-presenting body changes experiences. By using
phenomenological interviews and journal entries, I explored the bodied experience of tutoring with a group of female-identifying undergraduates receiving tutoring at their college or university. The focus on female-identifying students is two-fold: female-identifying students are more likely to seek support services (Primary Research Group, 2020), and tutoring research has largely neglected the gendered-body experience (Grosz, 1994). Approaching the data with a feminist phenomenology lens creates a space for exploration into the lived experiences of gendered bodies.

In addition to exploring a space that was previously understood as genderless, feminist phenomenology offers a strong rebuke to traditional scientific methods, which value numerical/objective data over narrative/subjective (Stoller, 2017). This methodology highlights the value of narrative data about the experiences of individuals, especially those from marginalized groups, such as women and people of color. Since much of Western scientific knowledge has been attributed to white, wealthy, straight cis-gender men, the voices and perspectives of individuals who don’t fit that mold have largely been ignored or co-opted (Grosz, 1994). Feminist phenomenological methods create the space for Othered voices (in this case women) to share their experiences and have the product of their life experiences be valued as knowledge.

**Research Question Review**

In seeking to understand the impact of the body on female-identifying students, this research project focuses on the lived body experiences of those being tutored. With this in mind, there is one research question posed: what is it like to be a female-identifying undergraduate support student? The intent of identifying just one question is to collect a broad-range of body-based stories about tutoring to better understand the overall environment of tutoring for female-
identifying students. This sets the stage for future research to focus more specifically on findings that emerge.

**Qualitative Research Design**

The limited qualitative research regarding tutoring and gender necessitates a study that focuses on the impact of gender on lived body experiences. Qualitative research is intent on developing a deep understanding of a topic, rather than gathering empirical data to draw conclusions about correlation or causation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of research leans heavily on face-to-face interactions with participants and the sharing of their stories. The results aim to capture the descriptions provided by participants and highlight similarities and differences between them.

In phenomenology, specifically, the intention is to develop a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon as it is lived by an individual (van Manen, 2013). Methodologically, phenomenology is the practice of listening to and analyzing the experiences of individuals in an attempt to find the essence of that experience (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). Like other qualitative methods, phenomenology uses interviews and written artifacts to gather the details of the study phenomena from the participants (van Manen, 2013). The individual approaches to this goal differ based on the phenomenologist who developed them. For this study, a feminist phenomenological process, developed from the work of Shabot & Landry (2018), Simms & Stawarska (2018), and Stoller (2017) were applied to the data.

**Feminist Phenomenology Approach**

Feminist phenomenologists often critique the previous accounts of different phenomena and work with participants to co-create a product “albeit one that remains open to critique and contestation” (Weiss, 2021, p. 70). The continued conversation around the topic of interest and
the phenomenon highlights the dialectic relationship between an individual and society that is central to feminist phenomenology (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Unlike Merleau-Ponty and his contemporaries, feminist researchers focus less definitively on the essence of an experience, with the understanding that individual circumstances and societal expectations make every experience different for different individuals. They also understand that socio-cultural factors may limit the ability of women to fully express their experiences (Shabot & Landry, 2018).

Feminist phenomenology is a critical approach to phenomenology that started in the 1960s and 1970s as a way to question the assumptions of the heretofore male-led field (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Critiques of male-bias and over-bracketing were taken up by female philosophers, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Helene Cixous, though none referred to themselves as phenomenologists at the time (Shabot & Landry, 2018). In response, feminist phenomenology considers power and privilege as the participant experiences it, in the analysis of data, as well as researcher positionality. Al-Saji (2020) explains that feminist phenomenologists do not bracket out these elements, like Husserl may have intended, but rather bring them into the conversation. Since one’s identity and sociocultural background greatly impacts how one experiences the world, feminist phenomenologists center, rather than neglect these features of an individual. The work that has come from these phenomenologists includes research into issues that were previously neglected by male researchers, such as maternity, menstruation, and menopause from the perspective of those living through them (Stoller, 2017). Additionally, work which extends the reach of feminist phenomenology into other fields is also developing.

Like earlier versions of phenomenology, feminist phenomenology saw several phases of development and change (Stoller, 2017). Stoller (2017) notes that feminist phenomenologists do not always adhere strictly to the methods developed by traditional phenomenologists.
Phenomenological reduction, for example, which was central to Husserl’s methodology, is often rejected or altered in feminist research (Stoller, 2017, p. 338). This has led to several iterations of the methodology, which researchers apply based on the specifics of their study and explain in the narrative.

**Instrumentation**

Instrumentation is an umbrella term in research for the tools used to collect data from research participants. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and tests are examples of common instruments used in various types of research. In qualitative research, the main instrument being used for the study is the researcher themself (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is considered the main instrument, because their interactions with the participants serve as the tool by which data is collected.

**Researcher as Instrument.** Since the researcher is able to be flexible and adapt to the situation, understand verbal and nonverbal cues, and interact directly with the participants, they act as the main instrument to organize and analyze the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This means that rather than relying on a tool, such as a survey, the researcher uses his/her knowledge, experiences, intuition, and skills to develop an understanding of the participant. High levels of engagement with the participants and the study itself are necessary in this type of research.

Given the role of the researcher, the relationship between the participants and I was a crucial element of the study. The researcher must be able to explain their relationship to the participants, the field, and their experiences with the phenomena (Dodgson, 2023). Transparency in these areas can improve the quality of the work produced and increase the confirmability, transferability, and credibility of the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Phenomenologists are expected to engage in reflexivity - process of self-reflection to help researchers understand
their connections (Dodgson, 2013) - critically and often to ensure that their positionality doesn’t impede the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). These reflections are often recorded in a researcher’s journal and used as a data source. They are also included when a researcher uses an audit trail to show the rigor and transferability of their study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, reflexive writing has been built into the methodological approach to ensure that it is happening consistently. Prior to starting interviews, I engaged in reflexive writing, based on the work of van Manen (1997). Van Manen’s phenomenological method includes four steps, which I followed prior to engaging in the interviews. The first piece of reflexive writing that I completed highlights all of the steps (Table 2).

### Table 2

**Reflexive Pre-Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1. Turning to the Nature of Lived Experience</th>
<th>Receiving tutoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orienting the phenomenon</td>
<td>Receiving tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating a question</td>
<td>What is tutoring like for female-identifying support students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicating assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and pre-understandings</td>
<td>- Women go to tutoring more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tutoring is framed as “for struggling students”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Has opportunity to really help</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Students learn better from peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Training for tutors is limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Abilities at college centers are limited</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Can be scary/intimidating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Can be empowering</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tutor drastically impacts a session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not always culturally responsive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Can be cost-prohibitive/socially stigmatizing</td>
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<tr>
<th>Step 2: Existential Investigation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploring the phenomenon: generating data - Using personal experience as a starting point</td>
<td>I was always a teacher’s pet, the smartest (or highest scorer, at least), the first to finish a test, the one to help others, until I wasn’t. Skipping Chinese 1 meant that I missed the building blocks of the language and jumped into the use of it, making me the least prepared. As always with languages, I quickly got writing and reading, but speaking was a particular struggle. I was told to get a tutor and I felt defeated despite “knowing” that it didn’t mean I was dumb. I’d like to think I walked into tutoring open and ready to take her advice, but my 19-year-old self wasn’t as humble as I...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
am now. (LOL!) Looking back, I remember being a bit resistant and hesitant, but also feeling better after it was over. She definitely pushed me out of my comfort zone and got me to speak more clearly and accurately. I remember being glad she was a she and that the receptionist didn’t know me from elsewhere on campus. Through the weeks of working with her, I gained confidence, comfort, and a bit of self-knowledge, though I don’t think I knew that until years later. As a tutor myself, I’d like to think I brought lessons from that experience with me into my own work.

### Step 3. Phenomenological Reflection

**Conducting thematic analysis: Uncovering thematic aspects in lifeworld description**
- Tutoring because behind/struggling
- Opposite of success
- Self-awareness
- resistance/hesitance
- Positive outcome/learning experiences
- Glad she was a woman

### Step 4. Phenomenological Writing

I noticed that even though I, as an adult and now a tutor, firmly believe that tutoring has nothing to do with personal deficits, when I was thinking about it, feelings of shame and defeat are attached to those memories. I also highlighted how successful the short-lived relationship was, because I did actually learn a lot. I only reflected on gender once, but in my memories of it, the receptionist was also a woman and somehow that was comforting. I think now that would play a bigger part for me.

This reflexive activity was the first that I did during the course of the research to help me understand what feelings, biases, and understandings I had about being a tutor currently and a support student in the past.

During the coding process, I also engaged in reflexive writing. Based on the work of Shabot & Landry (2018), this exercise included critical analysis of the interviews, as well as the way they were conducted. Finally, I engaged in reflexive writing after the data has been collected and analyzed to come to an understanding about what I learned from this process, as well. By engaging with the recordings and focusing on the dynamics of power and relationships, which are central to feminist phenomenology, this writing can help me identify my biases and assumptions, so they can be clearly articulated in the paper. In order to use this personal
understanding as data, as is expected in phenomenology, it is essential to regularly engage with oneself throughout the process.

**Phenomenological Interviews and Journal Entries.** Phenomenology largely uses language-based methods to investigate phenomena, such as interviews, focus groups, and written artifacts (van Manen, 1997). The focus on spoken and written word can be traced back to Heidegger, who believed that as an essential element of humanity, language was crucial to phenomenological investigation (van Manen, 1997). Some phenomenologists also base their work on observation data, which has a foundational role in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Observations were not included in this study, as explained later in this chapter.

While there is no true consensus on how to do phenomenology, different versions have been put forth by many scholars (Al-Saji, 2020; Simms & Stawarska, 2016; Stoller, 2017). Despite their differences, all generally include some version of bracketing, analyzing, and describing (Badil et al., 2023; van Manen, 2013). Bracketing refers to the practice of setting aside personal knowledge of a topic in order to approach it without preconceived notions (Høffding & Martiny, 2016, p. 552). Feminist phenomenologists have taken issue with the extent to which this practice was used in earlier research and suggest a different approach: using bracketing to explain being critical of one’s own knowledge, with the understanding that an individual can never fully be separated from their knowledge (Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Van Manen (1997) supports this approach to bracketing, also explaining that making one’s assumptions and biases known is a more reasonable approach than trying to set them aside. Analyzing, like its dictionary definition, refers to the deconstruction of thoughts and ideas to understand what makes them up. In phenomenology, this is a practice that the researcher and participants undergo in an effort to continuously engage with the phenomenon at varying levels (Pazurek & Koseoglu, 2022).
Finally, description is a crucial element of phenomenological work (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; van Manen, 1997). Thick or rich descriptions of the experiences of participants and the environments in which the phenomenon occurs are considered the essence of the approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In feminist iterations of the method, additional focus is added in the areas of reflexivity and the articulation of data. Simms & Stawarska (2018) argue that feminist phenomenological results warrant an entirely different approach to the dissemination of research to capture the intent and voice of the information (p. 13). Additionally, the importance of reflexive writing is centralized because it helps participants and researchers alike to understand power, privilege, and biases in their experiences.

In this study, the participants answered interview questions and respond to journal prompts about their bodily experiences in a tutoring setting. The choice to focus on these two points of data was two-fold. First, observations can interfere with the setting that one is observing. Biases, on the part of the researcher and participant, can lead participants to behave or respond in atypical ways or based on what they believe the researcher wants to hear (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Second, observations create more space for the researcher to make assumptions and judgments about the participant, tutor, program, and/or college/university because of in-the-moment interpretations. While the understanding of one’s observation could be member-checked in a way that is similar to an interview transcript, the ways that the actions and speech of the participant and tutor are recorded could color the responses provided by the participant.

**The Interviews.** After participants changed their name on screen to their chosen pseudonym, the interviews began with an introductory statement that includes a reiteration of the rights listed in the informed consent, details about the research, and an opportunity for participants to reaffirm their intent to participate. Before moving into the content of the
interview, a short description of embodied learning and a guided embodiment session was done to help the participant understand the types of questions asked.

For the guided session, I taught a brief language lesson about Mandarin Chinese tones using embodied methods of hand gestures and facial expressions. In Mandarin Chinese, all words have tones - an intonation or pitch - but unlike English, these tones change the meaning of the word. The example that I taught at the start of the interview focused on the word ma (as written in pinyin - the romanization of Chinese characters (pinyin). This word can be said with each of the four tones, which shifts the meaning from mom (tone 1) to hemp (tone 2), to horse (tone 3), to scold (tone 4). It is important to note that in Chinese characters, these words are represented differently, but pronounced the same, save for the tonal change. This lesson is particularly attuned to embodied learning, because learning the four tones with hand gestures and facial expressions can help cement it in one’s memory. The four tones are represented in words with directional marks above the letter a to show how it would sound. The associated hand gestures are used to help new Chinese speakers and readers with identifying, memorizing, and utilizing the correct tone. In addition to mimicking the shape of the mark above the words, the hand gestures help learners to remember which tone to use when speaking, based on the direction of the hand. For example, the first tone is flat, which is modeled with a flat hand at the level of one’s face or clavicle. The sound, likewise, is flat, and the voice does not rise or fall like with the other three tones. To illustrate this relationship, the word (as it is written in pinyin) is shown connected to each tone, which then shows the hand motion associated with the tone and the meaning of that version of the word (Figure 2). It should be noted that only the third hand gesture requires movement of the hand; the others are consistent. Chinese characters are not included, as they were not shared with the participants for the sake of the activity.
Since the method is an embodied practice, it also gives them additional tools to bring to their tutoring sessions, as well as other settings. Though the information is not directly relevant to most of the participants (four were not studying Chinese, and one has studied Chinese, so she was already familiar with it), the practice of using the body to learn was central to their understanding of the questions and the research context. This activity took from two to five minutes based on the participant and set the stage for the embodiment questions that followed.

Several demographic questions were asked at the start of the interview to better understand each participant’s position, in relation to the study. Demographics that were collected include year in school, race, first language, years in tutoring, and program of study in college. The five interview questions were all open-ended and encouraged participants to delve into the experiences they have had that relate to negative or positive embodiment while in tutoring. The interviews were semi-structured, so there was always room to add or modify questions as I saw fit, based on the responses of the participants. Questions about how their tutors responded to their actions within tutoring were included as follow-up questions. Each question focused on different elements of bodied experiences, based on the four-pronged model of embodied learning described in chapter two (Table 2). These questions were designed to open
the conversation to more detailed and specific questions to follow. Examples for each response were included on the protocol for participants who didn’t understand a question or needed more information to develop their answers. Despite the intentional categorization of these questions into the four topics, participants were given the freedom to answer in any way that fully expressed their experiences. For example, if a participant began talking about a collaborative moment they had while answering question one, they were encouraged to keep explaining. These diversions were attended to during the coding process.

**Table 3**

*Main Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Movement</td>
<td>Tell me about a time when you were aware of how your physical presence/body influenced (or being influenced by) your tutoring experience. (This might include “not being able to focus because you were too tired” or “having an easier time studying because the furniture is better than your dorm”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to Space</td>
<td>Describe your tutoring environment in as much detail as possible. What does it smell like, look like, sound like, feel like, etc.? How do you feel in that space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Tell me how your body is influenced by the tutor or other support students in the tutoring space. (Do you do better in one-on-one, small groups, silent, chatty, with a tutor of the same gender/age/major etc?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of Fulfillment</td>
<td>Can you share any stories about tutoring in which you felt particularly connected to your body or the material you were studying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Journals.** Journal entries were the second method of data collection. Like the interview questions, all were open-ended and focused on the lived experiences of female-identifying support students in their tutoring environments. The Qualtrics link for the journal prompts was provided via the meeting chat and an email sent at the conclusion of the interview (Appendix F). Though there were eight available prompts, participants were asked to fill out at least four, allowing them to reflect on the questions that had the most meaning to them personally. I
explained that they could answer more than four of the questions, if they wanted to and some of
the participants did so, providing more information about the individual tutoring settings. In
phenomenological research, written interaction with the phenomenon being studied is central
(van Manen, 1997). Based on Heidegger’s belief that “language, thinking, and being are one,”
van Manen (1997, pp. 38-39) highlights the importance of speaking and writing the human
experience. These were intended to supplement the information in the interviews and offer the
participants more freedom, given the lack of requirements.

This also gives participants time to answer the questions without the gaze or influence of
the researcher, which might encourage deeper or more honest answers. Unlike the interview
questions, the journal prompts are not subject to change, but participants had the freedom to
answer the prompts as they saw fit. When explaining the loose instructions, I told the participants
that they could write in the journals in any way that they wanted to do so, and some expressed
surprise that they were not tied to full sentences and college-level writing. In keeping with the
belief of Simms & Stawarska (2018) about allowing women’s voices to be heard, I noted that
their responses would be shared as they wrote them, so they could even write a poem or in bullet
points, if that felt authentic to them. Some of the journal prompts included several smaller
questions within one large question, in anticipation of participants answering in greater detail
when given specific elements to focus on (Table 4). Some specifically requested an example or a
story that was relevant to the question. To encourage participants to answer the questions as
honestly and fully as possible, they were not required to follow an answer format or spend a
ddictated amount of time on them. Also, as these prompts were tied only to the participants’
pseudonyms, there was no risk of loss of confidentiality in answering the questions. Like the
interviews, participants were asked not to name any individuals or entities when writing their responses.

**Table 4**

*Journal Prompts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Prompts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is tutoring like for you? What do you think, see, smell, feel, touch when in the tutoring space? Give an overall description of your tutoring experiences that include the ways you feel, the others present, the space around you, the content of the sessions, etc. Any details that you deem important about your sessions can be included.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When you are corrected or told that you are wrong in tutoring, what physical and emotional reactions do you have? How does the tutor handle those moments?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How and how often do you engage your body when learning (mnemonic memory devices, physical response, movement around room, relaxation activities, etc.)? If never, consider what it might look like and how it might impact tutoring for you.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think back to the first time you visited the tutoring center. Compare how you felt physically and emotionally then to how you are feeling physically and emotionally now when you come to tutoring.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Write down your physical and emotional responses to a recent tutoring session. Be as detailed as possible about what was occurring in your body and mind before, during, and after the session.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think back to a tutoring session that you left feeling good/content/proud/etc., what do you remember about that session? How was that session different from others that you have left with less positive feelings?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do you respond to bodily needs (hunger, thirst, bathroom, exhaustion, etc.) when you are in a tutoring session? How does your tutor respond? Please give details or an example, if possible.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you describe your initial reaction to tutoring? (What were your feelings regarding starting, the tutor, the class that you were attending for, how you came to tutoring, etc.?)</strong></td>
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**Stages of Procedure**

The variations in the methodology used in phenomenological research highlight the many ways that researchers can approach experiential data. Some researchers focus on the phenomenological reduction, while others put emphasis on description, and yet others only loosely follow the methods suggested by early phenomenologists (Stoller, 2017). The lack of consensus surrounding the method is reminiscent of that surrounding the philosophy (Al-Saji,
Due to these variations, researchers must align with one method based on the focus, purpose, and epistemological underpinnings of their study.

