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Working on Environment Projects in Cambodia: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Experiences of Some Western Expatriates

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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The experiences of western expatriates working in the environment sector in Cambodia were explored in this study. Given that there is no indigenous environment movement outside of NGOs, and the importance of NGO work to the post-conflict phase in Cambodia, how expatriate environmentalists make sense of their experiences, and strategies they use for success in their work pursuing environmental change is of interest. The process of overcoming environmental degradation and experiences of working on environmental projects in a crosscultural setting are of interest to health psychology. The chosen method, interpretative phenomenological analysis, allows themes to emerge from the talk of participants, whose sense-making is of interest. Four superordinate themes emerged from the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with 8 expatriates, who had lived in Cambodia from 2 to 11 years. Themes included understandings about Cambodia’s environment, experiences of environment work in Cambodia; politics in environment work and their experiences of being expatriate environmentalists.
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