

CAPTURED AND ENRAPTURED

THE PHENOMENON OF FIRST-TIME

PARENTING IN THE FIRST YEAR

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certificate	i
Acknowledgment	ii
Table of contents	iii
Abstract	ix
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background to the study	1
1.1.1. A personal reflection	1
1.1.2. Nurses and parents	2
1.2. The study	5
1.2.1. The purpose of the study	5
1.2.2. Organisation	6
Chapter 2. Review of the literature	7
2.1. Introduction	7
2.2. Events and activities in the first year	8
2.2.1. Caring for a first child	9
2.2.1.1. Feeding and nutrition	9
2.2.1.2. Immunisation	14
2.2.1.3. Illness	16
2.2.2. Nursing and health services	16
2.3. Parenting	18
2.3.1. Roles, work and transition	18
2.3.2. Relationships	24
2.3.3. Influences on parenting	25
2.3.4. Parenting: A unique human experience	27
2.4. Conclusion	29
Chapter 3. Method: Phenomenology as a way to knowing and understanding	30
3.1. Introduction	30
3.2. Phenomenology: A philosophical movement	31
3.2.1. The early philosophers	32
3.2.2. The German philosophers	33
3.2.3. The French philosophers	38
3.3. Phenomenology: A research methodology	39
3.3.1. Van Manen's human science	39
3.3.2. Nursing research and phenomenology	41
3.4. Conclusion	44
Chapter 4. Method: Investigating the phenomenon of first-time parenting	46
4.1. Introduction	46
4.1.1. Research question and aims of the study	46
4.1.2. Method and design	47
4.2. Phenomenology as method for the study	48
4.2.1. Offerings from transcendental phenomenology	48
4.2.2. Offerings from hermeneutic phenomenology	49
4.2.3. Offerings from Van Manen's human science	50

4.3. Design	51
4.3.1. Participants	51
4.3.2. Recruitment	52
4.3.3. Consent	53
4.3.4. Interviews	53
4.4. Analysis	55
4.4.1. From spoken word to text	56
4.4.2. Text as the source of meaning	57
4.4.3. Messages in the data	57
4.4.3.1. Constructing thematic statements	58
4.4.3.2. Constructing theme	59
4.4.3.3. Constructing perspective	60
4.4.3.4. Constructing interpretive meaning	61
4.5. Findings	61
Chapter 5. The Parents	63
5.1. Introduction	63
5.2. Peta and Sean	64
5.3. Gina and Murray	66
5.4. Penny and Steve	68
5.5. Gerri and Ken	69
5.6. Paula and Chris	70
5.7. Megan and Lindsay	72
5.8. Bella and Matt	74
5.9. Jane and Patrick	75
5.10. Deborah and Colin	77
5.11. Jenny and Kris	78
5.12. Conclusion	80
Chapter 6. Making a place for a child	81
6.1. Introduction	81
6.2. Preparing for a child	82
6.2.1. Getting ready	82
6.2.2. Being responsible	84
6.2.3. Gathering perceptions	85
6.2.4. Anticipating a child	87
6.3. Giving birth to a child	88
6.3.1. Experiencing labour	88
6.3.2. The presence of a partner	92
6.3.3. Working with others	94
6.3.4. Giving birth	95
6.4. Receiving a child	97
6.4.1. Responding to a newborn child	98
6.4.2. Becoming acquainted	100
6.5. First days	102
6.5.1. Separation	102
6.5.2. First feedings	103
6.5.3. Losses	104
6.5.4. Hospital as place	106
6.6. Summary and conclusion	107
6.6.1. Ways of making a place for a child	107
6.6.2. Being generate	108
Chapter 7. Acting responsibly in the care of a child	109
7.1. Introduction	109
7.2. Responding to a child	110
7.2.1. Recognising cues	110
7.2.2. Responding to a child's needs and preferences	111
7.2.3. Making adaptations	113