Feminist phenomenology is no more consistent in its approach to methodology, with various researchers advocating for a wide array of methods and focusing on differing elements (Al-Saji, 2020; Simms & Stawarska, 2013). For this research, the approach was derived from Shabot & Landry (2018), Simms & Stawarska (2013), and Stoller (2017). Since there were few approaches specifically articulated, the following steps, distilled from the advice of Shabot & Landry (2018), Simms & Stawarska (2013), and Stoller (2017), were used to collect and analyze data: (1) position the researcher, participant, and study in the world, (2) engage in reflexive writing, (3) collect data through interviews and journals, (4) engage in reflexive writing and coding, (5) present results with attention to voice. Simms & Stawarska (2018) note that due to the infringement on female voices by patriarchal structures, it may be necessary to share the information in atypical ways. Additionally, feminist phenomenologists argue that it is vital to honor the form and type of expression used, since female expression has been limited inside and outside of research (Shabot & Landry, 2018; Simms & Stawarska, 2018). The steps of this procedure can be traced from the work of earlier phenomenologists to its present iteration, though each generation placed emphasis on different elements. Husserl, for instance, focused heavily on the phenomenological and eidetic reductions in his process (Shabot & Landry, 2018). Merleau-Ponty’s central belief was that an individual operated in connection with the world and that could not be properly bracketed out (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The iteration of the process that I modeled my reflexive writing on includes orienting the phenomenon (choose a phenomenon of particular interest that can be investigated), formulating a phenomenological question (creating
an existential approach to the phenomenon as a whole), and explicating assumptions and pre-understandings (bracketing) (van Manen, 1984).

Step one is derived from the expectation that researchers describe the world in which the study is happening and how all of the stakeholders are positioned in it (Stoller, 2017). To accomplish this step, I explained my own position in relation to the study and the larger world and then the participants, based on the information they provide at the beginning of the interviews about demographics and relationship to tutoring. This positioning also honors the goals of feminist research which are relation-centered and question the ways that power is distributed in different situations (Simms & Stawarska, 2018). This step includes gathering and reporting the necessary demographic information of the participants, the setting, the researcher’s positionality, and the relationships that exist between individuals and institutions related to the study. The act of identifying and seeking to understand the power dynamics at play adds to the trustworthiness of the study and the confirmability of the results. Since feminist phenomenology is heavily focused on the ways that social positioning impacts the experiences of individuals, it is crucial to centralize that element in the methodology.

Step two comes from both traditional and feminist phenomenology, since reflexivity is required in all methodologies in which the researcher is the main instrument (Cresswell & Miller, 2010; Stewart, 2010). Reflexivity is the practice of a researcher sharing their personal beliefs, biases, and values, which may impact their research (Creswell & Miller, 2010). It stands apart from reflection, because the goal is to constantly attempt to be more aware of one’s thoughts and actions and their interaction with the wider world. Merleau-Ponty (1945) explains that being reflective - looking back on a memory of an event or experience - isn’t enough, because the person who perceives the moment and the one who looks back at it later are not the
same (p. 49). Unlike reflection, reflexivity makes the distinction that the individual is considering themselves in this moment, not looking back at a previous experience. This means that the researcher should be attempting to voice all that she understands about the topic at hand, as well as her personal beliefs and biases, so they can be sifted through in relation to the data. In addition to responding to a series of questions, I used the practice of free writing over several days prior to data collection to take time to engage with the topic.

Step three was the actual data collection process, which was detailed in the researcher’s journal. As indicated, data was collected using recorded Zoom interviews (for which participants’ names were be changed to pseudonyms) and journal entries. The semi-structured interviews were organized into a variety of body-focused topics that invite participants to share stories that were related. Interviews were expected to take between 40 and 60 minutes. Likewise, the open-ended journal prompts are intended to create space for participants to engage deeply with their body knowledge, bodied experiences, and identify as a female-identifying student receiving tutoring. There were eight possible entries available, but participants were only required to answer four. Anyone who wanted to answer more than four were welcome to do so. Journal entries are expected to take about 20 to 40 minutes to complete, depending on the amount of writing a participant does.

The fourth step required both coding of the participants’ words and additional reflexive work by the researcher. It is important to note that steps three and four did occur in a linear progression. Coding and reflexivity overlapped with data collection regularly. Additionally, the process of reflexivity was one that I consistently engaged with throughout the study. Coding took place in two phases, the first deductive and the second inductive. The initial phase of coding was to organize responses into categories based on the four constituent elements of embodied
learning - connection to space, meaningful movement, relation to fulfillment, and collaboration (Table 2). After this initial phase, inductive and in vivo coding were used to find common themes between the participants’ responses. It is at this stage that intersections and connections, as explained by Stoller (2017) were investigated. This means that codes that were similar or related to the same topics were grouped into categories.

The articulation of results was the fifth and final step. Simms & Stawarska (2018) note that to keep the integrity of the voices of the participants, in order to produce an empowering product, feminist phenomenological researchers may choose non-traditional ways of sharing the narratives they collected. This may include poetic techniques, inclusion of the unsaid, and thick descriptions to fully portray the stories (Simms & Stawarska, 2018, p. 13). The results of this study were conveyed in a manner that respected the voices of the participants and represents the full experiences they share. Thick description, a technique which draws on the work of anthropologists, is a crucial element of this step and is considered necessary to flesh out the world of the results (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Thick descriptions are detailed renderings of the environment, the individual, and the situation they are describing in order to give the narrative rich, realistic detail (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Like reflexivity, thick description increases the trustworthiness of the results by providing readers with as much detail about the process as possible (Creswell & Miller, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2019).

While this progression of steps was not a direct replication of any previous feminist phenomenological method, it highlighted the interactions and connections that Stoller (2017) has argued are most valued. Based on the phenomenological works of Shabot & Landry (2018), Simms & Stawarska (2019), and Stoller (2017), the stages of a process were developed following
the outline of expected phenomenological methods and focusing heavily on reflexivity, power
dynamics, and underrepresented voices, central features of feminist research. These steps
includes a feminist approach to the phenomenological reduction and description, while
remaining focused on the lived experiences of the participants.

Participants

The choice to focus this study on college tutoring is multifaceted. First, tutoring research
writ large is lacking qualitative data about the experiences of the students, but college tutoring
research shows promising growth in this area (Alfonso, 2022; Connor & Gray, 2023; Dvorack,
2001). This source of data can be a powerful driver of change in college tutoring programs, but it
has been found that college tutoring programs use data at variable rates (Primary Research
Group, 2020). By adding to this developing area, more information were available to tutoring
program administrators to better their programs and improved programs are likely to increase
positive student outcomes.

Second, since college-aged students are typically 18 years old or older, they are a unique
population from which to sample. Their role as young adults makes them both valuable and
vulnerable and require additional research to make sure methods used in tutoring are as
beneficial as possible. Likewise, the research on tutoring with non-K12 students is limited in
scope and is largely focused specifically on writing centers (Boquet, 2002; Connor & Gray,
2022; Lambert, 2015; Trosset et al., 2019; Washko, 2023) making a qualitative study of
experiential data that expands on what is currently available is of critical importance.
Additionally, unlike younger students being tutored, these students do not need additional
consent from parents or guardians; their choice to participate in the research is enough.
Finally, tutoring programs geared toward these young adults differ greatly from those designed for younger learners and offer more opportunities for studying the phenomenon in question. Though embodied learning may not be a goal of tutoring in either age group, it is more likely to occur with younger learners who naturally need more movement and have lower impulse control than with older learners who have developed those skills throughout their lives. Additionally, in American culture, people are taught to ignore or reject their bodies and feelings as they get older (Hossain, 2022; McBride, 2020), so college students can provide invaluable insight into the involvement of their bodies in their learning post-high school.

**Population, Sample, and Setting.** The population for this study is female-identifying undergraduate students, over the age of 18, enrolled in college-sponsored tutoring from a Mid-Atlantic college or university (Table 5). Eligibility to participate also requires that participants be engaged in a university tutoring program on a consistent basis and be able to communicate comfortably in English, though they need not be native or first language English speakers. Consistency in tutoring over a period of time has shown promising results for students (Allen & Chavkin, 2004; Trosset et al., 2019), so students who participated in tutoring on a drop-in or inconsistent basis were not considered for this study. However, drop-in tutoring is a common support service offered to students, so despite it falling outside the scope of this work, it deserves further attention. Additionally, anyone receiving a secondary or additional bachelor’s degree was not included, as their previous experience with bachelor’s degree programs may skew the results unintentionally. Disability status was not included in the inclusion and exclusion criteria, because students with and without disabilities can utilize tutoring. For students who choose to share their disability status during the research, it was considered a personal descriptor and included in their participant profile.
Table 5
*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion Criteria</th>
<th>Exclusion Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enrolled in a Pennsylvania undergraduate program</td>
<td>• Inconsistent attendees of tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify as female</td>
<td>• Receiving a secondary/additional bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be at least 18 years of age</td>
<td>• Non-English speakers (who do not have a strong command of English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engaged in consistent tutoring at PA college or university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-native English speakers (who feel comfortable communicating in English)</td>
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**Sampling Procedure.** As student emails are not public information, the study documents were sent to the tutoring center coordinator at all applicable colleges and universities that had such information available (96 in total). The directors were asked to post a flier and email their students at the centers that agreed. This purposive approach to sampling allowed tutoring directors at a wide variety of Mid-Atlantic colleges and universities to make the study available to their students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each university received the same packet of materials: a recruitment flier, recruitment email, and information about the primary investigator (PI). The informed consent document and interview sign-up were linked in the email. Students enrolled in the project on a volunteer basis and could choose to withdraw at any time if they wanted or needed to.

In addition to this sampling method, I used snowball sampling and social media posts to reach out to more students. I asked participants to share the study with others that they thought would participate at the end of their interviews. I also distributed the recruitment flier to individuals who can share it with students directly and posted it on social media. Posts were made on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share the study more widely (Appendix D). By reaching out more directly to students in tutoring or individuals who may know of students
receiving tutoring, there was a higher chance of increased participation among students who meet the inclusion criteria.

Five students met the criteria and four of them participated in both phases of the study. The participant who did not respond to the journal prompts also did not participate in member checking. The goal of the sample is not to be representative of a larger population, but rather to investigate the circumstances of several situations closely. Shabot & Landry (2018) call this attention to small groups of non-representative individuals particularization. Homing in on a shared experience that is likely to elicit different results from each individual allows me to explore the experiences from the feminist phenomenological lens. Since depth of understanding is central to phenomenological research, the goal of particularization - knowing a data point well and emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual story (Stake, 1995) - rather than generalization aligns well with the methodology and frameworks supporting the research.

**Setting.** Participants were elicited from Mid-Atlantic colleges and universities. Through two rounds of recruitment, emails explaining the project and asking center directors to post fliers and send emails were sent to 96 tutoring centers in Mid-Atlantic colleges and universities. These 96 institutions were chosen for contact because they had an individual listed on their tutoring center website who could directly respond to questions and provide access to their location. At the end of the recruitment period - February 9, 2024 - 10 locations had agreed to participate, 10 declined, and the remaining 76 did not respond to communication. Those who agreed submitted a letter of support for the research and shared the study with students at their institution. Additionally, the study was shared through snowballing and social media posts. All interviews were hosted online, so participants could do their interview from their location in the region.
Participants were not asked which university they attended but were required to affirm their attendance at a qualifying institution.

**Informed Consent and Protection of Human Subjects.** The informed consent document was housed on Qualtrics, where participants were also given access to their journal prompts. In addition to the traditional elements of informed consent, there was a list of resources made available to students in case they felt the need to access mental health care after engaging with the topics of the interview and/or journal prompts. Participants were asked to choose their pseudonym at the time of consenting so that all of their data could be organized via that pseudonym. The interview sign up was conducted via Sign-Up Genius, which was formatted to only allow students to see their own registration information.

Both in the informed consent and at the start of the interview, participants were informed that they could skip questions or withdraw from the study entirely, at any time, if they felt the need to. Though no participants withdrew, the procedure for this situation was the deletion of data for any withdrawn participants to protect their privacy.

Interviews were scheduled for a one-hour time block, but not all took the whole hour to complete. At the start of the interview, students changed their screen name to their chosen pseudonym before the recording began. After the recording started, participants were asked to verbally re-consent before beginning the interview. At the close of the interview, journaling instructions were explained so participants could begin journaling as soon as they wanted to. Data collection was intended to take place prior to the start of fall 2023 finals at any of the participating universities, but due to challenges with recruitment, the interviews and journal responses were collected in early 2024. This time frame also avoided midterms and finals for the 2024 spring semester. Participants who completed both sections of the research - interview and
journal entries - received a $10 digital visa gift card and a short section of the conclusion, written specifically for them.

**Benefits and Risks**

As with all studies involving human subjects, there were both risks and benefits to engaging in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2016). In this study, the benefits - adding to the knowledge of embodied learning, engaging in reflective practices, developing innovative approaches to an old teaching form, and adding to the field of feminist phenomenology - were mostly for the field. Additionally, making more explicit connections between the body and learning in all types of learning spaces can improve the quality of support students receive. However, students engaged in this research also had the opportunity to develop a better understanding of themselves and their learning needs. This understanding can be used to better address personal needs, advocate for themselves, and improve academic performance.

Since the time required to participate was minimal (approximately 30-60 minutes for interviews and 20-40 minutes for journal entries), there was not an excessive time commitment for participation. While the risks were limited, participants engaged in body centered actions, which can cause stress and discomfort. To further limit risk, participants were told that they could skip questions or discontinue their participation at any time. Should their discomfort extend beyond solely needing to end their engagement with the research, a list of resources was available to them.

In addition to the risk for discomfort, there were minimal risks to confidentiality and privacy. To alleviate the largest risks to confidentiality and privacy, all electronic data were stored on a password protected computer that was locked in the PI's home office when not in use. The document which houses the pseudonyms was kept on the same password protected
computer. This list was destroyed after member checks were completed. Emails were also deleted once transcripts were confirmed. Consent forms with names and pseudonyms were stored on Qualtrics and audio-video recordings were deleted after transcription and member checking occurred. Sign-Up Genius allowed me to keep sign-ups private (participants could only see their own name and sign-up information). The Sign-Up Genius was also deleted once the interviews occurred.

The interviews were audio and video recorded via Zoom to ensure accuracy in transcription but were deleted once they had been transcribed and member checked. The interviews were recorded with the participant’s chosen pseudonym. Journal entries were submitted on Qualtrics with the participant's pseudonym. Qualtrics does not allow participants to see or access anyone else’s data, so information shared in those entries was available only to the PI, dissertation committee, and Institutional Review Board (IRB).

During interviews and in entries, participants were asked not to name their university, tutoring program, and/or tutor by name to protect the privacy of the institution. Suggestions for general ways to name these people and places were made if the participant is unsure how to do so. In the one instance of a participant naming their school, the school name was redacted from the transcript. Additionally, only demographics and descriptives provided by the participant were used to identify them or explain their tutoring situation.

**Data Collection Procedures**

After participants volunteered, filled out the consent form, and signed up for an interview time, participants received a confirmation email including the time and date of the interview and the Zoom link. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom and were audio and video recorded. Participants were asked to use the pseudonym they chose on the consent form to
rename themselves on the Zoom screen, before the recording began. Recordings were deleted after transcriptions and member checking were completed. Each of the interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes.

Five open-ended questions were used to start the interview and emergent questions were asked, as they were needed. The five pre-written questions asked about body-based experiences while in tutoring, one’s perception of the tutoring space, and connections to one’s own body (Table 3). These questions were developed with attention to the four features of embodied learning that developed from the literature review and within the overarching framework of feminist phenomenology. All of the questions were written to allow participants to share their experiences in depth and tell stories where appropriate. Since feminist phenomenology focuses heavily on power dynamics (Al-Saji, 2020), the interviews were balanced with journal entries to alleviate issues caused by the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee.

Eight possible journal entries, with one open-ended prompt each, were available to the participants on Qualtrics. Everyone taking part in the study was asked to complete at least four entries. There were no restrictions on how the participant answered, the length of the response, or when they could write responses. Journal entries were submitted via Qualtrics with the participant pseudonym. I estimated between 20 and 40 minutes would be needed to answer the journal prompts, and the participant who spent the most time on the prompts answered them in 21.3 minutes. The recruitment email contained links to the Qualtrics journal prompts and was provided in a follow-up email after the interview (Appendix H). Like the interview questions, the journal prompts attempted to create space for the participant to delve deeply into their lived experiences. Together, these two sources of data were analyzed for similar themes and moments
that could be used to better understand the experience of female-identifying undergraduate students who are enrolled in tutoring.

Interview transcriptions were done shortly after the completion of interviews. The PI returned summaries of the responses and initial coding to the participants for member checking. Four of the five participants responded to the member checking emails within two weeks with approvals. One participant did not respond. The researcher saved corresponding transcripts, member checking notes, and journal entries in folders organized by the participants’ pseudonyms for analysis.

