



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Midwifery

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/midw](http://www.elsevier.com/midw)

## Kairos time at the moment of birth

Susan Crowther, PhD, MSc, BSc (hons.), RM, RN (Senior lecturer in midwifery and caseload midwife)<sup>a,\*</sup>, Elizabeth Smythe, PhD, RN, RM (Professor School of Health Care Practice)<sup>b</sup>, Deb Spence, PhD, RN, RM (Senior Lecturer School of Health Care Practice, Dr.)<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

<sup>b</sup> School of Health Care Practice, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 8 May 2014

Received in revised form

1 November 2014

Accepted 3 November 2014

## Keywords:

Kairos time

Birth

Nativity

Spiritual meaning

Hermeneutic phenomenology

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** there is something extraordinary in the lived experience of being there at the time of birth. Yet the meaning and significance of this special time, named Kairos time in this paper, have received little attention.

**Aim:** to describe the lived-experience of Kairos time at birth and surface its meaning.

**Methodology:** this is an interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology study informed by the writings of Heidegger and Gadamer. 14 in-depth interviews with mothers, birth partners, midwives and obstetricians were transcribed and stories from the data were hermeneutically analysed.

**Findings:** there is a time, like no other, at the moment of birth that is widely known and valued. This paper reveals and names this phenomenon Kairos time. This is a felt-time that is lineal, process and cyclic time and more. Kairos time describes an existential temporal experience that is rich in significant sacred meaning; a time of emergent insight rarely spoken about in practice yet touches everyone present. The notion of Kairos time in relation to the moment of birth is introduced as a reminder of something significant that matters.

**Key conclusions:** Kairos time is revealed as a moment in and beyond time. It has a temporal enigmatic mystery involving spiritual connectedness. Kairos time is a time of knowing and remembrance of our shared nativity. In this time life is disclosed as extraordinary and beyond everyday personal and professional concerns. It is all this and more.

**Implications:** Kairos time at birth is precious and powerful yet vulnerable. It needs to be safeguarded to ensure its presence continues to emerge. This means maternity care providers and others at birth need to shelter and protect Kairos time from the sometimes harsh realities of birth and the potentially insensitive ways of being there at the moments of birth. Those who find themselves at birth need to pause and allow the profundity of its meaning to surface and inspire their actions.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

When people talk about the experience of a baby being born there is a shared knowing. It is often communicated beyond words, with meaningful eye contact, tears, smiles, nods, affirmative sounds. At times birth may be less than optimal yet birth always appears to invoke powerful experiences whether they are of joy or sorrow. Each person may be drawn back into their own memories of a special time at birth; a time commonly expressed as powerful, transformative and compelling. Despite the power of this experience, little attention to the significance of this moment

is evident in the literature. Yet there are hints of something extraordinary. The words of a midwife in Doherty's study (2010, p. 100) announce this time, 'The awe of birth has never diminished...the spirituality of the moment, the tears in my eyes, and the lump in my throat' (Doherty, 2010, p. 100). Leboyer (1975/1991) referred to the time at birth as 'a matter of a moment a unique one' (p. 99) and Gaskin (2011) described this time at birth as sacred requiring reverence. In this paper we name such a moment Kairos time and through stories from those at birth this notion is explored and described.

Non-rational or indeterminate and intuitively felt experiences at birth remain unexplainable yet paradoxically are perhaps the most meaningful and important. There is growing concern that something of importance is being covered up, forgotten and ignored at birth within western maternity systems that

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [scrowthe@aut.ac.nz](mailto:scrowthe@aut.ac.nz) (S. Crowther).

are structured according to technocratic and biomedical understandings (McAra-Couper et al., 2010). How a society interprets birth is fundamental to how a society functions (McIntosh, 2012). Bartlett (2001) warned that emphasising 'safety' over 'sacred' would reduce the experience of birth to something secular. However non-rational aspects of birth are not necessarily oppositional to the rational critical-thinking and decision-making often required at birth (Klassen, 2001). The thesis of this paper is not that modern maternity technocracy and medicalisation is lacking or privative. The purpose of this paper is to turn attention to non-dichotomous unifying experiences at the time of birth. It is a call to be mindful of this precious time in ways that safeguard and shelter something of existential value that needs honouring.

The notion of Kairos time emerged from hermeneutic phenomenological research exploring the lived experience of joy at birth (Crowther, 2013, 2014; Crowther et al., 2014b). One of the major themes arising from interpretation of the lived experience of joy at birth is felt-time. The notion of Kairos emerged from interpretation of felt-time or temporal experiences at the moment of birth. Kairos time has been explored previously in relation to the crisis of unwarranted pregnancies (Ayres, 2008), it is now introduced in relation to experiences of felt-time at the moment of birth. This paper brings awareness to Kairos at birth and discusses possible implications of ignoring and forgetting this unique felt-time.