7.3. Providing for a child	114
7.3.1. Providing resources	114
7.3.2. Providing stimulation and learning experiences	117
7.3.3. Providing nourishment	118
7.3.4. Providing protection and safety	121
7.4. Assuming responsibility in the care of a child	122
7.4.1. Assuming responsibility for a child	122
7.4.2. Assuming responsibility for the care of a child	123
7.4.3. Assuming responsibility in the role as parents	126
7.5. Managing the care of a child	130
7.5.1. Organising care	130
7.5.2. Managing routines	131
7.5.3. Organising activities	132
7.5.4. Taking charge	132
7.6. Summary and conclusion	133
7.6.1. Ways of acting responsibly in the care of a child	133
7.6.2. Being for another	134
Chapter 8. Interacting with others as parents of a child	136
8.1. Introduction	136
8.2. Interacting with the extended family	137
8.2.1. Parents and the extended family	137
8.2.2. The extended family and a child	140
8.3. Interacting with health professionals	143
8.3.1. Midwives	143
8.3.2. Doctors	145
8.3.3. Nurses in the community	146
8.4. Interacting with others in the community	150
8.4.1. Friends	150
8.4.2. Other parents	151
8.4.3. Community members	157
8.5. Summary and conclusion	160
8.5.1. Ways of interacting with others as parents of a child	160
8.5.2. Being as parents in the world	161
Chapter 9. Acknowledging the development of a child	162
9.1. Introduction	162
9.2. Responding to a developing child	163
9.2.1. Delighting in a child's delight	163
9.2.2. Captivated by a child's unfolding	164
9.2.3. Amazement and wonder	167
9.2.4. Getting something back	169
9.3. Knowing and understanding a child's development	170
9.3.1. Awareness and interest	171
9.3.2. Estimating development	173
9.4. Caring for a developing child	177
9.4.1. Monitoring a child's development	177
9.4.2. Meeting changing needs	179
9.5. Summary and conclusion	180
9.5.1. Ways of acknowledging the development of a child	180
9.5.2. Being held to a child	180
Chapter 10. Maintaining personal wellbeing and integrity	181
10.1. Introduction	181
10.2. Preserving identity and self-worth	182
10.2.1. Interests and activities	182
10.2.2. Social contacts	184
10.2.3. Independence and a sense of self	185

10.3. Maintaining self-fulfilment	187
10.3.1. Importance of work	187
10.3.2. Effects of work	190
10.3.3. Making a career	191
10.4. Optimising opportunities	193
10.4.1. Further education	193
10.5. Ensuring well-being	195
10.5.1. Physical fitness	195
10.5.2. Keeping healthy	196
10.6. Summary and conclusion	197
10.6.1. Ways of maintaining personal wellbeing and integrity	197
10.6.2. Being other than a parent	198

Chapter 11. Living with new perceptions: Experiencing feelings as parents

	199
11.1. Introduction	199
11.2. Feelings about a child: Love and enrichment	201
11.2.1. Loving a child	201
11.2.2. Feeling proud	202
11.2.3. Being enriched	203
11.3. Feelings in being with a child: From delight to despair	203
11.3.1. Closeness	203
11.3.2. Sharing happy experiences	204
11.3.3. Pleasure in a child	205
11.3.4. Bearing with a child	206
11.3.5. Fearing for a child	211
11.3.6. Fearing for the future	213
11.4. Feelings in caring for a child: Confidence, anxiety and guilt	215
11.4.1. Becoming sure	215
11.4.2. Taking responsibility	216
11.4.3. Giving adequate care	217
11.4.4. Leaving a child	221
11.5. Feelings about selves: Joys and disappointments	223
11.5.1. Becoming parents	223
11.5.2. Doing parenting	226
11.5.3. Meeting own needs	230
11.5.4. Each other	232
11.6. Summary and conclusion	237
11.6.1. Ways of living with new perceptions: Experiencing feelings as parents	237
11.6.2. Being open	238