Analysis and Coding Procedures

Saldaña (2009) explains that a code is a word or phrase that gives meaning to a piece of data that has been collected. Several types of coding are available to researchers so they can express their participants’ meanings clearly and accurately, without needing to share their responses word for word. In this study, codes were categorized into larger themes, based on similarities. Coding took place in two distinct phases; the first was deductive and the second, inductive. Deductive coding is the process whereby a researcher starts with a few categories and organizes the data into those (Vanover et al., 2022, p. 134). The first phase of coding applied codes identified by the literature review as elements of embodied learning - connection to space, meaningful movement, collaboration, and a relationship to fulfillment - to the transcripts of interviews and journal responses. The goal of starting with this method was to find general connections between embodied learning and the experiences shared by the participants. By using the four elements of embodied learning (Table 2) to sort through the responses, I identified tutoring that had elements of positive or negative embodiment.
The second round of coding relied on inductive coding to develop a list of themes from the text of the transcripts and journal entries. Once data was categorized into large groups, I did a line-by-line analysis of the responses, using inductive coding. This is the process of developing codes from the data (Vanover et al., 2022, p. 135). Several of the codes that emerged were direct quotes from participants, which are called in vivo codes. In vivo coding is a form of inductive coding that uses the participants’ verbatim word choice as the code (Saldaña, 2009). These codes follow the understanding that a narrative of the participants’ experiences emerged from the data, but that there were overarching categories into which this data was likely to fall. The second round of coding also created the opportunity to review the responses in a different light. Finally, codes were assessed to see if any could be located under a similar umbrella, with the goal being five to eight total codes.

**Threats to Validity Measures**

Defining measures of trustworthiness in qualitative research poses issues for researchers, because the quantitative definitions don’t directly translate to human-focused research. Quantitative researchers define reliability as consistently achieving the same results and validity as measuring what is intended to be measured (Creswell, 2019, p. 158). As such, qualitative researchers have developed new ways to measure rigor or explain why their research is trustworthy that differs between individuals and disciplines. In place of the quantitative leaning measures of reliability and validity, this research was held to the standards of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016). Credibility in qualitative research is judged by how closely the results relate to real life (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016). Transferability refers to the ability to use the approach with another group of individuals. For instance, using this methodology with high school students who are receiving tutoring to
make sure the research can be replicated. It is important to note that the burden of proof for transferability falls to the researcher seeking to recreate the study (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016). Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the data, which is often increased through triangulation or similar methods (Badil et al., 2023). Finally, dependability is related to the quantitative measure of reliability, which refers to how likely it is for a study to be redone by another researcher and result in similar findings (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016).

Using the constructivist lens, I employed disconfirming and rich description, and also brought in member checking, as a means to manage my inability to be entrenched for a long period of engagement (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking allowed me to make sure that my representation of participants is fair, accurate, and detailed. Disconfirming is a process that the researcher undertakes near the end of the study to locate conflicting data, to further refine themes (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016). For example, if the results seemed to show growth in self-efficacy, I scoured the data for any information that disagrees with that and dug into this further, either on my own or with the participant. Using this process also increased the credibility and confirmability of the data.

Member checking, used to assure that ideas are not misrepresented, could be an ongoing process or a single occurrence. By taking the results, as I have understood them, back to the participants, they can correct or expand on topics covered. This also provides an opportunity for the participant to have additional time with the researcher to ask questions, express concerns, or elaborate topics. Like disconfirming, member checking increased the credibility of the information, as well as the confirmability.

Third, rich description aids in all four measures, by including enough detail for a reader to understand the context, problem, methods, results, and limitations, in order to determine its
ability to be transferred to their setting. Creswell and Miller (2000) explain that qualitative validity often falls more to the researcher attempting to replicate or model a study. Rich description would include detailed accounts of the learning environment, embodied methods, and participant engagement with them, as well as the notes/analysis of the researcher.

Finally, intercoder reliability was deployed to ensure that the coding was appropriate. 15% of the de-identified data was shared with a secondary coder. The secondary coder has her BA in Spanish and French and her MA in TESOL and has worked in language tutoring for five years. She is currently an administrator at a tutoring organization. In addition to tutoring, she has also served as a conversation partner, lesson plan writer, and ESL teacher. The secondary coder was provided with instructions and two examples of coded passages from other parts of the data to check. She was given two responses from each individual to code. Initially, there were five instances of differences between the two, based on one miscommunication and several cases of the secondary coder making more precise decisions. After one round of discussion, the two coders came to full agreement on the material. Together, these four measures were used to ensure the rigor and validity of the study.

Limitations

Qualitative research faces a number of challenges in the academy that include concerns about the subjectivity of the researcher, selection bias, and the inability to generalize due to small sample size (Creswell & Guetterman, 2002, p. 230). Though qualitative research has been elevated in recent years, critiques of qualitative methods often argue that the subjectivity of the researcher can skew the results. Qualitative researchers acknowledge that their active involvement in the study is an asset, rather than a concern. However, this requires constant, critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Qutoshi, 2018, p. 220). Feminist
phenomenology, as a method, requires reflexive work in order to make sense of the information provided by participants (Quotshi, 2018; Simms & Stawarska, 2013). Such reflexivity was used in the study to highlight the ways that I acknowledged and mitigated biases, used their perspective to engage differently than past researchers, and compared with the participants.

In addition to the concerns about researcher bias, there is a chance for selection bias in studies that use volunteers and self-reported data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 230). Those who volunteer are likely to represent the more extreme ends of the spectrum with respect to opinions and experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In order to try to mitigate this, the goals of the research were spelled out explicitly on recruitment materials, and only interviews and journals that pertain directly to the topics were included in the final study. There is also a possibility that respondents attempted to answer in ways that they believe I (the researcher) would feel were favorable (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 230). In order to limit this, the questions posed for interviews and journal prompts were intentionally open-ended, and participants were encouraged to speak to their full experiences, whether they were negative or positive. Additionally, by supplementing the interviews with journal entries, participants had the opportunity to provide responses without the influence of the researcher, in order to limit the ways researcher presence might bias the results.

Though some scholars cite an inability to generalize qualitative research as a weakness (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), phenomenology requires deep engagement with fewer subjects, in order to obtain strong, rich data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Rather than seeking to find a measurable answer that can be extrapolated to a wider population, the goal is to deeply understand the subjective reality of a few individuals who share certain characteristics (Quotshi, 2018). Engaging at this level with individual stories allows the researcher to understand the
essence of the phenomenon and describe it so that the reader comes away with a feeling of understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 28). In the case of this study, by getting more depth about a few experiences, I was able to reflect the participants’ voices more accurately.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of female-identifying undergraduates who are engaged in tutoring, to learn how they bring their bodies to their learning and how they interact with others. In keeping with this goal, the research question of this study was: what are the lived body experiences of female-identifying support students? To answer this question, I developed a feminist phenomenological study, which used semi-structured interviews and journal prompts to get to the heart of the experiences shared by the participants. In addition to the interviews and journal entries, I counted myself amongst the instruments, as qualitative research dictates (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The study was designed in five stages, which were derived from previous phenomenological research: position oneself and the participants in relation to the study, engage in reflexive writing, collect data, code data, and write reflexively, and present the results. Within this larger structure, coding also occurred in stages (Shabot & Landry, 2018; Simms & Stawarska, 2019; Stoller, 2017). First, interviews and journal entries were deductively coded based on four features of embodied learning. Second, interviews and journal prompts were inductively coded.

The participants in this study were volunteers who met the following inclusion criteria: enrolled in a Mid-Atlantic college or university, female-identifying, engaged in consistent tutoring, pursuing first bachelor’s level degree, 18 years of age or older, and speak English comfortably. The first purposive method asked tutoring center directors to hang fliers in their
center and send an email to their students. The second approach included snowballing and social media posts on several platforms. Participants were asked to fill out the informed consent on Qualtrics, as well as verbally reconfirm their intention to participate in the Zoom interview. Five volunteers met these requirements and four of the five participated in both the interview and journal prompts. Interviews were recorded after participants changed their names to their chosen pseudonym to ensure accuracy of transcription and protection of the participant. Journal entries and interviews were transcribed and coded, member checked, and compiled into categories. The analysis was completed in three phases and the results are discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter details the findings of the feminist phenomenological study that was done in search of answers to the following research question: what is it like to be a female-identifying undergraduate support student? Additionally, this chapter includes brief profiles of the participants and a summary of the data collection methods that were used and the analysis that was conducted. The literature suggests that female students use tutoring regularly, but there is little qualitative data about their experiences. Data from this study, which allowed them to express the details of their experiences in their own words, can help to fill this gap. The focus on embodied learning within the tutoring setting is also in response to the limited data on the use of embodied learning techniques in tutoring settings, where they have the ability to make a distinct difference for any student enrolled in a support service. The data gathered in this study was used to understand their tutoring experiences more widely and to develop the amount and quality of qualitative research regarding gender and tutoring.

Review of Methodology

The qualitative analysis was largely based on the work of feminist phenomenologists Shabot & Landry (2018), Simms & Stawarska (2018), and Stoller (2017). Their work, which focuses on the impact of gender on one’s experiences, suggests an approach to phenomenology that centers, rather than brackets, the gender of the participants. By doing this, they highlight how systems of oppression can become central to one’s own understanding of his or her experiences, thus altering the data (Young, 2005). With critical attention to how one’s experience as a woman may color her understanding of herself and the moments she is recounting, feminist phenomenology attempts to notice and give voice to the ways gender infiltrates all areas of experience. In several of their responses, the participants of this study highlighted such moments,
when they questioned their own knowledge or shared stories of silencing themselves in their tutoring settings.

Participants were asked to share their tutoring experiences through interviews and journal entries. Questions were focused on body-based learning and the students’ awareness of their bodies in their tutoring settings. Five preliminary interview questions were used and several follow-ups were asked based on the initial responses. At the start of the interview, all participants were encouraged to take part in an embodied learning activity to bring their attention to their bodies and to provide an example that they can refer to when thinking of how they engage their body during tutoring sessions. The journal entries were made available after participants finished their interview and asked to complete them within two weeks. The journal prompts were intended to allow students to delve more deeply into their experiences and consider additional facets of the tutoring they have been a part of.

Participants

I interviewed five participants for this study. Participants were required to be 18 years or older, female-identifying, undergraduates attending a Mid-Atlantic college or university, who spoke English comfortably. All participants had taken part in college/university-sponsored tutoring for one or more classes, including but not limited to calculus, organic chemistry, and writing. The exclusion criteria included: not speaking English comfortably, being enrolled in a second or post-bachelor program, and attending tutoring inconsistently. The participants included individuals who ranged in age from 19 to 21 and represented five distinctly different majors. Each of the participants had different experiences with many types of tutoring, across many years, with some being enrolled in tutoring since elementary school. Brief descriptions of each participant are included below, under the pseudonym they chose.
**Alex**

Alex is a 19-year-old sophomore. Her dark brown eyes were highlighted with winged eyeliner and bright eyeshadow. During our interview, she wore her long brown hair down over her shoulders in waves. She alternated between pushing it behind her ears and letting it fall over them. Occasionally adjusting her necklace or earrings were among the many ways she used her hands to express thoughts or feelings throughout the process. A large black water bottle sat just off camera, which she took sips from throughout the time we talked. Doing the interview from a dorm room, her window offered a city view, and her wall sported a sorority flag. Throughout the conversation, she smiled often and was quick to laugh.

She identified as multiracial - half Asian, half Caucasian. Her native language is English. She is pursuing a double major in business economics and international studies. She has attended tutoring both her first and second year, at her school, for calculus-based math, business statistics, finance, and accounting.

**Bianca**

Bianca is a 21-year-old junior. Her curly brown hair was layered over her shoulders and her zip up during our interview. While she looked intently into the camera when I was speaking, she spent most of the duration of her answers looking off into the distance, as if weighing her thoughts. With her long, pink nails, she gestured to show emphasis and demonstrate movements she described. Sitting in a kitchen, her walls were bare of decoration, but a large whiteboard rested against one in the corner of the frame.

She identified as African American/Black, and her native language is English. Studying philosophy, politics, and economics, Bianca has attended tutoring for calculus, microeconomics, and macroeconomics. She has used the tutoring services at her school since her first year.
Ivy

Ivy is a 20-year-old junior, who has been enrolled in tutoring for three years. Ivy joined our interview from a bedroom, painted in a light green color. Books and notebooks were visible in the frame, along with a large whiteboard. Her tight black curls ended just above her shoulders and drew attention to her red-rimmed glasses, which hid her eyes from view. Despite this, her face was very expressive, and her emotions clearly showed while she was talking. Wearing an Apple watch and grabbing her water bottle frequently, she had the air of an athlete. She used her whole body when describing her actions and shifted in her seat a lot, which she also mentioned doing during tutoring. While I couldn’t see her feet on the camera, she noted that she wasn’t wearing shoes during the interview, which was her preferred way to learn.

She identified as two or more races, noting that she is half-Black, half-Asian. She speaks English and Vietnamese. She is a health and societies major and has attended tutoring for math, biology, chemistry, and organic chemistry.

Karlita

Karlita is a 20-year-old sophomore. Karlita kept her straight black hair tied back in a messy ponytail. A small stud glittered on her nose and caught the light when she turned in her chair. Her expressive facial features and frequent hand motions illustrated her thoughts clearly. She also shifted positions and took her time answering questions, always looking like she was thinking deeply. In addition to her nose ring, she wore rings on both hands, which likely unintentionally, added additional emphasis to her words. She noted that she uses a lot of gestures when speaking Spanish and her long, pink nails added emphasis to her statements. Sitting in her dorm room, the white cinderblock walls gave way to a closet with teal storage boxes. Laughing regularly throughout the interview, she appeared relaxed in this setting.
She identified herself by her ethnicity, Mexican. Her first language is Spanish. She is studying neuroscience and noted that she joined tutoring right away when she entered college. She has received tutoring in Italian, chemistry, biology, calculus, and physics.

**Sara**

Sara is a 19-year-old first-year student. Sitting in what looked like a booth seat, Sara wore a bright yellow hoodie and had her purple backpack rested against the seat next to her. Her long black hair was swept behind her shoulders, showing her air pods. As the interview progressed, she reached for her purple Stanley mug repeatedly, highlighting an element that came up in her interviews: she likes to have water/snacks available when she is studying. While she shifted her view frequently, she remained in the same position. Throughout the interview, she easily broke into smiles while recounting her experiences and asking several questions.

She identified herself as Filipino and Italian. Her native language is English. She is undecided about her major but has received tutoring for statistics so far in college. She stated that she has been enrolled in tutoring since elementary school through programs like Kumon and Mathnasium, for support and advancement.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected over a period of two weeks through Zoom interviews and online journal entries. Links to the journal prompts were sent to participants who engaged in the interview and asked participants to answer four or more of the eight questions. The intention was for the journal entries to offer additional space to investigate feelings and bodily sensations more deeply, and without the influence of the researcher. However, the length and depth of responses served as support or explanations for answers provided in the interviews, rather than additional data, in most cases.
Two rounds of coding were carried out - first deductive, second inductive - on the interview transcripts and each journal entry. Answers were deductively coded into one of the four categories of embodied learning detailed in Chapter 2. The four provisional categories were connection to space, meaningful movement, feelings of fulfillment, and collaboration (Table 1). Additionally, a none of the above category was added for those details that were outside the scope of embodied learning. Answers were coded according to their attention to one of the categories and several responses included references to more than one code, so the answers were divided accordingly (Table 6).

**Table 6**
*First Round Provisional Coding Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Answers addressing:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to Space</td>
<td>• Physical details of location of tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Travel to tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feeling of the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Movement</td>
<td>• Embodied learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bodily awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of Fulfillment</td>
<td>• Success or achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive or negative emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preferences being met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>• Working with other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working with tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working against others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then, codes were developed inductively based on the content of the answers. Through line-by-line and in vivo coding, I developed a list of codes that identified the topics of importance to the participants. After deleting duplicate words, there were 355 unique codes, grouped into seven large categories: embodiment, working with other support students, learning strategies, clarification/confusion, tutor-related, environmental or session, and success. The 355 codes were then distilled into the code groups represented below, with similar phrases and ideas organized together under a large topic.
Table 7  
*Second Round Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embodiment</td>
<td>Internal or external focus; intentional movement; familiar v. unfamiliar; positive body affect; negative body affect; positive emotions; negative emotions; body awareness; unintentional movement; intellectual energy; lack of body awareness; emotional expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with other SS</td>
<td>Comparison; competition; collaboration; impactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning strategy</td>
<td>Prepared v. unprepared; to combat negative habits; helpful strategies; unhelpful strategies; use of person as resource; active learning; passive learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification/confusion</td>
<td>Clarification; qualification; confusion; does that answer the question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor-related</td>
<td>Positive tutor qualities; negative tutor qualities; role of tutor; tutor preferences; relationship with students; expectations; format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental + Session</td>
<td>Supportive school environment; variable; ideals; in-person v. virtual; body in space; sensory input; compare to other experiences; time; emotions; resource; impacts mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Deep learning; challenging self; accountability; feelings; expectations; resource; goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Codes that were sorted into embodiment had to do with bodily feelings, emotional feelings, movements, and body awareness. Working with other support students was a category created to show the range of ways students perceived their peers. The learning strategy category encapsulated anything the participant used to improve their learning or that was employed in a session for that purpose by a tutor. The clarification/confusion category included two different types of responses: those in which they asked questions of me to make sure they understood or those in which they qualified their answers, expressing a hope that they had answered the questions. (In each case the preceding answers had been well-developed and contained a lot of information.) Any codes in the tutor-related category had to do with how the tutor behaved, spoke, taught, or was viewed by the participants. Codes related to the environments in which learning had occurred were sorted into the environment and session format category. Finally, any
mention of content regarding grades, goals, or outcomes was organized into the success category.

Each of the second-round codes represented a large category into which several individual codes fit (Appendix J). For example, intentional movement from the embodiment category included such codes as standing up, holding head for concentration, and deep breaths, among others. In success, the code feelings encompassed both positive and negative feelings associated with success or failure, as the participants explained them. The reason for organizing the smaller codes into more inclusive categories was to represent the ways that the terms and phrases used by the participants were related to each other.

To assure intercoder reliability, a second coder was asked to go through approximately 15% of the data and discuss areas of disagreement with me. For the first round of coding, the second coder was given two responses from each participant and the five categories into which the answers may fall, along with two example paragraphs. For the second round of coding, the second coder was given one response for each participant and the codes the first coder developed. Once agreement was reached in each stage, I moved forward with the next. In addition to a secondary coder, member checking, rich description, and disconfirming data were used to assure credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016).

