

Mid-length Adventure Racers and Place Attachment

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Adventure races and eco-challenge competitions have gained a significant profile in the media coverage of extreme sports. They have also spawned numerous smaller scale events throughout the world. They typically feature strenuous sporting competitions in rugged natural settings. While the participants of these events use these landscapes as competition sites, their attachment to these places is not clear. Place attachment in the context of this study is defined as the positive affective bond between an individual and the place he or she visits (Hay, 1999; Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). It is important to understand the place attachment of these racers because individuals who are attached to the natural places will presumably be more willing to practice sustainable activities while using the site. In-depth interviews were conducted with 11 participants of the 2002 Canadian Death Run in Grand Cache, Alberta to explore their attachment to the environments in which they raced. The data indicated that the respondents had, in fact, developed strong attachments to competition and training sites but that in the case of Grande Cache, this attachment was more of a function of place dependence (e.g. specialized terrain needed for competition) than place identity (e.g., personal identity derived through a place).