## Literature review

The purpose of reviewing the literature in hermeneutic research is to make the phenomenon more visible, opening dialogue with the reader and provoke thinking while remaining attuned to unexpected possibilities (Smythe and Spence, 2012). The complexity and uncertainty in literature reviewing is an endless hermeneutic process that unfolds concurrently throughout the research project (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010). In dwelling with a wide range of both classic and new writing, our quest was to stay attuned to the phenomenon of interest and to consider how other authors drew us into common or new thinking. Other readers become dialogic partners bringing their own horizons of understanding to the phenomenon. A more extensive hermeneutic literature review with a detailed description of the review process has been published previously (Crowther et al., 2014a). What follows is for the purpose of offering foci of thinking that will later be gathered together to articulate the nature of Kairos at birth.

### Lineal time and birth

Lineal time at birth is a forward movement of measured time according to which protocols, procedures and structured tasks are performed along a predetermined trajectory. In the pursuit of change we move from one time to another creating a drive that propels us forward. As Heidegger (1992) argues it is this drive that allows for temporal succession (Heidegger, 1992). The cultural and historical rise of biomedical models of childbirth in western nations has led to conceptions of time at birth as measurable (McCourt, 2009). It is these contemporary drives in western maternity care that manifests structured, organised and managed lineal time. For example, the precise time of birth must be documented for resuscitation purposes (NICE, 2007). Lineal time in modern western maternity services has become deeply embedded exerting authoritative power (Downe and Dykes, 2009). This mirrors an industrial vision of birth that seeks control through fixed timed parameters paying little or no attention to the experiential felt-time at birth.

### Cyclical time or process time and birth

Cyclic or process time is connected to the seasons, reproductive functioning and moon cycles that flow endlessly. Natural cyclic time has a before and after, such as before and after a sunrise. Cyclical processes around birth have also been named maialogical time (Kahn, 1989; Dykes, 2007). Maialogical cyclic time describes dialogic, reciprocal synchronised being together; a time of mutuality and interconnectedness that reveals the relationships between self and other after birth. Walsh (2009) argues that it is lineal time rather than process or cyclic time that dictates modern maternity. Yet time at birth is both lineal and cyclic, there is also felt-time.

### Felt-time and birth

To temporalise time is to feel and live time. Heidegger argues that time temporalises itself rather than time 'is' or 'is not' something definable (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Felt time is a time that is lived through and lived in (Vagle, 2014). van Manen (1990, 2014b) describes lived time as felt experience unlike that of clock or lineal time when time feels to be passing at a different pace. For example, waiting for the neonatologist to arrive to assist an unwell newborn or a mother waiting for a sonographer's appointment to tell her all is well with her unborn child may 'feel' far longer than the moving hands on the clock. Time is an ontological phenomenon and thus can never be fully understood. Felt-time as described here fails to describe human temporal experience at birth completely. There is more to the experience of time at birth than the above descriptions together.

### Kairos time and birth

Kairos is an ancient Greek notion that is beginning to be examined more closely in recent years (Murchadha, 2012). Kairological time describes time qualitatively beyond the lineal and cyclic. This is a unique felt-time, an invitation to enter into new ways of being. According to Heidegger, Kairos time provides fullness of being drawing past and future into unity. Kairos has no fixed place from which time began or will end. In Kairos time there is no contrived hierarchy or process; this is a moment of arriving in a profound felt 'now'. This is not 'the momentary now of time... but is the eternal now' (Heidegger, 1992, p. 45). Kairos cannot be ordered, foreseen and articulated in chronological language as used to describe lineal and cyclic time (Murchadha, 2012). For example chronological or clock time during birth is adopted to describe the step by step measures of time to full dilation, birth, and birth of the placenta.

Conversely Kairological time is a shared experience that finds us unexpectedly confronted by an enigmatic mystery; a time that designates the right moment, an opportune or critical moment (Kazenshe, 2004). This is a moment of life altering possibilities. The moment of birth is likewise a critical and auspicious felt-time. Labour and birth can involve overcoming many hurdles requiring extreme effort and surrender to natural forces. Kairos, too, has been described as a 'passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved' (White, 1987, p. 13). Kairos cannot be grasped, it is fleeting and can slip away in an instant. Van Manen (2014a) describes Kairos time as an evanescent moment of sudden seeing which strikes us gifting a moment of grace, meaningful insights and knowing.

Kairos at birth signals a moment of common significance beyond individual everydayness. Kairos time includes Dyke's (2007) maialogical time yet it is more than this interpretation of time alone. The interrelated nature of people and environment at birth suggests the time is special and shared (Bergum, 2007). However there is also the transpersonal and spiritual experiences

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10515682>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10515682>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)