In the next section, I describe the themes that emerged from the interviews and journal entries. While the participants came from different backgrounds, were studying divergent fields, and had different levels of experience with tutoring, several commonalities about the space, people, and format of support services. Each of the five themes came together after two rounds of coding and an additional phase of compiling and comparing codes. While each participant
used different words to describe what being a female student in tutoring has been like for them, their experiences could be distilled into five truths that they shared. First, tutoring did not foster meaningful movement or clear awareness of one’s body. Rather than using the flexibility of the spaces to their advantage, the participants’ tutors used traditional classroom methods, such as lecture, consistently. Second, there was a complex interplay between space, tutor, and students that created safety for learning. It is not any one element that created a conducive learning environment, but a precise combination of all three. Third, tutoring as a support flourishes best in a larger environment of support. Schools that extensively used student support systems were likely to encourage the use of tutoring, regardless of students’ academic grades. Fourth, collaboration between support students produced the best results. When support students used tutoring time to work with others, rather than against them, deeper learning occurred. Fifth, an effective tutor filled a specific role as a guide. Tutors, especially peer tutors, bridged a space between classmate and teacher that created a unique opportunity for valuable interaction and specific learning outcomes.

**Theme #1: Limited Integration of Body into Learning**

In being focused on the lived body experiences of female-identifying support students, the goal of this study was to identify ways in which the body was used, ignored, neglected, or abused in the learning process. Feminist phenomenologists point out that living in a female body can impact the way one understands their own experiences of movement, body awareness, and safety, among others (Shabot & Landry, 2018; Young, 2005). In the interviews and journal responses, it became clear that the tutoring spaces these women learned in did little to center embodiment or embodied learning in their sessions. Despite the level of awareness that some of
the participants exhibited regarding their feelings about different elements of tutoring, they generally had trouble explaining their body movements or affect.

In a limited number of cases, the participants mentioned using intentional movements as a way to help them learn. Ivy and Bianca talked about walking to the board and writing out problems or processes that they needed to visualize. Alex discussed pacing while reading as a method of studying and using her fingers to remember a math trick she learned. Karlita discussed ticking off steps of a process with her fingers to keep herself on track. Sara noted that she prefers to stay sitting while working, in order to maintain the feeling of flow and stay productive. However, how she sits is important to her; she feels most comfortable sitting on her feet, which raises her up so she is higher in relation to the table she is working at.

Though Sara was the only participant to highlight staying seated as a preference, each participant explained that they came into their tutoring setting and sat down at a table for the duration of the session. Occasionally broken up to use the restroom or show an example on the board, the sedentary nature of tutoring was overwhelming. The participants explained that their tutoring sessions were between one and two hours long, in general, and they often sat for the entire time. As they also usually sat in their classes and when doing work outside of either setting, they largely agreed that their learning mostly took place while seated, and often not comfortably. Research suggests that consistent sitting should be broken up by physical activity at all ages (Mazzoli et al., 2021). The reasons for breaking up sitting range from increased physical to mental health outcomes. It could be argued that the time between classes and tutoring walking around campus qualifies, but the benefits of incorporating movement into learning time are innumerable (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). As a group, the participants explained that they often modify how they are sitting to be more comfortable when learning. Alex said she often rests her
head on her hand while writing notes. Ivy stated that she moves closer to her work when concentrating, prefers to have her shoes off, and usually sits with her feet off the floor. Bianca explained that she often fidgeted as the session progressed. Sara stated that she frequently shifts her position while sitting but tends to slouch over the surface she is working on. Only Karlita stated that she preferred sitting upright and in a learning position, as it is often called by elementary teachers and tutors (straight up, feet on the floor, hands on the desk).

While each of the women was able to identify one or two ways they used their bodies, they had more trouble thinking of intentionally incorporating their body into learning at their current stage. For instance, Alex remembered that as a child she was taught the notes of songs using hand gestures, which she still knows today. Sara and Ivy also recalled musical examples. In Sara’s high school Latin class, she learned songs that served as mnemonic memory devices for different concepts. For Ivy, who identifies herself as musically inclined, she remembers creating her own musical devices to study for science classes. Similarly, when Bianca studied Chinese in elementary school, she was taught four hand motions to associate with the tones in order to remember how the sounds of the words physically changed. Ivy also discussed being taught tricks for approximating measurements with her fingers when she was younger. Even though they remembered these fondly, they had a hard time picturing using those same tools today. Bianca even said she didn't think she would have appreciated using the hand gestures for Chinese when she took the language in college. These childhood connections are not surprising, as much of the embodied learning literature is highly focused on young learners (Barab et al., 2007; Birsch & Carrekker, 2011; Kosmas et al., 2019; Oliver & Lalik, 2001). However, it is also suggested that regardless of age or subject, body-based learning strategies can actually be invaluable (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Research suggests that there has been an increased interest
since 2017 of bringing embodied methods into higher education in a variety of fields, but nothing that brings that attention to tutoring (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2021). Additional study and practice in higher education tutoring settings is necessary to more fully understand how embodied learning fits into this space.

Each of the participants voiced strong support for active learning methods, noting that when tutoring was lecture-based, they often lost interest. Alex mentioned spacing out and Sara noted that the lessons often go in one ear and out the other. Bianca and Ivy expressed a similar sentiment: that if they aren’t being challenged and engaged, they are less interested in being there and have a harder time focusing. When discussing strategies that worked, Karlita specifically addressed using analogies and visuals. In one of her most successful sessions, she reports that her tutor was basically guiding her hand to show her how to draw a complex molecular diagram. Given their interest in active learning methods, the introduction and use of embodied learning methods could prove beneficial. All noted that the tutors didn’t teach specific learning strategies, but rather focused on going through problems and assignments. Some methods that the participants may have benefited from based on their descriptions of learning include, but are not limited to breath control, musical mnemonics, or role playing.

Another commonality about the participants’ relationships to embodiment was that they generally didn’t have one. Every participant showed surprise or confusion when I asked questions about bodily awareness, affect, or emotions during the interviews. Additionally, all of the participants voiced some variation of “I have never thought about that.” When prompted, they all took time to consider these aspects of their experiences, but it was in most cases the first time they had ever done that. When asked about their body comportment, posture, or needs, Ivy and Sara asked clarifying questions and Bianca acknowledged that she really had to think about
it. In the case of emotions, all of the participants realized they often intentionally hid emotions during tutoring or tried to circumvent expression of negative emotions with words or jokes. After some time and reflection, each participant was able to give voice to their emotions, but the concept of body experience was still difficult for them to express. Freiler (2008) reported that even cultures that are highly embodied have a difficulty expressing the movements and intentions behind them, but the information is passed onto the next generation through practice.

The participants exhibited levels of bodily awareness that were surprising to me, because I think I would have struggled to explain my feelings about such complex topics at their ages. Additionally, they made few connections between emotions and their physical self, most struggling to even articulate how they express strong emotions. Since they also noted that they often hide or mask emotions, it may be that they are not fully understanding their responses. McBride (2021) writes that in Western society we are often taught to avoid emotional processing, rather than move through it and this can impede our ability to manage stress and live healthy lives.

Their examples of bodied learning were largely from educational experiences they had as children. When asked why they moved or acted a certain way, their abilities to answer were limited. Their desire for active learning methods stood in stark contrast to the actual experience of tutoring that most had. It also highlighted that the participants understand their need for movement or engagement but aren’t able to foster those needs. Subsequently, the tutors were not aware of these needs and couldn’t make adjustments in their sessions. Additional training in this field could support more proactive tutors. In addition to the participants' individual levels of self-awareness, the tutoring sessions did not lend themselves to embodied learning or increased body-
awareness. This lack of body awareness can have consequences beyond their tutoring sessions, if they are unable to advocate for themselves based on what their bodily needs are.

**Theme #2: Complex Interplay of Factors Affect Feelings of Safety**

Tutoring spaces represent a distinctly different learning environment than classrooms, in that they can be located in non-traditional locations, tutors are likely similar in age and experience to the support students attending a session, and their formats range dramatically, based on a wide variety of influences. These features of tutoring were among the reasons that research focused on these spaces is necessary. As tutoring cannot be directly compared to classroom learning, it is valuable to understand how those differences are experienced by students. In this study, the focus on female-identifying students was also to highlight that the needs of the majority of users of tutoring may be impacted by gender in ways that are not clearly understood yet.

In interviewing the participants for this study, it was clear that while individual elements like the comfort of the learning space, the quality of the tutor, and the presence of other students were important elements of the tutoring experience, it was the interplay of the three that defined the most positive experiences. For example, when the physical environment wasn’t ideal, it impacted the interactions between support students sharing the session, which impacted the tutor’s ability to help everyone. Likewise, when a tutor was ineffective, it created time for support students to be more self-conscious and focus on physical discomforts. Meanwhile, when support students were able to collaborate or build off one another, the tutor was better able to support each individual, and the comfort, or lack thereof, was less of a concern for the support students. It is also important to note that despite the limited focus put on the physical body
during tutoring, the participants were keenly aware of a need for safety in their spaces, which is greatly impacted by their bodied experiences.

**Impact of Space on Support Student Learning**

The variability of spaces in which support students met their tutors was based on the organization of the university and the tutoring program. Some met in designated tutoring spaces, others met in lounges located in student housing, others met in dining halls, others met in library study rooms, while yet others met in large lecture halls after class hours. Timing of sessions, lighting, furniture, smells, sounds, the layout of the space, background activity, and the availability of resources all factored into the way the space was experienced by the participants and the impacts it had on their learning. Alerby et al. (2014) explains that space works as an extension of a person, which can either impede or support their goals.

**Physical Comfort and Flexibility.** When asked about the sights, smells, sounds, and feelings of their tutoring spaces, the codes that arose most frequently in regard to space were about a desire to feel physically comfortable in the learning space. From having the ability to move, stand, or take off shoes to having comfortable seating, the participants expressed a belief that a higher level of physical comfort would positively impact their learning. Although the discomfort of a space could be tempered by the other factors at play, the quality of the light and furniture seemed to have big effects on what it was like for female-identifying students to be tutored.

Since each of the participants noted that they spend the vast majority of their tutoring sessions sitting down, it follows that all of the participants would discuss the furniture and their motility within the space as impactful on their learning ability. Alex identified the hard surfaces as one element of the study room that she found negatively impacted her learning. She noted that
she especially noticed how hard the chairs were when her sessions were unchallenging, or she felt that the tutor was not being helpful enough. The less engaged she felt, the more she attended to her physical discomfort, while the more engaged she was, the less these elements seemed to matter. Ivy also expressed a preference for chairs which were large and comfortable enough to sit cross-legged or with one leg perched on the chair, while Sara noted that she typically sits on her feet and needs to feel like she can do that. For Sara, the type of furniture played a large role in her comfort. She explained her preference to be seated up high, so the table could accommodate slouching, which is how she typically sits to take notes.

In addition to the physicality of the furniture, the use that it allowed was also important to the participants. Both Sara and Karlita preferred settings where they had enough space to spread out their belongings and not feel like they were encroaching on other students’ spaces. Since college courses typically require several materials, including books, computers, notebooks, pencils, pens, highlighters, and water bottles, it was important to both Sara and Karlita that they had the space to have these materials available to themselves, while not interrupting the space of the other support students they shared their session with. Unlike the other participants, Ivy noted that she likes to take her shoes off but would only do so in spaces that felt amenable to that choice. One study room she worked in had dirty carpets, so she chose to keep her shoes on at that time, but felt that it impaired her learning, as her preference was not wearing shoes, when it wasn’t necessary.

Lighting was another of the most common elements mentioned by the participants. The quality of the light was reported to have impacted both focus and comfort. Alex said that she associates the harsh lights with school and wrinkled her nose into a face of disgust. While she did not elaborate on what previous experiences these lights brought up for her, she explained that she
always felt like her eyes needed to adjust to those lights when she came into a space that used them. Sara, who also noted that lighting is important to her ability to learn, expressed that she needs lots of light to work well and most of her tutoring spaces have been pretty dim or under the fluorescent light that Alex called harsh. Ivy also explained that softer yellow light in a study room made it more comfortable and less difficult on the eyes. In the writing center that Sara attended, which was brightly lit and modern, she felt at ease and ready to learn.

The appearance and the smells of tutoring spaces were also among the reported factors that participants considered important to their learning. The relationship between a person and their environment has been widely studied in a variety of settings, with one studying showing that enjoyment of a space can be a valuable factor of learning (Thornburn & Marshall, 2014). Both Bianca (discussing tutoring in a dining hall) and Alex (discussing tutoring in a library study room) noted that the spaces could smell like food - sometimes old food - which occasionally made it hard to focus. Another smell that permeated the spaces was dry erase markers, in the rooms that used whiteboards. Karlita, Sara, and Ivy did not note any smells in their spaces, but also noted a lower level of attention to the room than Alex and Bianca. Despite their lack of attention to sensory stimuli like smells, they all discussed the look of the spaces they were in. Karlita noted that she often paid attention to the shape of the room, while Ivy was attentive to whether or not the space was modern, and Sara often focused on how much space was available. Though these foci were different, each had the ability to be distracting for the support students, especially when they were not fully immersed in their sessions.

Each participant expressed different experiences regarding the room, furniture, other people, rules, and structure, but one commonality existed: each participant wanted to feel comfortable in their space, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Whether that meant having the
ability and clean enough carpets to take off shoes, flexible seating options, or the option to eat while learning, the overarching goal was to be able to bring their full selves to the table. Nguyen & Larson (2015) and Reeves & White (2021) explain the importance of holistic engagement in learning, which the participants described as part of their ultimate goals. Different settings and tutors fostered this ability with differing levels of success, but when the needs of the learner are centered, they report more positive learning experiences.

**Ideal Learning Environments vs. Real Learning Environments.** The most consistent response across the interviews and journal entries was that the learning environments the students were in were distinctly different from their ideals. Participants also explained their ideals in regard to the tutor and other support students, which are addressed in the next sections. Though each participant had a separate ideal scenario, all reported that their individual learning spaces did not fit within the parameters of their ideal. It is vital to note that since none of the participants had experienced their ideal thus far in tutoring, they could not comment on whether or not the stated ideal would benefit their learning.

Alex stated that the most important features of her ideal learning environment were warm and cozy. Rather than sitting in plastic chairs in the library, she expressed a preference for a comfortable seating arrangement and a blanket. Sara’s ideal learning environment was somewhere with high ceilings, tables and chairs that allowed her to sit in her preferred fashion, and lots of light. Karlita’s most important point was the distance from her dorm to the space. She explained that the time it takes to walk to sessions can really add up and take away from your day. Additionally, she noted that students walk so much on her campus that limiting additional walking would be agreeable. Both Karlita and Sara expressed a preference for whiteboards over chalkboards, but for divergent reasons. Karlita said that the noise of chalk on a chalkboard
disturbs her, and Sara finds that reading off of a whiteboard is easier to do. Bianca expressed a preference for an enclosed space where just the individuals who were in the tutoring group could see and hear the interactions. She also noted that the type of interactions between students is important to her ideal environment. Alex also indicated that active learning was preferable to passive learning, which was the most common type of learning she had experienced in tutoring so far.

Though temporal, rather than spatial, Bianca, Sara, and Ivy mentioned that their scheduled sessions were often at inconvenient times, based on the availability of each member of the tutoring group. No one suggested what time of day would work best for them, but they all agreed that the times they had met were not beneficial. Many of the participants noted that their sessions had been at night and felt like “the last thing” they needed to do, which neither promoted excitement about learning, nor fostered their focus.

In spite of the less-than-ideal circumstances of tutoring, each participant described a singular dedication to the process and motivation to go. Sara stated that “you do what you have to do,” and Bianca noted that there were times she didn’t want to go to tutoring, but she worked with an accommodating tutor to get her work done. Similarly, Karlita called tutoring a way to keep herself accountable and explained that students “just like meet anywhere that’s possible.” Sometimes that meant meeting in public spaces or booking study rooms, but they all expressed that regardless of location, the time spent tutoring was worth it. Alex talked about the importance of attending tutoring, even when she wasn’t struggling with a specific topic, just so she could get the extra support.

As a factor impacting the feeling of safety, space was the most heavily discussed topic. The desire for safety - a space where they could be vulnerable and unafraid to ask questions -
was central to positive experiences for all of the participants. Having a space that felt physically comfortable, allowed each support student to move, and was flexible enough to work for their unique needs were markers of a space which each was able to learn in. Additionally, having a space that fostered emotional security was vital to the learning situation. For most emotional security was centered on not being fearful of making mistakes. In combination with the tutor and other students, the space plays a large role in supporting students’ feelings of safety and the impact that has on their ability to learn and use tutoring as the resource they feel it is.

**Impact of Tutors on Support Student Learning**

In addition to the importance of space in the experiences of the support students, all of the participants highlighted how important a tutor is to a conducive and secure learning environment. Research shows that peer tutoring can support the learning of students of all academic capabilities when used as a supplement to classroom learning (Srivastava & Rashid, 2018). Each participant noted certain characteristics that they valued in their tutors and experiences that informed their feelings about the tutoring environment. Some common threads amongst the responses were a desire to work with a tutor who listened, answered questions, and did not speak condescendingly. While Alex noted that the tutor was less impactful than the other students in the space, the other participants felt that the tutor was often the factor that most strongly impacted a given tutoring session.

The most striking preference that arose from the interviews was that four of the five participants noted feeling more at ease with a female tutor. Sara, the participant who expressed no gender preference, noted that she has had mostly female tutors to this point, so her experiences have largely been with females. Their reasons ranged from being more comfortable asking women questions to being able to relate to them more on a personal level. Some
generalized that female tutors are more likely to ask and answer questions, based on their personal experiences. Karlita noted that she feels the female tutors she has worked with have been generally more empathetic and easier to ask questions of. Likewise, Ivy said she feels “better asking women questions, as opposed to men.” Bianca stated that female tutors took time to get to know the students and check their understanding. Both Ivy and Alex stated a preference for female tutors who are older than them. In both of their cases, the age difference helped to delineate authority figures for the participants. Ivy explained that she was recently assigned a tutor who is her age and whom she knows from other places, which just felt strange to her, even before meeting. All of the participants noted that the line was blurred about their relationship to their tutor because they were often direct or nearly direct peers.

**Tutor Quality.** Tutor quality was explained in several ways, by different participants. While all tutors are selected by the universities that employ them, the participants noted that not all tutors can be considered equal. Each participant shared both positive and negative experiences that they had been through with tutors, which were based on the tutor’s teaching ability, their communication skills, or the environment they fostered.

