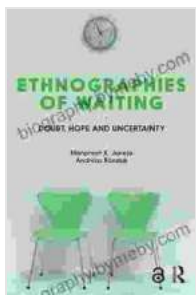


# Ethnographies of Waiting: Unveiling the Murky Waters of Doubt, Hope, and Uncertainty

Waiting is an enigmatic and often overlooked aspect of human experience. It seeps into our daily lives, shaping our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Yet, despite its ubiquity, waiting has remained largely unexplored in the realm of social sciences.

In recent years, a growing group of anthropologists have turned their attention to this intriguing phenomenon, producing a rich body of ethnographic research that delves into the multifaceted experiences of waiting. Their findings offer a nuanced understanding of how waiting shapes individuals and communities, revealing its profound impact on our sense of time, self, and social relations.



## Ethnographies of Waiting: Doubt, Hope and Uncertainty

by Dr. Michael P Masters

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4426 KB

Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 230 pages



## Waiting as a Liminal State

One of the recurring themes in ethnographic accounts of waiting is its liminal nature. Waiting places individuals in a state of "betwixt and between," where they are neither fully present in the current moment nor

fully immersed in the future. This liminal state can give rise to a range of emotions, including frustration, anxiety, and anticipation.

In her ethnography of waiting for kidney transplants, anthropologist Sarah Franklin explores the ways in which patients navigate the emotional rollercoaster of hope and despair. She argues that waiting for an organ transplant is a particularly intense form of waiting, as it involves both the anticipation of a life-saving gift and the uncertainty of whether or not it will ever come.

### **Waiting and Power Dynamics**

Ethnographic research has also shed light on the ways in which waiting can be shaped by power dynamics. In her study of waiting rooms, anthropologist Susan Leigh Star shows how the physical design of these spaces can reinforce social hierarchies. For example, patients in low-income clinics are often forced to wait in cramped and uncomfortable conditions, while those in private hospitals enjoy more spacious and luxurious surroundings.

Star's work highlights the fact that waiting is not simply a neutral experience, but one that is often infused with power relations. Waiting can be used as a means of control, a way to assert authority, or a way to reinforce social inequalities.

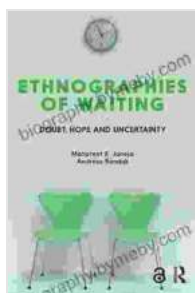
### **Waiting as a Site of Resistance**

Despite its often negative connotations, waiting can also be a site of resistance. Anthropologist Arturo Escobar argues that waiting can be a form of political protest, a way for marginalized communities to assert their rights and challenge the status quo.

In his study of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, Escobar shows how indigenous communities have used waiting as a strategic tool to resist government oppression. By refusing to participate in the electoral process and instead waiting for a more just and equitable society, the Zapatistas have forced the Mexican government to confront the long-standing grievances of indigenous peoples.

The ethnographic studies of waiting offer a rich and nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon. They reveal the ways in which waiting shapes individuals and communities, influencing our emotions, our sense of time, and our social relations. Waiting can be a source of frustration and anxiety, but it can also be a site of hope, resistance, and transformation.

By shedding light on the complexities of waiting, these ethnographies invite us to rethink our own experiences of waiting. They encourage us to recognize the power dynamics that shape waiting, and they inspire us to see waiting not as a passive state, but as a potential source of agency and change.



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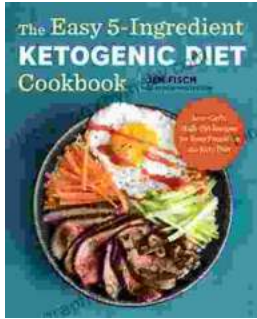
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