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

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Abstract

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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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review	1
Chapter 2: Method and Methodology	15
Chapter 3: Cambodia's Environment: Expatriates' Understandings	24
Chapter 4: Environment Work in Cambodia	56
Chapter 5: Politics in Environment Work	80
Chapter 6: On Being an Expatriate Environmentalist	111
Chapter 7: Conclusion	127
Appendix A: Information Sheet	133
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form	135
Appendix C: Interview Schedule	136
Appendix D: Tape Release Authority	137
Appendix E: Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes	138
Appendix F: Newspaper Articles	144
References	155