Alex stated that some tutors were better at teaching than others, and Ivy noted how being talked at by tutors was an ineffective strategy. Karlita and Sara both expressed that going to an ineffective tutor felt like a waste of time because they did not provide the support that was needed. Since each of the participants communicated a desire to learn deeply - to understand the content and how to use it - rather than just the ability to memorize and regurgitate information, the ability of the tutor to promote such learning is central. Moreover, the ability to teach without attempting to fill a professorial role was crucial to the participants. Tutors who asked students questions, used active learning strategies, and answered student concerns were remembered
fondly by participants, while those who lectured, used passive learning strategies, or patronized students were not. Being similar in age and often having commonalities with the tutor opened doors to more casual teaching relationships, which all of the students appreciated to a degree. Bianca explained that having someone similar in age, who also experienced the class, explain their struggles helped to limit her imposter syndrome. Ivy and Alex did note that they still wanted the tutor to feel like an authority figure in some way.

Ivy explained that it was important to her that her tutors were both competent and confident. She feels that it is valuable that tutors understand the content they are teaching, but also that they are confident in their knowledge. For her, the confidence or lack thereof is evident to the learners, and it greatly impacts how the information is received. Bianca and Karlita both highlighted how important a tutor’s communication skills are because they need to both know the information and share it in useful ways. Karlita paid attention to how they delivered the information and noted that tutors sometimes came off as patronizing, which impeded her ability to trust them fully. Bianca explained that communication skills were important for the tutor and the support student, so they could work through problems and get to the content. Whether it was the ability to communicate or a command of the topic, teaching ability was front-of-mind for the participants, as they noted that they wanted tutoring to be effective for them.

**Tutor-Student Interactions.** Each participant was able to pinpoint both good and bad tutoring experiences that were based on the interactions they had with the tutor. While the participants agreed writ large that tutoring has been a generally positive experience for them, they all noted that they have had negative interactions with tutors too. Negative experiences often centered around a tutor mishandling a question/situation and making the student feel
embarrassed or ashamed. Tutors who were able to explain concepts effectively and do it in a respectful way came up repeatedly in the positive stories shared by the participants.

The most common negative experiences that students reported with tutors were being made to feel dumb for asking questions and getting useless feedback from a tutor. All of the participants expressed some version of feeling ashamed. Sharing an example of this experience, Karlita stated:

But I guess this one particular moment I remember I went to ask for help, and I guess I asked the question, and I don't know, I guess like I don't know what kind of like diction this person was trying to use but basically their response was “Oh, it's common sense. Like it should be XYZ.” And I guess it just made me feel bad because I felt ashamed for asking a question when I know that it was there for that reason. It's for you to ask questions like I've always heard the phrase no question is a dumb question, but I sometimes feel like there are dumb questions. That's why I feel self-conscious.

The shame or self-consciousness that each participant expressed was often focused on a comparison to the other students in the group. Their feelings of embarrassment or discomfort often stemmed from personal beliefs about how the tutor or other students viewed them.

Sara and Ivy mentioned feeling like tutoring is a waste of time if a tutor doesn’t provide meaningful support, like feedback on an essay or problem-solving strategies for math problems. This becomes even more apparent in tutoring settings where tutors have more than one student to work with. When a tutor is unable to balance the needs and abilities of all of the students present, it can create a situation in which the students feel they need to compete for attention or help, which can increase the pressure of an already competitive college environment. Sara and Alex noted that having multiple people in the room can be difficult because the tutor needs to be able
to negotiate their time and support throughout a session, and those who can’t are often seen more negatively than those who can.

Ivy’s explanations about her positive tutor experiences encapsulate the most common elements that participants cited as important in a tutor. She notes that her tutor was always willing and able to answer questions and was flexible in their sessions. The tutor she described was able to discuss the material and create a space where the students were able to develop their organic chemistry knowledge as well as foster personal growth.

Since tutoring is both more flexible and more intimate than a classroom, each of the participants explained that having a tutor who worked to build trust and a professional relationship with the students was valuable to them. Karlita said that she appreciates it when tutors talk about more than just the content because they often find they have something in common. Ivy also stated that getting along with the tutor was a goal and that it made sessions move more smoothly. The similarity in age and sometimes major has even allowed some of the participants to become friends with their tutors after their sessions. The time spent on building these relationships was considered valuable because it increased trust in the tutor and made sessions more comfortable. This also created an environment that was amenable to relationship-building between the support students as well, which also helped to foster collaboration in the sessions. Ivy felt that building the relationships in tutoring created a more collaborative environment within the classroom, because students felt comfortable working together based on their time tutoring together.

**Relatability and Flexibility.** I should note that while the physical space is pertinent to the experience, some of the comfort measures were dictated by the tutor who was leading the sessions. Since the tutor takes on the role of an authority figure (in some cases), as both Ivy and
Alex mentioned, their relatability and flexibility were contributing factors in how comfortable students felt in those spaces. For example, some tutors allow students to move around as necessary, eat when hungry, and engage in conversation/discussion. The students described these tutors as casual, flexible, and unstructured. When tutors created a more formal environment where these actions were not allowed or where students felt unsure, the participants reported feeling less safe and comfortable.

**Impact of Other Students on Support Student Learning**

While the participants disagreed on how impactful other support students were on their learning, they all indicated that having other students present changed how they engaged with the tutor and material. Each of the participants had experience with college tutoring that was not a one tutor to one student ratio, but rather one tutor to three or four students. Some of the common experiences that they expressed included feeling competitive with the other students or feeling like they had less access to the tutor due to the presence of other students.

**Competition and Comparison.** Though tutoring is designed as a support framework, which does not encourage competition, the format that the participants described often felt contentious anyway. Since tutors are assigned based on the course and not the needs of individual students, it was common for the participants to be in groups with students who were well above or below their own level of comprehension. This often led to students vying for attention or failing to ask questions to allow others to do so. Alex noted that she sometimes felt like she shouldn’t be using the service, because she was grouped with students whose understanding was less advanced than hers, so she reserved her questions to avoid making anyone else feel bad or taking their time. Conversely, there were times that she was less comfortable with a topic and felt like her questions weren’t complex or important enough to be
asked. Karlita also expressed that she stopped talking when she felt she was in a setting with differently leveled students. Sara explained that having multiple students often puts the tutor in a position of needing to split their time or attention. Ivy stated that before her first session, she was worried about the environment being potentially competitive and how that was going to pan out. Alex felt that the ability to discuss concepts and ideas back and forth was important, but typically felt that having additional students in the space hindered that.

All of the participants expressed feeling dumb or stupid when they asked what tutors treated like obvious questions or they were wrong in a session. Bianca noted that it can be embarrassing when you are comparing answers, and you are the one who is incorrect. Aside from the attention that making mistakes engenders, it can slow down sessions and impact other students. Alex and Karlita expressed a lot of concern about negatively impacting the other students. Sara mentioned how confusing it can be when students come up with more than one answer and the tutor doesn’t adequately explain the solution. Bianca also mentioned the time taken by taking turns asking questions and the annoyance one may feel while waiting for their chance. Ivy also mentioned potentially feeling hurt or overwhelmed when she is corrected in tutoring, which can impact a student’s willingness to ask questions, participate, or return to tutoring.

The participants’ experiences with competition and/or comparison in tutoring were varied but were centralized around wanting to feel safe to use the resource they were seeking out. When the space was more focused on competing or comparing oneself to others, the participants expressed less desire to engage for numerous reasons. Whether they were concerned about their impact on other learners or the ways the other students impacted them, they all noted that feeling at odds with the other students was not beneficial to their learning.
Collaboration and Comfort. Contrarily, each participant also highlighted the positive effects of having multiple learners in one space, starting with the ability to collaborate. Participants referred to their work with other support students in several different ways. Though only one participant used the word collaboration to describe these interactions, the experiences that were shared all showcase some form of collaboration.

As stated earlier, the participants felt safer when they didn’t feel like they were in competition with each other, but there were more direct benefits to their collaboration skills, as well. By creating a situation in which the students worked together to solve problems or address needs, the tutor was helping them learn ways to interact that were non-competitive, increasing their comfort working together outside of tutoring. Ivy specifically mentioned that having had the chance to form relationships in tutoring made discussing questions and working together easier in the classroom. With or without intention, the tutors that fostered collaboration also improved the safety of the space for those in it.

Alex expressed a unique point of view, when she explained that she prefers learning in office hours over class or tutoring, because it is a small group, and everyone feels like they are present for the same goal: to learn. She felt that this was not the case in every tutoring session and when the apparent goals of the students were different, it made it harder to want to learn. However, when goals were aligned – either due to the tutor or the students – tutoring felt had less of a competitive feel, making the space more comfortable and conducive to learning.

Sara and Karlita both mentioned that when they didn’t have questions or weren’t sure where to start, being in a group was very beneficial. They discussed other students’ questions as jumping off points, especially when they felt unprepared. Additionally, Bianca expressed that at times that she wasn’t able to formulate a question, sometimes the other students in the group
were able to articulate it well. Ivy noted that in her organic chemistry I tutoring session, the group was good at building off of each other’s questions and supporting each other.

Another positive outcome of tutoring in a group was accountability. Karlita and Sara mentioned that working with other people created accountability to get work done, be prepared, and keep on track. The motivation created by the other students that they spoke about can be perceived as positive peer pressure, to encourage them to continue learning and developing their skills. Karlita told me that tutoring “motivates [her] to review the content more,” so she can achieve mastery of the topics. Ivy said that the presence of other students can even be grounding and help her remain in the present. When the setting is right, Bianca stated that the ability to be vulnerable about her struggles made it easier to deal with them. Ivy extended that statement and said that being able to talk about concepts outside of tutoring improved her relationship with the other students inside and outside of academic endeavors.

One of the themes that emerged was the desire for a safe learning space, which seems to be impacted by numerous factors, including the space, the tutor, and the other students present. The responses of the participants highlight that spaces that are comfortable to sit in and flexible were the most ideal learning settings. Unfortunately, most noted that the settings that their tutoring occurred in rarely met their ideals. In regard to their experiences with tutors, the points they focused on included tutor quality, interactions with students, and relatability. Since peer tutors walk a fine line between teacher and peer, their behavior greatly impacted how safe or comfortable the participants felt in their sessions. Lastly, the other students in a session have the ability to “make or break it” as Ivy said. When collaboration is fostered and students are encouraged to build off of each other, rather than compete, they report better outcomes. The combination of a secure and agreeable space, a knowledgeable and supportive tutor, and students
working together in sessions were the hallmarks of a safe tutoring environment as detailed by these participants. As noted, these factors individually only partially support the needs of the students, but when all are addressed, they have the opportunity to create a conducive, healthy tutoring environment in which the participants want to learn.

**Theme #3: Environments that Encourage Use of Supports Destigmatize Tutoring**

The environment of the larger college also had an impact on how participants perceived and experienced tutoring. Schools that promoted tutoring and other academic supports lessened the stigma surrounding tutoring. Alex and Ivy stated that their schools have a competitive environment already, which can set up tutoring to follow the same pattern. Likewise, when tutoring is only associated with students who are struggling, the feelings expressed in sessions can be more negative. Karlita and Sara stated that when the tutor behaves condescendingly or dismissively, their concerns about the type or quality of their questions increases and makes them less participatory. In contrast, having a college or university that highly supports and publicizes tutoring services encourages greater use of the resource. Introducing the tutoring center at orientation and suggesting it in advising and other resource meetings can create a positive image, which may invite participation in tutoring that isn’t possible elsewhere.

In addition to tutoring, the participants talked about the use of academic advisors and program specialists, who helped guide them. The presence of and reliance on these resources encourages the use of college-sponsored supports writ large. Additionally, these individuals often brought up tutoring when the participants expressed concerns. A program specialist suggested it to Alex after a poor grade on a test, as a way to get ahead. Subsequently, the positive attention given to tutoring by the school increases attendance and students’ willingness to express that they use tutoring. Bianca, Sara, Alex, Ivy, and Karlita all mentioned being told to
use the service by older students. Bianca noted that these students told her that everyone goes to tutoring. Ivy had a similar experience when older students in her program told her that it was almost expected.

All five participants had a positive experience in this regard, as their schools are highly supportive of using tutoring as a resource. Sara noted that having been in tutoring since elementary school, whether or not she was struggling, she considers it an extra tool and plans to continue using it. Alex stated that she always requests a tutor, just in case. If she finds that she doesn't need any support, she uses the time to get extra practice. In their interviews, the participants indicated an interest in continued enrollment in tutoring and seemed vocal about how useful it can be for people at all levels. In that way, they are continuing the cycle of positive engagement that leads to student usage, acceptance, and then sharing. When a college or university promotes the benefits of tutoring and students feel supported by their tutors, they are likely to continue using the service and to tell others about it or engage as tutors later in their college careers.

**Theme #4: Collaboration Produces Positive Learning Outcomes**

As mentioned previously, tutoring in groups, rather than one-on-one can create an environment of collaboration or competition, depending on several factors at play. The participants explained that when they worked with the other students in their tutoring groups, they learned more and felt more confident with their work. The most common example given of collaboration was that of working through each other’s questions. Breslin (2014), Seo & Kim (2019), and Srivastava & Rashid (2018) all discuss the increased ability to work collaboratively after going through peer tutoring. Especially pertinent when someone felt unprepared, having another student bring up questions was a good way to get started in a session. While this is not an
intricate example of collaboration, it does highlight the value of having multiple thinkers in one space. Just listening to another student frame a question would sometimes help one of the participants to organize their thoughts. Sara stated:

   I think it was super helpful sometimes to work through a problem that other people that are in the class and are kind of at the same level of understanding are talking through, figuring it out together. I think that’s a really helpful tool.

Karlita also explained that it was helpful to see how other people solved things. Sara found it beneficial to have the tutor walk through a question, whether she had posed it or not, so she could learn the whole process.

   In addition to building off of each other, tutoring offers the space to encourage students to actively collaborate. Rather than asking each student to solve a problem and show the group how they did it, tutors could pair learners and ask them to work through the problem together and explain any differences in thinking. This also provides time for the tutor to measure each student’s understanding, without requiring students to present their thoughts to a whole group or be proven incorrect at the board. By asking students to work with each other, rather than against each other, tutors can encourage similar collaboration in other academic spaces. Karlita noted that when she felt disincluded, she often drew back into herself and stopped participating, which can impact how effective sessions are. Actively asking students to discuss ideas between themselves, engage with complex problems, and support each other can improve college-wide inter-student relationships. Though this and other examples of collaboration and competition were not acknowledged as embodied responses, the physicality of the spaces and interactions is expressed clearly. From physically changing the way one is sitting to disengaging emotional and
mentally, the relationships fostered in the space impacted and were impacted by the bodied individuals in the space, much like in Moje (2000).

Alex felt strongly that collaboration was easier if the students present were starting at a similar place, but acknowledged how difficult that would be to coordinate. Sara and Karlita also mentioned that each student brings their own questions and students are often at different places with their understanding. Sara explained:

I think it can be really confusing when you come to different solutions and you don’t really know who’s correct or the rationale as to why that person is correct. And then you have competing ideas of how the formula works…

However, when tutors leveraged these discrepancies in understanding, they were able to help the students to learn more deeply. For example, a student who understands a topic that another is questioning can lead the group on this one and likely every student has their chance with a topic they are most comfortable with (Breslin, 2014). In addition to giving the students time to demonstrate their skills, it also helps prevent students from spacing out, which both Alex and Ivy mentioned happening when they weren’t engaged or challenged. Another benefit of having several possible solutions is creating the opportunity to practice negotiating and group work. Finally, treating a victory for one student as a victory for the whole group can change the mentality of the space to one in which everyone wants their fellow students to succeed.

Despite the challenges that are presented when multiple students are involved in one tutoring session, four of the five participants believed that having others there improved their learning. Bianca, Ivy, Karlita, and Sara all said the benefits of having multiple students in their session outweighed the disadvantages. From working together on material to learning new ways to understand a concept to using others’ questions as springboards, the participants found that
they appreciated what the other students gave them. When discussing direct collaboration, they spoke more about the positive feelings it promoted than the measurable results, but the two are intimately connected. More positive tutoring experiences often lead to improvements in grades, motivation, and confidence, to name a few.

According to Chin et al. (2011) relationship-building is one of the most important factors of a successful tutoring situation. In the interviews, the participants acknowledged that one of the defining factors of those relationships was the presence of competitive or cooperative individuals. When tutoring tutors are expected to work with a group of students, rather than in a one-on-one setting with a single support student, there is a chance that a competitive and unsupportive setting can develop. In already competitive settings, such as elite colleges or specialized programs, the stakes are increased. The participants explained that the imposed competition in tutoring decreases the value of sessions for them. In contrast, when collaboration was encouraged or required by tutors, the participants felt energized and involved. In addition to getting more out of individual sessions, the general consensus was that the collaboration skills they learned or practiced were also crucial to their relationships in their classes. Research also shows that collaboration skills are helpful at promoting autonomous learning for individuals in the future (Srivastava & Rashid, 2018), which is one of the primary goals for tutoring organizations (Chin et al., 2011).

**Theme #5: Tutor as Knowledgeable Resource**

The role of the tutor in the tutoring framework was a particularly distinctive element of the participants’ experiences. All have worked with peer tutors throughout their college careers and have found that they have specific expectations for those individuals. In Sara’s case, her expectations were based on her previous experiences, while participants like Ivy, who had not
used tutoring before college, were informed by the students who suggested tutoring to her. While their individual expectations differed, they expressed two compelling similar details. All expressed that they preferred a tutor who functioned more like a mentor, but who knew the material and had the ability to teach it.

**Characteristics of a Strong Tutor**

The characteristics that proved noteworthy to the participants ranged from vulnerable to constructively critical to welcoming, and more. As explained above, the participants expressed the ways that a tutor could impact a session in the short term or their relationship with tutoring in the long-term. Ivy centered confidence and competence as the two most important characteristics of a tutor for her. She explained that if she felt a tutor couldn’t answer her questions or didn’t have the presence to explain material to her, she had a harder time learning from them. Karlita found that the relatability and comforting tone of the tutor were most important to her. She explained that building trust took her some time and these two features helped that process. She recalled tutors who spoke discouragingly or condescendingly and said that she had a hard time expressing thoughts with them. For Sara, it was most important that her tutor could and would provide valuable feedback. She felt that her time felt wasted if a tutor didn’t (or couldn’t) offer constructive support. Bianca felt that accessibility was a vital characteristic of a tutor. She mentioned being able to text them to ask a follow-up question as something that has been helpful to her. Finally, Alex’s focus was on her tutor’s teaching style; she stated that she needed more active and interactive activities in tutoring to help her learn. When tutors simply lectured or talked at the support students, she felt it was easy to lose focus.
Neither Teacher nor Peer

Regarding the role the tutor played, the participants used words like facilitator, guide, and editor. Alex explained that when tutors just “did the problems for you,” they weren’t helping you learn. Her favorite tutoring experiences were those in which the tutor allowed the support students to learn through trial and error. Karlita explained that she like to work alongside a tutor who takes on a guide role, when she explained that she felt most supported when the tutor was willing to walk through the content with her or supply her with additional information. Likewise, Ivy said that she prefers when the tutor facilitates her learning, rather than leads it, by asking questions and incorporating practice into sessions.

