

CAPTURED AND ENRAPTURED

THE PHENOMENON OF FIRST-TIME

PARENTING IN THE FIRST YEAR

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Submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Technology, Sydney

1998

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.

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Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for the help and support, given in many ways, by those whose being in the world is such that they have graciously accommodated my undertaking of this thesis into their world with consideration and optimism.

My family, for their forbearance and ability to expect little and give much.

My colleagues in the Faculty of Nursing, University of Technology, Sydney, for their sustained interest and encouragement.

Professor Elizabeth Cameron-Traub, supervisor, for her wise counsel and intellectual astuteness.

The participating parents, for their cheerful willingness to share their experience and include the study in their busy and taken-over lives.

The University of Technology, Sydney for generous support in the form of special leave for the completion of this thesis.

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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**.