Chapter 12. Living with new perceptions: Thinking and knowing as parents

	239
12.1. Introduction	239
12.2. Thinking and knowing about a child: Learning and understanding	240
12.2.1. Having a child	240
12.2.2. Making a relationship	241
12.2.3. Knowing a child	242
12.2.4. Hoping for the future	247
12.3. Thinking and knowing about selves: Realising and accepting	248
12.3.1. Responsibilities	248
12.3.2. Giving care	249
12.3.3. Understanding parenting	251
12.3.4. Effects of parenting	253
12.3.5. Different selves	257
12.3.6. Another child	259
12.4. Summary and conclusion	260
12.4.1. Ways of living with new perceptions: Thinking and knowing as parents	261

12.4.2. Being open	262
Chapter 13. Being parents	263
13.1. Introduction	263
13.1.1 Sharing the experience	264
13.2. Being generate	268
13.2.1. Having hope	269
13.2.2. Enduring and persevering	270
13.2.3. Making adaptations	271
13.3. Being for another	272
13.3.1. Acceptance of responsibility	273
13.3.2. Sensitivity and responsiveness	274
13.3.3. Perseverance and forbearance	275
13.4. Being as parents in the world	278
13.5.1. Seeking and receiving	278
13.5.2. Sharing experience	280
13.5.3. Assuming role	281
13.5. Being held to a child	282
13.5.1. Delight	283
13.5.2. Commitment	284
13.5.3. Hope	285
13.6. Being other than a parent	285
13.6.1. Self-knowledge	286
13.6.2. Resoluteness	287
13.6.3. Self-regard	288
13.7. Being open	289
13.7.1. Being open in the experiences of feeling	289
13.7.1.1. Vulnerability	290
13.7.1.2. Absorption	290
13.7.2. Being open in the experiences of thinking and learning	291
13.7.2.1. Receptiveness	291
13.7.2.2. Flexibility	292
13.8. Summary and conclusion	293
Chapter 14. Conclusion and discussion	294
14.1. Introduction	294
14.2. Layers of meaning in the description of the phenomenon	294
14.2.1. The description of the phenomenon revealed through conscious experience	294
14.2.2. The description of the phenomenon revealed through perceptual perspective	296
14.2.3. The description of the phenomenon revealed through interpreted experience	297
14.2.4. The description of the phenomenon as captured and enraptured	298
14.3. Discussion	299
14.3.1. Findings and meanings	299
14.3.2. Issues for nursing and midwifery practice	301
14.4. Final comments	306
Appendices	309
Appendix A	
Consent form	309
Information form	310
Appendix B	
Thematic statements	311
References	335

Abstract

The experience of ten first-time parent couples over the first year has been investigated in a phenomenological study, which sought to describe the phenomenon of first-time parenting. The phenomenological description of first-time parenting reveals structures of meaning in the experience of first-time parenting and what it is to be first-time parents. It is concluded that first-time parenting can be described as an experience in which parents are **captured and enraptured**. This description is the end-point of a series of analytical steps in which the parents' accounts of their experiences were analysed, interpreted and reflected upon.

The study has found that first-time parenting can be described according to five themes. The five themes refer to the parents' experiences in **Making a place for a child; Acting responsibly in the care of a child; Interacting with others as parents of a child; Acknowledging the development of a child; and Maintaining personal wellbeing and integrity**. An extended description of the phenomenon was found in the parents' perceptions of their experience. These are described as **Living with new perceptions: Experiencing feelings as parents** and **Living with new perceptions: Thinking and knowing as parents**. A further layer of meaning in the parents' experience reveals them as parents who have their being in a number of essences of the phenomenon. These are **Being generate; Being for another; Being as parents in the world; Being held to a child; Being other than parents** and **Being open**. The final description of the parents' experience of first-time parenting as **Captured and enraptured** is drawn from the findings from each of these layers of meaning.

This study and its findings, therefore, presents a written account of the experience of ten parent couples with their first child over the first year, in which the description of first-time parenting as phenomenon, is made available. The meanings within the parents' experience are offered and the final conclusion, that people who parent can be caught up in an experience and way of being which holds and entrances them in ways not previously described, is explicated in the final description of the phenomenon as an experience in which parents are **Captured and enraptured**.