This placement of the tutor as an educational docent of sorts was of high importance to Alex, Karlita, and Ivy. They explained how this liminal position defined them as different from teachers and separate from peers. While the tutors are often similar in age, Ivy and Alex both expressed a preference for someone who is at least slightly older than them, because it helps to make the tutoring relationship clearer. Sara and Bianca didn’t discuss age as a factor, but they did mention that they like having someone who is not a teacher explaining things to them. Bianca stated that she found tutors helped her “to figure out how people who are good at a subject are able to do [it] quickly.” Sara recollected an instance when she was struggling with a concept, and it was made clearer when a TA switched from narratively describing it to using a visual. That additional perspective and outside viewpoint was something Ivy mentioned as well. She stated that since the tutor doesn’t always know the exact content of the class, their extra information or approach can be really enlightening. Alex focused on the depth of learning that tutoring had provided her. She said it had “taught [her] how to break things down in ways that
[she is] not just learning to memorize but also learning the logic and the reasoning behind things and the inner explanation.”

It should be noted that in addition to tutors taking on the role of knowledgeable resources, the participants also discussed using other supports to help them. Like the self-perpetuating cycle reference earlier - more supportive environment leading to students using tutoring leading to a more supportive environment - the use of tutoring seemed to stimulate the use of additional knowledgeable resources, such as TAs, academic advisors, program specialists, older students, and more, which in turn supported the use of tutoring.

Each of the participants described their ideal tutors, their preferences for tutors, and the best and worst experiences they have had with tutors. Their experiences vary widely, based on location, subject, time, and many other factors, but there are several points of congruity in their descriptions. They expressed that they wanted their tutors to perform a role that was neither teacher, nor peer, but more like a mentor. As a mentor, rather than a direct teacher, there was more flexibility for the development of further relationships and more space for vulnerability on the part of every part. Gallagher-Mackey et al. (2022) noted that tutoring and mentoring overlap in research, and that the supportive relationship was one crucial element of both. In filling a position that is not a direct peer, a tutor can still bear a sense of authority and erudition that one may not feel with a friend or classmate. The most surprising finding of this section was that the use of tutoring also prompted the participants to seek out additional resources, which in turn, encouraged continued engagement with tutoring. This cyclical engagement with support services echoes the second theme of this research that supportive school environments encourage the use of tutoring, which enriches the supportive environment.
Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the participants, methodology, data collection and analysis, and the findings of this feminist phenomenological study. In seeking to answer what it is like to be an undergraduate female-identifying support student, participants were asked to partake in an interview and answer several journal entries about their experiences in tutoring. From the five participants’ answers, several themes emerged: there is limited integration of the body into learning, a complex interplay of factors affecting feelings of safety among support students, environments that encourage use of supports destigmatize tutoring, collaboration produces positive learning outcomes, and tutor as a knowledgeable resource. Though the participants had varied experiences with tutoring, their responses told similar stories about the intersections of learning and the body. However, an intense focus on living in a specifically female body received less attention from the participants than was expected and hoped for. The connections that appear in chapter 5 were the result of deep engagement with participant responses on my part, but not on the part of the participants. In chapter 5, I discuss the ways these themes highlighted the female experience in tutoring, as well as identifying limitations and areas of future research. Additionally, chapter 5 includes a letter of sorts, written to the participants in response to all that they shared during the study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of female-identifying support students to better understand what it is like for them to receive tutoring. The literature suggested that bodied experiences were largely unreported and therefore the implications of them were not fully understood. The limited literature on the body, and more specifically, on the female body as it interacted with learning sparked this study. In this chapter, I briefly recap the literature, methodology, and findings, as well as explain the implications and limitations of the study. Finally, I provided a list of suggestions for future research.

Summary of Study

In chapter two, I investigated literature from three separate fields: tutoring, embodied learning, and feminist phenomenology to understand if and how they intersect, and what those intersections tell us. In short, the literature revealed a lack of qualitative data regarding the lived experiences of tutoring and even less about the female-specific lived experiences of tutoring. These two gaps are of specific importance, because qualitative data gives more information than quantitative about the students’ experiences and female students are the most highly represented in tutoring, so more needs to be known about them.

Tutoring research, which is heavily quantitative, suggests that college tutoring, especially peer tutoring, has positive impacts on student outcomes (Arco-Tirado et al., 2020). Despite that, the methods used are not always beneficial to all learners (Godbee et al., 2015). Nguyen & Larson (2015) argue that traditional pedagogies, which separate body and mind, impose limits on learning, especially the learning of marginalized students. In addition, in college tutoring, female students use the service at higher rates than male students, but research has a limited understanding of what they experience while using tutoring. Given the higher population of
women in tutoring, it follows that there should be a body of research focusing on the gendered experiences of female support students, but few studies highlighted the impact of gender on learning in the tutoring space. These two areas of limited research offer an opportunity to look at bodied experience through the lens of gender in a highly specific learning environment.

Embodied learning research included many more qualitative studies, but almost exclusively focused on traditional classrooms, rather than supplemental education spaces (Kosmas et al., 2016; Macedonia, 2019; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Nguyen & Larson (2015) note that students are often asked to ignore their bodies in learning, but incorporating the body is more successful and reasonable. Macedonia (2019) and Kosmas et al. (2016) provided evidence that embodied learning methods offer promising approaches to learning and there is evidence to show that tutoring could benefit from such methods. Godbee et al. (2015) argue that embodied methodology can also be leveraged to support marginalized students in ways that traditional methods cannot. Despite the support, little research has been done to pinpoint embodied methods or better understand them.

Finally, feminist phenomenology, which guided the theoretical framework and served as the study methodology, is a robust field with several different areas of focus (Shabot & Landry, 2018; Simms & Stawarska, 2020; Stoller, 2017). As a philosophy, the focus of feminist phenomenology is expanding research that centers on gender and other factors of identity that may disadvantage an individual. As a methodology, it varies from traditional phenomenology to make space for gender in the discussion and action. It focuses more heavily on reflexive writing and encourages more novel means of articulation to better serve the voices of women, who have been largely ignored in past research.
Chapter three detailed the methodology, participants, and analysis procedures of the study. Using a feminist phenomenological design, I asked participants to engage in one interview and a set of journal prompts that investigated how their female bodies were incorporated or ignored in tutoring. Five participants volunteered and four participated in both phases of the study. One participant only took part in the interview. Interviews took an average of 35 minutes and participants were asked five initial questions, which were elaborated on, as needed. After the interview, participants were asked to answer at least four available journal prompts. There were no additional instructions regarding how participants responded to the prompts, so that they had the room to express themselves. Once the participants submitted their journal entries, they were sent summaries of their responses to member check. Four of the participants approved of the summaries. One did not respond. Coding took place in two rounds. First, answers were deductively categorized into four provisional categories, based on the literature, or into a none of the above category. After reaching complete agreement with the second coder, the second round of coding was done inductively. Three hundred fifty-five codes were distilled down to seven categories with 52 code groups. These codes and categories were then organized into the five themes presented in chapter 4. The second coder and I assigned codes exactly the same way for the second round, so no additional discussion was needed.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study were explained in chapter 4, in terms of the five overarching themes that emerged from the data. These themes serve as the basis for the answers to the research question: what is it like to be a female-identifying undergraduate support student? They are as follows: there is a complex interplay of factors affecting feelings of safety among support students, environments that encourage the use of supports destigmatize tutoring, collaboration
produces positive learning outcomes, the tutor as a knowledgeable resource, and limited integration of the body into learning. The experiences shared by the participants highlighted several commonalities about tutoring spaces that deserve additional research as well. Some of these themes also relate directly to the four themes of embodied learning detailed in chapter two.

**Theme #1: Limited Integration of the Body into Learning**

The first theme that emerged was that the body was, at best, underexplored in tutoring. While the participants were able to identify emotions and some bodily affects when they were asked, few had considered it previously. Three of the participants responded with some variation of “that is a good question” and paused to think through their experiences. Even after reflection, several just stated “that it was something they did.” The group, as a whole, had trouble articulating felt senses, which is not uncommon, as even highly embodied cultures note that this can be difficult to express (Freiler, 2008), but rather than attempt to explain it, most simply said they didn’t know. Or, maybe, as Cixous (1976) argued, there is not sufficient language to give voice to experiences specific to the female lived body. Regardless of the reasoning, explaining why or how their body functioned in the space was onerous for the participants. They also noted that they were expected or allowed to use their body to aid their learning infrequently, with most of their connections to embodied learning coming from childhood memories. Though this theme shows a limited use of meaningful movement, it highlights an area of improvement available in tutoring. If meaningful movement, and all of the subcategories that fall in that area, can be built upon, the overall impact of tutoring is likely to increase. Without realizing it, the participants explained how their limited engagement with the body acted as a form of embodiment or an impediment to fully embodiment. Knowing that holistic approaches to education center the embodied, lived experiences of the participants, it is arguable that these support students lacked
an element of tutoring that may have been beneficial to their learning and/or their personal growth and development.

**Theme #2: Complex Interplay of Factors Impacting Student Safety**

Through the interviews and journal entries, the participants indicated that a number of factors worked in combination to impact how safe and comfortable the tutoring space felt. However, it is important to highlight that each individual element does not stand alone. Instead, the space, tutor, and other students worked in concert to impact the session and overall relationship of the student to tutoring. It is through a complex interplay of comfortable spaces, high quality tutors, and collaborative peers that female support students reported feeling their best in their tutoring settings. The clearest connection to embodied learning that emerges from this theme is the connection to space, as the environments in which tutoring occurred had a direct impact on the students’ sense of safety.

Embodied learning (Agostini & Francesconi, 2021; Alerby et al., 2014; Freiler, 2008; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Reeves & White, 2021; Thornburn, 2014) and feminist phenomenological research (Batacharya & Wong, 2018; Shabot & Landry, 2018) suggest that spaces can greatly impact a person’s experiences either negatively or positively, which the participants illustrated in their interviews and journals. Additionally, collaboration (Alerby et al., 2014; Freiler, 2008; He, 2016; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Walker, 2017) emerges as important here, because the connections between students and tutors also impacted the security that students felt. Finally, though less pronounced, the relationship to fulfillment (He, 2016, p. 38; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Reeves & White, 2021; Thornburn, 2012, p. 124; Walker, 2017) came into play as well, since feelings of success were often contingent upon feelings of safety. Ivy highlighted this interplay most clearly when she said in her interview that
the space mattered, but the other people could also make or break a session. When explaining her thinking about this statement, she discussed how the setting, the tutor, and the other students had the ability to improve or worsen a given session.

**Theme #3: Environments that Encourage Use of Supports Destigmatize Tutoring**

The environments that the participants have worked in have been highly encouraging of tutoring as a resource. The support students were introduced to tutoring through orientation, academic advisors, older students, or program specialists. These sources all spoke highly of tutoring for students who aren’t necessarily struggling, which is a common association with tutoring. The positive and frequent suggestion that students utilize the service helped to minimize the stigma surrounding tutoring. Sara even noted directly that she thinks there is a misconception around tutoring sometimes, but that there was no stigma at her school. Ivy echoed that sentiment, explaining that most of the older students she knew encouraged tutoring.

In addition to increasing the usage of tutoring, these environments also lent themselves to tutoring sessions that were supportive, rather than prerogative, and welcome, rather than dreaded. This theme speaks to collaboration and connection to space on a much larger level; when the larger school environment is supportive and encourages tutoring, students are more likely to participate (Breslin, 2014). Additionally, it is important to note that relationship to fulfillment is also connected to this, as students are more likely to develop positive tutoring relationships, and eventually outcomes without a setting that promotes engagement with tutoring. The participants in this study all explained how well established and viewed the tutoring programs were at their schools.
**Theme #4: Collaboration Produces Positive Learning**

As suggested by previous research, collaboration between students creates positive outcomes for learning. In the tutoring space, the participants also noted that when collaboration was encouraged by the tutor and the school environment, it limited feelings of competition. While the participants noted that they all felt self-conscious at times, more collaborative and communal spaces lessened such negative feelings. In addition to improving mood and self-image, collaboration between students improved their understanding of difficult concepts and encouraged more risk-taking. All four of the embodied learning themes arise when discussing the positive outcomes of collaboration. In addition to promoting positive connections between people and fostering feelings of fulfillment, the ability of students to work collaboratively is impacted by the space and the ways their own motility is disrupted or supported by the other elements of tutoring. Breslin (2014), Seo & Kim (2019), and Srivastava & Rashid (2018) all explain that collaboration in tutoring aids students with collaboration skills later.

As in the embodied learning research, this theme may have been the least developed in this study, but still maintains a high level of importance. Aside from opening another avenue of research, this finding can be directly instituted in tutoring organizations to likely strong results. Alex called out the competitive nature of her school, which sometimes seeped into tutoring, and Ivy noted that when her tutoring group worked together, each asking questions and building off one another, she felt more secure.

**Theme #5: Role of the Tutor**

The participants suggested that tutors filled a specific role in their lives that is distinct from being a teacher or a peer. The liminal position is one that tutors often had to work to stabilize. The participants stated that the tutors who were able to teach, while still remaining
relatable and separate from a teacher, were successful. Having the ability to balance the two divergent mantles of peer and teacher, and approaching students with compassion and proficiency were expectations of all of the participants. Moje (200) provides an important example of the fragility of relationships between individuals and those seemingly in positions of power. Like it was essential for Moje (2000) to carefully navigate her position as both peer and superior, tutors must do the same.

Finally, the participants also discussed character traits that they viewed as important for tutors to have, in addition to teaching ability. They noted that vulnerability, empathy, and benignity were among the most important attributes of a good tutor. Karlita had a strong belief a tutor who could be both peer and teacher, friend and mentor were important to her, because they were able to gain her trust and help her develop. Once again, this theme highlights the value of collaboration and feelings of fulfillment. When students are able to connect with their tutor in a collaborative relationship, they are able to benefit from tutoring. Though Thornburn & Marshall (2014) focused on the impact of space on a students’ learning, the logic they applied fits here as well: when a student is able to enjoy the learning, it comes more easily.

**Discussion of the Research Question**

This research set out to learn what it was like for female-identifying undergraduates in tutoring. The responses of the participants shared many commonalities, despite their sometimes-contrasting experiences with tutoring. The themes that emerged from the interviews and journal entries of the participants highlighted a few important responses to the question. The themes, summarized above, can be seen to impact how female-identifying students experience tutoring and how their bodied experience is impacted by gender. However, the connections to the female-lived body experience may not be immediately visible. Deep engagement with the themes and
feminist phenomenological literature makes connections clear. When developing the answers to the research question, I focused on what the themes expressed about experiencing tutoring, being a woman, and how individuals learn. With these areas of focus in mind, there were three answers to the question. Being a female-identifying support student is often an exercise in self-restraint, it is highly relationship focused, and it is mostly cognitive.

First, the experience of female-identifying support students is heavily cognitive (theme one). Instead of using bodied learning and finding ways to incorporate their full selves into sessions, participants highlighted their cognitive engagement and the focus of the tutor on thinking. In a Descartian fashion, the participants struggled to discuss their body and mind in unison (Grosz, 1994; Macedonia, 2019), instead talking about thinking and doing as two separate entities. The clearest example of using the body when learning, but not necessarily to learn, was Alex and Ivy sharing that they like to walk or pace while reading. Ivy noted that the movement helps blood flow and helps her think, but neither went into more detail than that. Another illustration of the mind-body connection was Sara’s story about her routine, which included a special drink when studying because it helped her focus her mind. However, none of these examples actually illustrate body-based learning techniques or an understanding that the body is active in the learning process. Beyond writing notes or following along on tablets, the participants did not discuss any body-based actions that they used to support their learning in their college tutoring settings.

Horn & Wilburn (2005) and Johnson (1989) explain that embodied learning theories are founded on the understanding that all knowledge is based in the body and can therefore not be taken from that context. In practice, this means that focusing on just the brain when teaching is actually short-sighted. As a result, modern education researchers have conducted studies that
show the impact of embodied learning on the learner and the teacher (Feibush, 2018; Macedonia, 2019; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). The studies have shown increased recall, better attention, and deeper understanding among students using embodied methods teacher (Feibush, 2018; Macedonia, 2019; Nguyen & Larson, 2015). Despite the widespread research of these methods in education, including higher education settings, the tutors, like the participants, seemed to focus solely on cognitive growth and did so by using traditional pedagogical tools, like lectures and practice problems. In the experiences of the participants in this study, tutors rarely encouraged movement of any type and students largely remained sedentary. In some cases, limited movement was necessitated by the space that was being used. In others, it was simply the accepted norm and students didn’t break it.

Second, being a female-identifying support student is often an exercise in self-restraint: not taking up too much space, physical and metaphorical, (themes one and two), not asking too many questions (themes two, three, and four), and not showing emotions (themes one and four). Young (2005) wrote about the implications of motility that female-identification imposed. In her foundational work, she argued that women and girls were encouraged to use their bodies in smaller ways, to take up less space, and to show more concern about how their motility is viewed by others. The participants’ awareness of their physical space and their concern for others showcased this theme. In voicing their desire for more space and intentional muting of their emotions, they showed an awareness of these expectations but didn’t comment on their impact. None openly connected their female body to their experiences, but as Al-Saji (2020) notes: as these actions, expectations, and beliefs become habitual, they are normalized for an individual and a society. Rather than questioning their relationship to physical space, they largely accept it as is. In addition to physically limiting motion and the space that they took up, the participants
talked about masking their emotions or trying to downplay them in sessions. Since female experience is often associated with overly emotional responses, it is not uncommon for women to temper their emotions in public spaces, especially in this culture which pits emotional thought against rational thought (McBride, 2021). It follows that this could be a natural extension of the research that shows that women talk more in women-only spaces (Shabot & Landry, 2018).

The participants also spent a large portion of their interviews explaining their concern for the other students in the group. This expression of concern for others is often associated with women and is usually portrayed as a positive trait. However, the care mantle is often expected and forced onto women (Holmes, 2016), and without realizing it, some of the participants echoed such sentiments. The desire to remain in their own space, as well as to limit their questions for the benefit of others were two common concerns that the participants expressed. Despite the possibly positive outcomes of such concern, it cannot be ignored that these concerns often came at the participants’ own detriment. Caring for another at the expense of oneself is not helpful for students or tutors. Alex noted that when she is more capable than other students in the group, she tries not to ask her questions to keep from making them feel bad and give them more time. This often resulted in her questions going unanswered. Karlita also recalled times that she let others discuss without her, so she wouldn’t slow them down with additional explanations. Doing so meant that the group might move onto a new topic, without addressing her current need. Such self-sacrificial behavior, whether intentional or not, keeps with the expectations placed on women that impact their lived experiences (Holmes, 2016). Though the participants did not voice these connections, viewing their experiences and the ways they expressed them through a feminist phenomenological lens brings attention to the ways their understandings about being women impacted their own actions.
Third, being a female-identifying support student is relationship-focused. Participants noted that the most effective tutoring experiences they had were impacted by the tutors and other students (themes one, two, three, four, and five). Chin et al. (2011) note that relationships are central to positive tutoring relationships in all cases, but the participants’ responses suggested that they are particularly important for female support students. It is also important to note that group harmony supports better collaboration in embodied learning settings (He, 2016). Across the participants’ responses, one of the most common statements was that getting along with other people was crucial. A focus on likability is a common theme in feminist interpretations, and the women who participated showed an interest in being liked by the group. Unlike the relationship between a teacher and a student, the relationship between tutor and student was typically more casual and more comfortable. Meanwhile, the relationships between support students could be collaborative or competitive depending on different factors. Regardless of the individuals involved, the quality of tutoring seemed to rest heavily on the relationships for each of these individuals. Relationships are central to lived experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and often become a touchstone for experiences, as well as self-image (Grosz, 1994). For example, having a negative relationship with someone in tutoring, because they act like they are more intelligent than others, can lessen one’s own understanding of their intelligence. Stoller (2017) notes that since relationships are based on dynamics between individuals, the gender of the people needs to be considered. How a woman interacts with a male tutor, for example, may be impacted by how a male tutor or teacher treated her in the past.

Surprisingly, the participants did not focus heavily on gender, even when asked direct questions relating to it. Four of the participants noted that they preferred female tutors, but otherwise, they did not reflect on the implications of their gender or that of their peers in any
meaningful way. In the case of the participants, the one relationship they clearly understood as gendered was their relationship with their tutors. Though one participant stated that she did not have a preference, she also noted that she has had more female tutors than male and therefore has more experiences with those relationships. The other four participants felt that they had had better experiences with female tutors thus far, from feeling listened to and supported to having an easier time asking them questions and relating to them. A sense of comfort or freedom in female-dominated or female-led spaces is common in studies addressing female embodiment (Kruks, 2018; Shabot & Landry, 2018). While I reject the belief that women are more naturally empathetic as one participant suggested, I think that belief contributes to the sense of security that women report when working with other women.

As one-on-one supplemental settings provide the most flexibility and targeted support (Colvin & Fry, 2016), the fact that each student had the same experience of multiple students per tutor at each session, it seems reasonable to believe that this is a common format in several colleges. Breslin (2014) included two colleges in his research and notes that tutors in both settings are paired with multiple students. The questions that this format implies are why do schools choose to group students with one tutor, rather than pair one student to one tutor and does this system have any impact on the consistency of the support an individual student receives? Though there is no clear reason for this system in higher education settings in literature, there are several possibilities. Colvin & Fry (2016) called into question the sustainability of one-on-one tutoring, because of the high investment needed. Some of the reasons it may not be sustainable include having more students in need than tutors available. Additionally, schools may need to cap the number of tutors they can hire to manage costs. Another reason schools may assign one tutor to multiple students is to assure sessions don’t
regularly get canceled. Since a tutor has three to four students, it is unlikely that all will cancel or no-show to the same appointments, so the tutor does not waste time and the school doesn’t waste money.

Alternatively, it is possible that the school values the collaborative possibilities of a group session. If choices about tutoring services are being made based on research, rather than resources, it is possible that the choice to pair several students with one tutor is intentional. Despite the benefits that one-on-one spaces engender, some research suggests that multiple students in a space is actually a benefit to the learner (Breslin, 2014; Seo & Kim, 2019; Srivastava & Rashid, 2018). Practicing collaboration and communication skills (Seo & Kim, 2019; Srivastava & Rashid, 2018) were among just some of the benefits represented by the literature. Breslin (2014) argued that working in groups and allowing the students to support each other improved critical thinking skills, which would not be present in a one-on-one learning environment, since the support student wouldn’t be able to bank ideas off anyone but the tutor.

The other concern that can be raised about this approach to tutoring is the school’s attention consistency. If the practice of having multiple students with one tutor is a way to alleviate overbooked tutors, it can have the positive effect of maintaining consistency between tutors and students. Rather than being shuffled between whichever economics tutors are available a given week, the set schedule with a few students ensures that they are meeting with the same tutor on a regular schedule. The value of relationships that was expressed by the participants highlights the importance of this consistency. If support students do not have the time to get to know a tutor and build a trusting relationship with them, one of the factors contributing to their comfort and safety is minimized from the start.
Also, it is important to note that many of the elements of K12 tutoring, which largely informed my experiences, were absent. For instance, specific learning activities and structured sessions were largely unfamiliar in the participants’ college tutoring sessions. As a K12 tutor, it was also surprising to me that the participants had largely positive experiences with tutoring. Several of the participants voiced how ubiquitous tutoring was on their campuses and that they did not feel it had a stigma. Sara even noted that it was a misconception that tutoring was only for the lost; in my experiences as a tutor, that is a common sentiment. It also means that students often come to tutoring with lower self-esteem and self-efficacy, which was not the case for these participants. Though the five of them do not represent the situations of all undergraduate support students, it highlighted that a more asset-based approach was more common in higher education, which is fully supported by embodied learning, as this approach asks students to bring their whole selves to the table and often celebrates non-traditional academic success.

Though these answers give a good indication of some of the facets of being a female-identifying support student, it is also important to highlight what was left unsaid. Despite the strong and continued focus on feeling safe and secure, the participants gave little attention to their bodies. Since safety or the lack thereof are strongly embodied experiences, it was expected that the discussion of one would lead to the other. Given the difficulty of locating anything in their bodies, it was not surprising that these connections were not made explicitly. Similar to gender, none of the participants made any explicit connections between their identities and their experiences. Though the participants represented a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, there was almost no mention of these elements of their identities. In order to understand their conceptions of intersectionality, additional questions could have been helpful.
Additionally, with only five participants from a limited area, the experiences explained in this study do not express a wide variety of opinions. For example, all of the participants had positive experiences with their tutors, which is not the case for all female-identifying support students. Also, all five noted that they do not consider tutoring a support for only low-achieving students, arguing that it is helpful for students with all different grades. As Grey & Hoyt (2020) note, that opinion is not common, as many individuals associate tutoring only with struggling students. There are also several forms of college tutoring that were not represented in this group of volunteers, and their inclusion may alter some of the overall findings.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study that may have impacted the findings. They include virtual interviews, time constraints, few previous studies, and no observational data. To minimize the impacts of these limitations, mitigation strategies were employed at each stage of the study, from planning to data analysis.

The interviews for this study were conducted virtually, for the convenience of the participants and me. Still, virtual interviews create a distance between the parties that can impede interview cohesion. Specifically, in this study, virtual interviews hide some of the body from view, which limits what I could report on. Since Zoom interviews offer more options for participants, it was important to ask them to keep their cameras on when engaged in the interview, as body language and gestures are central to the interpretation of one’s speech. It is crucial to build trust and comfort quickly in this setting, especially when talking about a topic as difficult as bodies. Rice (2018) explains that it is essential for researchers working in this field to “maintain self-reflexivity and vulnerability with regard to their embodied experiences and histories when conducting research with groups whose bodies are socially constructed as
anomalous” (p. 136). Especially for women, who are constantly faced with societally created beliefs about their bodies, attention to bodied experiences can cause discomfort or increase awareness of differences (Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Rice, 2018).

Additionally, the requirements of participation - an interview and journal entries - increase the work expected of the participants, who are already engaged in additional support for their classwork. To account for this, I planned data collection around the busier times of the semester - midterm and finals - to avoid overwhelming the students at these times. Due to these constraints, data collection occurred in a limited window, with each participant only being interviewed once. Despite the time restrictions, data saturation was used for the measurement of completion. Future studies could benefit from studying tutoring over the course of a year rather than a semester, to create more opportunities for researchers and participants to interact. An elongation of the study may also allow for the detection of patterns that may not arise in one semester.

Finally, the lack of observational data to compare with the interviews and journal entries may be considered a limitation of this research. Observations are often used in phenomenological research to corroborate spoken or written observations (Quotshi, 2018). By adding observational data to the written and/or spoken information provided by the participant, researchers can better explain the phenomenon that is being studied. Likewise, observations of tutoring sessions could offer a window into how the tutoring is conducted so it can be compared with what the participants say, but it also creates several additional barriers that could harm the study. Increased risk to the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, and the additional consideration of the tutors, might limit the number of students who choose to participate. Also, observations often have the impact of changing the situation being observed, which would dilute
the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Since there is always the potential that participants may change what they say and/or how they act based on the presence of an observer (participant bias) (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 230). In that case, the information obtained would be less useful than the self-reported data that was collected through the interview and journal entries.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

While embodied learning is neither a new concept nor an unknown one, its use in tutoring settings is still underdeveloped. Likewise, detailed information about the impact of gender on tutoring settings is also limited, and additional studies can help to bridge this gap. After conducting this study, I would recommend several improvements on my design, most specifically an increased focus on the gender of the participant in relation to their embodiment. Additionally, longer engagement with the participants and additional sources of data can help to develop the basic results that this study produced. Finally, in-person interviews could improve the quality of the interactions between an interviewer and participant.

**Increased Focus on Gender in Relation to Embodiment**

Since the integration of the female body was one of the main goals of this study, it should be noted that the specific questions used and the conversations generated did not uncover many connections made by the participants, between being female and learning with the body, as was expected. Some of this is likely due to a lack of awareness on the part of the participants, but some of it can also be traced to a lack of focused questions. In trying to avoid leading or loaded questions, I crafted questions in which the focus on gender was more implied than explicit, which meant that there were fewer responses addressing these concerns directly. For example, responses that talked about concern for others and trying to keep oneself limited to a specific space could be connected to the female body experience, but only through analysis. None of the
participants made any explicit connections between their female body and their experiences, because none of the questions asked them to try to do so either.

The writing prompts offer a great opportunity to explore these topics in more detail, because they create space and time for reflection that is not available in an interview. Oliver & Lalik (2001) found that the richest data they collected came from the journals, as students appreciated the ability to express themselves openly. More purposefully focused questions could have helped bridge this gap. Questions about female-specific functions, interactions with others focused on gender, and their understanding of gender and its ancillary topics would be helpful to make more direct connections. Likewise, offering a phenomenological writing prompt (van Manen, 1989), rather than individual questions, might have given the students space to think more existentially about the topics. This option also gives the participants a chance to engage in the methodology more directly, though it would have required more detailed instructions and time.

**Longer Engagement**

Creswell & Miller (2000) explain that one avenue for constructivist qualitative research to be more credible is to engage with a topic over a long period of time. This can deepen the description and extend the types of data that a researcher has to work with. Additionally, it allows the researcher to lengthen the time spent on analysis and reflexive writing. Future researchers who have the opportunity to extend this research over a longer time frame will likely see a benefit. From talking with students more than once to engaging with additional data sources that couldn’t be considered in the time frame of this study, additional time could allow for a more expansive project. The difference between doing this study over the course of one semester and two semesters may seem minimal, but it would create much more space and time
for interaction with participants and possibly other parties. It would also allow the researcher to
give participants more time to respond to journal prompts, to be interviewed more than once, to
engage in observations, or include other data collection measures. By extending the length of
time that a researcher is engaged in the study, they can also develop more detailed
understandings of the participants’ backgrounds, the tutoring processes at the schools, and the
ways these and other factors impact the experiences the participants report. Additionally, longer
engagement supports the goal of thick descriptions, which are expected in phenomenology.
While this study involved descriptions of the students and their tutoring spaces, more developed,
in-depth descriptions could be used to accompany the narratives with more time spent with
participants and the data they produce.

**Additional Data Sources**

With the goal of phenomenology in mind, more chances and ways to delve deeper into
the experiences of the participants would create even more complex images of what it means to
be a female-identifying support student. By utilizing additional interviews, different writing
tasks, or observations, a future researcher could get more specific data about the participants. It
could be especially useful to compare a student’s body language and behavior in a tutoring
session observation to their understanding of those things shared during an interview or in a
writing response. More demographic and non-demographic data would help to paint a fuller,
richer picture, an important goal of phenomenological research. Additionally, triangulating or
crystallizing the data becomes more valuable with more streams of information to compare
(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Having more streams of data would give a future researcher the
information needed to provide a more multifaceted approach to the topic.
An auxiliary data source that this could also produce is more reflexive writing on the part of the researcher. Though I engaged in reflexive writing three times in the process, I feel that more frequent attention to this part of the process is required with the feminist phenomenological approach. Additional reflexive writing would highlight any biases or generalizations on the part of a future researcher, because when repeated regularly throughout the process, it can mark changes and growth that has occurred during the process. As reflexive writing is a required element of feminist phenomenology (Simms & Stawarksa, 2018), more frequent reflexive writing could impact how the researcher chooses to share the data or incorporate their own experiences as well.

In addition to finding extra streams of data related to the tutoring students, the tutors and center directors can offer invaluable insight into the tutoring process. This data can also help to explicate the environment in which the tutoring occurs. Since feminist phenomenology pays special attention to the circumstances that exist which may alter or impact experience, these data points offer an important point of view. Seeking out information that can better develop the overall picture of the participant and the setting can improve upon the findings that are produced.

**In-Person Interviews**

Zoom interviews provided several benefits in this study. They allowed participants to engage from wherever they were located. It also increased the ease of recording and transcription. However, it impeded my view of the participants beyond their small box and provided a limited window into their world. In-person interviews would alleviate those limitations and might also increase the amount of information received, because they could be hosted in any location amenable to the researcher and participant. The other big improvement
that in-person interviews would provide to the research is the ability to more fully model embodied learning, since the space is not restrictive. While the advantages of Zoom did outweigh the disadvantages in this study, future studies could benefit from the more direct face-to-face interview, both from the lens of embodied learning and phenomenology.

**Conclusion**

Three years ago, I completed a yoga class, spun around on my mat, and told a friend that I knew what I wanted to write my dissertation about. Her surprise was not misplaced, given the setting, but as I explained the realization I had made - that a lot of my negative associations with my body were fostered in school - the project started to take shape in her mind too. In that class, as I worked to try to make peace with the size of my thighs (the area of my body I am least comfortable with), I found myself remembering the first moment I was forced to sit on my hands in school. While there is no way to draw a direct line from a past event to a current reality, it was that memory that made me question all of the ways the body had been a central element of my education, while never being central to my learning.

Research surrounding movement in classrooms is extensive, but the limited number of studies focusing on embodiment in higher education and/or tutoring highlighted gaps that needed to be addressed. Most of the research that does exist does not give voice to the participants, which felt like a missed opportunity. Focusing on tutoring was both a choice based on personal interest and an awareness that research was lacking in that area. Having been both a private tutor and a tutor through several organizations, I knew that the circumstances of tutoring varied greatly and that they had the potential to impact students and their learning. Knowing that my bodied experiences were inherently impacted by my gender and beliefs (and those beliefs that
were foisted upon me) about the female body, it felt crucial to look for insight about other female bodily experiences in tutoring.

The combination of feminist phenomenology and embodied learning allowed me to develop a project that questions what it is like to be a female-identifying undergraduate support student. The findings that arose include five themes that developed from the responses of the participants - there is a complex interplay of factors affecting feelings of safety among support students, environments that encourage use of supports destigmatize tutoring, collaboration produces positive learning outcomes, tutor as a knowledgeable resource, and limited integration of the body into learning - and three statements regarding what it is like to be a female-identifying support student - it is an exercise in self-restraint, it is relationship-focused, and it is heavily cognitive. The participants, who answered interview questions and responded to journal prompts, shared their experiences with tutoring that shed light on female bodily comportment, though they largely expressed limited knowledge about their bodies or their body-mind connection. Despite the repeated vocalization that they “didn’t know,” I believe that they do, in fact, know more than they were able to say.

**You Do Know**

To conclude this study, I would be remiss if I did not address the participants and what they shared directly. First, thank you for your time and responsiveness throughout this project. I literally could not have produced this without you, and I am so grateful for your time, interest, and dedication. I will also be eternally grateful for what I learned from all of you; I made many connections and realizations about myself, learning, and embodiment while talking with you and analyzing your words.
Second, I wanted to share with you what I found, without sending you an entire dissertation, because who has time for that. It was your interviews and journal entries that allowed me to develop the ideas that I present here, after all. Your experiences were very similar in some interesting ways, but also distinctly different from each other in some areas. I developed five themes based on what you all shared: there is a complex interplay of factors affecting feelings of safety among support students, environments that encourage the use of supports destigmatize tutoring, collaboration produces positive learning outcomes, tutor as a knowledgeable resource, and limited integration of the body into learning. Together these findings form the basis of my project and allowed me to make connections to the literature I had read about embodiment, tutoring, and life in a female body.

Finally, I want to argue that you do, in fact, know. The most common sentiment across all five interviews was “I don’t know” or some variation of it. As women, we are often encouraged to ignore our own feelings or to doubt our understandings. It happens in insidious ways, just like learning to distrust or dislike your own body, but the ability to see those moments and question them can be your power. While you may not have realized it, there were so many instances of both self-assurance and self-doubt in the interactions I had with each of you. From now knowing why you do something, to not trusting your answers to questions, to qualifying logical and thoughtful responses with phrases like “if that makes sense,” the interviews were littered with moments of insecurity that didn’t match the awareness and ability that you all displayed. While it may be hard to articulate or to trust your own interpretations, I argue that you do know. As Kruks (2018) states, “our embodied orientations to the world profoundly ‘suffuse’ our ‘thinking’; we discover the ‘the body itself as a knowing body’” (p.122). You know yourselves better than I ever did, and I hope you will stand firm in yourselves in the future.
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Appendices

Appendix A. IRB Approval

From: do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2023 10:19 AM
To: Staulters, Merry L <MSTaulters@wcupa.edu>; Weiss, Samantha <SWeiss2@wcupa.edu>
Subject: IRB-FY2023-351 - Initial: Initial - Expedited

Jun 26, 2023 10:19:30 AM EDT

To: Samantha Weiss
Col of Education & Social Work, Special Education

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - IRB-FY2023-351 Understanding lived body experiences of female undergraduate tutees: A phenomenological inquiry

Dear Samantha Weiss:

Thank you for your submitted application to the West Chester University Institutional Review Board. Since it was deemed expedited, it was required that two reviewers evaluated the submission. We have had the opportunity to review your application and have rendered the decision below for Understanding lived body experiences of female undergraduate tutees: A phenomenological inquiry.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Sincerely,

West Chester University Institutional Review Board

IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155
Appendix B. Email Requesting Support

Dear (NAME):

My name is Samantha Weiss. I am a student in the Ed.D. in Policy, Planning, and Administration program, (Curriculum and Instruction or Higher Education Administration) track at West Chester University. I am on track to graduate in May 2024.

For my research, I am interested in learning about the lived experience of the female-identifying tutored-body. Using a phenomenological inquiry design, I plan to interview and use journal entries to ascertain how tutees experience their bodies in relation to tutoring. For this study, I am focusing on PASSHE institutions, but my goal would be to expand after the completion of the dissertation to a wider swath of college environments. From my research, it is clear that there is limited information on how one interacts with their body in the tutoring space, but such information could help students to develop their understanding of their body and their learning process, tutoring centers to better utilize their resources, and tutors to incorporate embodied learning into sessions. There are minimal risks associated with the study, including possible privacy risks, and slight discomfort with the subject matter. Measures taken to mitigate these risks are explained in detail in the informed consent form, attached here.

I am reaching out to ask if you would give me permission to recruit female-identifying undergraduates seeking tutoring services at the (TUTORING SITE) to participate. If you are willing to allow research at your site, please copy the contents of the Letter of Support attachment onto your
university’s letterhead, sign it, and send it back to me by June 1, 2023. If you are not the person to request permission from, please inform me of who I should reach out to or forward this message appropriately.

If your center will participate in the research, I will send a follow-up email after my IRB approval has been attained explaining the next steps and providing more detailed information.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reach out via email to sweiss2@wcupa.edu with any questions.

Best,

Samantha Weiss
Professional Testing Center Coordinator
Francis H. Green Library, Suite 129
25 West Rosedale Ave.
West Chester University
610-436-2413
Sweiss2@wcupa.edu
Appendix C. Letters of Support

May 25, 2023

West Chester University
Institutional Review Board
700 South Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Kyle Vickers, Director of Tutoring and Testing have reviewed Samantha Weiss’s request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval and school district policies. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and January 31, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates, in our Student Support Services and participation is voluntary.

I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Kyle Vickers
Director of Tutoring and Testing
PennWest University
kvickers@pennwest.edu
814-393-1838

PennWest is made up of Clarion University, California University of PA, and Edinboro University. This letter of permission extends to all three sites, as Kyle Vickers is the permission-granting party for each school.
August 15, 2023

Ms. Samantha Weiss
West Chester University of Pennsylvania

RE: Research Project Entitled “Understanding Lived Body Experiences of Female Undergraduate Support Students: A Phenomenological Inquiry”

Dear Ms. Weiss:

The SRU Research Permissions Committee has reviewed your request to conduct a study with SRU students as research participants. The Committee found this to be a worthwhile study and has given their approval for you to proceed. Keep in mind, however, that this approval does not obligate the individual students to participate in the study. It merely means that SRU administration is aware of the project and has given approval to contact the potential research participants. Please contact Ms. Amber Hamilton by telephone at 724-738-4097 or by email at amber.hamilton@sru.edu.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, contact Casey Hyatt by telephone at 724-738-2045 or by email at casey.hyatt@sru.edu.

Sincerely,

Ursula Payne
Interim Associate Provost for Academic Finance, Planning and Strategic Initiatives

cc: Ms. Amber Hamilton
Casey Hyatt
June 5, 2023

West Chester University
Institutional Review Board
700 South Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Dr. John Craig, University College Dean, have reviewed Samantha Weiss’s request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss to complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval and school district policies. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and January 31, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates in our Learning Assistance and Resource Center and participation is voluntary.

I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

John B. Craig, EdD
Dean, University College (interim)
January 29, 2024

West Chester University
Institutional Review Board
700 South Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Jacob Hebda, Lackawanna College Writing Center Interim Director, have reviewed Samantha Weiss’s request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval and school district policies. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and February 29, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates in our Writing Center and participation is voluntary.

I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jacob Hebda
Lackawanna College Writing Center Interim Director
January 25, 2024

Katie McNulty
Director of Tutoring & Writing Centers
Marywood University
2300 Adams Avenue
Scranton, PA 18509
570-348-6211 x2279
kmcnulty@marywood.edu

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Katie McNulty, Director of Tutoring & Writing Centers at Marywood University, have reviewed Samantha Weiss’s request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval and school district policies. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and January 31, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates in our tutoring and writing centers and participation is voluntary.

I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,
Katie McNulty,
Director of Tutoring & Writing Centers
Marywood University
January 30, 2024

West Chester University
Institutional Review Board
700 South Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Ryan Miller, have reviewed Samantha Weiss's request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and February 29, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates in our tutoring services site and participation is voluntary.

I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University's Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Ryan Miller, Ed.D.
Senior Director, Weingarten Center
University of Pennsylvania
January 30, 2024

West Chester University
Institutional Review Board
700 South Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383

Dear West Chester University, Institutional Review Board,

I, Stephen D. Kelly, Ph.D., Program Coordinator of the Temple University Student Success Center, have reviewed Samantha Weiss's request to conduct research. This letter documents approval for Samantha Weiss to complete research regarding the experience of the tutored-body for female-identifying undergraduates, in accordance with IRB approval and school district policies. I have been advised of the scope of the research and how data will be collected. I also understand that all information to be gathered will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will take place between September 26, 2023, and January 31, 2024. Participants include female-identifying undergraduates in our Student Success Center at Charles Library on the campus of Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and participation is voluntary. I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University's Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Stephen D. Kelly

Stephen D. Kelly, PhD
Program Coordinator
Temple University Student Success Center
Charles Library 233
1900 N. 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

(215) 204-8487
stephen.d.kelly@temple.edu
Appendix D. Recruitment Materials

This study has been approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board, protocol IRB-FY2023-351.

**DOCTORAL STUDENT SEEKING FEMALE-IDENTIFYING TUTORING STUDENTS FOR DISSERTATION STUDY**

The purpose of the research is to understand the ways the body is involved or neglected in the tutoring environment.

I am interested in both positive and negative tutoring experiences.

Participants will be asked to take part in a 30–60 minute audio-video recorded interview and respond to at least four journal prompts.

$10 digital gift card as compensation will be offered for those who complete the interview and journals.

TO SIGNED THE INFORMEC CONSENT, PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE. ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE END OF THE FORM.
Share your experiences with your Pennsylvania college or university tutoring program by participating in a dissertation study about the body’s role in the learning experience. Participation involves one interview and responses to at least four online journal prompts. For more information, please reach out to sweiss2@wcupa.edu. If you are interested in signing up, please fill out the informed consent at https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_40CwCso0CQ7Tz8i and select an interview time at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080D4BA9AF2AA0F49-44470776-tutoring. This study has been approved by the West Chester University Institutional Review Board, protocol IRB-FY2023-351.
Dear Tutoring Student:

My name is Samantha Weiss. I am a student in the Ed.D. in Policy, Planning, and Administration program, (Curriculum and Instruction or Higher Education Administration) track at West Chester University. I am planning to graduate in May 2024. You are receiving this email, as you are currently enrolled in tutoring at your university and I am seeking to study the experiences of female-identifying participants who are actively engaged in college tutoring.

For my research, I am interested in learning about the lived experience of the female-identifying tutored-body. Using a phenomenological inquiry design, I plan to interview and use journal entries to ascertain how tutees experience their bodies in relation to tutoring. From my research, it is clear that there is limited information on how one interacts with their body in the tutoring space, but such information could help students to develop their understanding of their body and their learning process, tutoring centers to better utilize their resources, and tutors to incorporate embodied learning into sessions. There are minimal risks associated with the study, including possible privacy risks, and slight discomfort with the subject matter. Measures taken to mitigate these risks are explained in detail in the attached consent form.

If you are willing to participate in this study, your commitment will include one 45-60 minute interview and four or more written responses through a Qualtrics journal. No compensation will be offered for this study. If you are interested, please fill out the consent form provided at https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_40CwCso0CQ7Tz8i. To sign up for an interview, please choose a time slot on the Sign-Up Genius, which is also provided on the consent form: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080D4BA9AF2AA0F49-44470776-tutoring.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out to sweiss2@wcupa.edu with any questions.

Best,
Samantha
Appendix E. Interview Protocol

Informal introduction

[change to pseudonym and start recording]

Thank you for signing up to participate in this research study. My name is Samantha Weiss and I am the principal investigator. I am going to run through some logistical details and then we will get into the interview.

Throughout the research process, you will be identified only by the pseudonym that you chose when you signed up for the project, in order to protect your privacy. This interview will be recorded, but the physical recording will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed.

Having your camera on for the interview is required. To fully participate, I am asking that you do one interview and respond to at least four journal prompts, which you will receive the link for at the end of the interview. I am asking to have the journals finished within two weeks, if possible.

At the conclusion of the study, compensation in the form of digital gift cards will be sent out via email.

Your participation is optional and can be terminated at any time, for any reason. If any of the topics create extreme discomfort or concern, available resources are included on the consent form you signed. During the interview and in your journal entries, I ask that you refrain from mentioning the name of your university, tutoring center, or any individual. After interviews and journal entries have been transcribed and coded, I will send you a de-identified summary of your responses, that I will ask you to confirm or revise.

Please re-confirm your consent if that all sounds okay, and we will get started.

Age? Year? Time in tutoring? Classes you’ve received tutoring for? Race? Native language?
So, as noted in the flier and research brief, I am interested in how female students use or do not use their bodies when they are learning in the tutoring setting. A few examples of using the body in learning include tapping to count syllables in early grades, learning a mnemonic like PEMDAS in middle school, or practicing the body parts by using your own body. To demonstrate, I will teach you the four tones in Mandarin using our hands (Mandarin lesson).

Please follow along with me.

How did it feel to learn something like that? What did you like about it? Dislike about it? Is it familiar? Unfamiliar?

So, before we move into the questions, I want you to take a moment to clear your head of all the things you “know” about tutoring. In this interview, we want to focus on your experiences only.

General: Tell me about how tutoring has influenced you (academically, personally, emotionally).

Theme 1: Meaningful Movement - Tell me about a time when you were aware of how your physical presence/body was influencing (or being influenced by) your tutoring experience. (This might include “not being able to focus because you were too tired” or “having an easier time studying because the furniture is better than your dorm”).

- How do you hold your body when you going into your tutoring space? Why do you think you do that?
- What is the format of a typical tutoring session for you?
- How and how often do you move your body intentionally in tutoring?
- How do you usually express your emotions and how does that come out in tutoring?
- Can you think of any instances in which you felt particularly good in tutoring?
- Can you think of any instances in which you felt particularly bad in tutoring?
Theme 2: Connection to Space - Describe your tutoring environment in as much detail as possible. What does it smell like, look like, sound like, feel like, etc.? How do you feel in that space?

Theme 3: Collaboration - Tell me how your body is influenced by the tutor or other support students in the tutoring space. (Do you do better in one-on-one, small groups, silent, chatty, with a tutor of the same gender/age/major etc?)

- How do you typically prefer learning?
- What is your comfort level with those around you in tutoring? Why?
- How do the people around you impact your learning?

Theme 4: Feeling of Fulfillment - Can you share any stories about tutoring in which you felt particularly connected to your body or the material you were studying.

- What strategies and activities that your tutor does with you do you like? Why do you like them?
- What achievements/accomplishments are you most proud of from tutoring? What makes you feel that way?
- What does tutoring mean for you/why do you do it/what do you want to gain from it?
Appendix F. Journal Entries

Journal prompts can be found at: https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5aoxf7QTCHJk0LA. This link will be provided to the participants at the end of their interview.

Are you getting tutoring for a specific class? How did you learn about tutoring? Did someone recommend that you go to tutoring?

What is tutoring like for you? What do you think, see, smell, feel, touch when in the tutoring space?

Give an overall description of your tutoring experiences that include the ways you feel, the others present, the space around you, the content of the sessions, etc. Any details that you deem important about your sessions can be included.

When you are corrected or told that you are wrong in tutoring, what physical and emotional reactions do you have? How does the tutor handle those moments?

How and how often do you use your body when learning (strategies to help you remember content, movement around the room, relaxation activities, etc.)?

How did you feel physically when you first started tutoring? How did you feel emotionally when you first started tutoring? How do you feel now? Is there any difference?

Tell me about how you felt physically or emotionally during a recent tutoring session. Please give details about what your body and your mind felt like before, during, and after the session.

Think back to a tutoring session that you left feeling good/content/proud/etc., what do you remember about that session? How was that session different from others that you have left with less positive feelings?
How do you respond to bodily needs when you are in a tutoring session? For example, what do you do if you start feeling hungry or tired, or have to go to the bathroom? How does your tutor respond? Please give examples.
Appendix G. Researcher Journal Example Entries

2/19/21
Round 1: Coding Guide/Plan
Do these answers highlight elements of LOA featuring embodied learning?
- connection to space
- Meaningful movement
- Communication
- Timing of fulfillment
- not related to LOA

Process: Read excerpt with 5 highlighters to highlight connections to EL themes. If more than 1 expressed, tried to stay/step each color appropriately. First round of all transcripts together, then all journals together.

Round 1 Transcripts: 2/10/21 (bulk 5)
Round 1 Journals: 2/11/21 (bulk 4)

Also marked any particularly note-worthy comments.
Reflection & Discussion Questions
- How am I coping up all the demands placed on me?
- What have I learned about research & the structure of the research process?
- What is my approach or strategy for making the necessary revisions?
- What are my strategies for completing Ch. 4?
- What strategies or supports am I using to facilitate the final components of this work?
- What do I do when I disagree w/my dissertation advisor?
- How will I use the research process in the future?

Comparison Notes

1. All very articulate
2. More aware of self/feelings than I was
3. Competition
4. Likes challenge/practice
5. Flexibility largely based on people
6. Preference for females
10:00am interview. Acoustic. Sans.

Describer. Smiling, open. Smooth, easy.
1. Thoughtful, nice, loud, holy.
2. Very talkative.
3. Nervous, strong, mocky.

Giggled a lot during interview. Smiled a lot. Moaned a lot. Said she talked a lot. Moaned a lot when speaking.

Comparison to: jargon, program, omegan, xmas, jocks.

Meeting pace, smooth, steady, running. Right hand a lot. Head, side view, window, desk.

Used hands in hair, pointed. Very aware of space.

Boring, as usual. Not great when slumbering.
Appendix H. Journal Entry Email

Subject: Post-Interview Follow-Up

Hello again!

Thank you for participating in the interview portion of the study!

The next step is answering at least four of the journal prompts linked here:

https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5aoxf7QTCHJk0LA

If you would like to answer more than four, you are welcome to do so. Please respond to the prompts within two weeks of receiving this email, so the project can proceed on schedule. There are no specifications for how you answer the prompts, but please be detailed when possible. If you have questions regarding the journal prompts, please contact me via email, and I will respond as soon as possible.

After the journals, you will receive a summary of your interview and journal responses by Feb. 20, 2024, to confirm or revise. More information about this step will be included in that email.

Thank you again for your time!

Best,
Samantha B. Weiss, MA
she/her - What is this?
Professional Testing Center Coordinator
Francis H. Green Library, Suite 129
25 West Rosedale Ave.
West Chester University

610-436-2413
sweiss2@wcupa.edu
Zoom:
https://wcupa.zoom.us/j/5756074012?pwd=NEE2SEhZZ3FqMXpqbTRXblBWxCQT09

Book time to meet with me
Appendix I. Member Checking Email

Subject: Dissertation Member Checking

Good morning,

Attached to this email is a summary of your responses from the interview and journal entries, along with my general understanding of your responses. Please review the attachment and respond to this email in one of two ways:

1. If you approve of the notes and my interpretation, please respond with Approved.

2. If you do not approve of the notes or my interpretation, please respond by noting what I got incorrect and making corrections.

Please respond by Feb. 27, 2024. If you make corrections, we will redo this process until you approve of the information provided to you.

Once your responses have been member checked, you will have completed all of the requirements for the project. I will reach out again in late April to send your virtual gift card.

Thank you for taking part in this study! Your time and consideration is greatly appreciated!

Best,
Samantha B. Weiss, MA
she/her - What is this?
Professional Testing Center Coordinator
Francis H. Green Library, Suite 129
25 West Rosedale Ave.
West Chester University

610-436-2413
sweiss2@wcupa.edu
Zoom:
https://wcupa.zoom.us/j/5756074012?pwd=NEE2SEhZZ3FqMXpqbTRXblB1QWxCQHT09

Book time to meet with me
Appendix J. Code Compilation and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Compilation and Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embodiment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal or external locus of control for others, self-conscious, had trouble thinking of outcomes, self-consciousness vs. self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional movement: stand up, holding head for concentration, moving for better focused flow, practice problems, deep breaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar vs. unfamiliar (used ESL activity to peak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative bodily affect: draw back, silence, pressure, struggle, give up, hunger, raced out,.sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive bodily affect: curiosity, motivation, be present, flow, stay engaged, value, vibrant, fresh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papillae emotion: conﬁdence, proud, excited, calm, ease, security, relief despite fear, supported, excited, numbles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body awareness: The sit, fell change, systems/meme, want to talk when stuck, no getaways in college, hand motions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentional movement: fidget, change of positions, tapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of body awareness: unaware of senses, don’t think of it like that, forget about hunger, don’t know why I did it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional expression: happy, sad, happy, sadness, facial expressions, verbal expressions</td>
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