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Exploring Visitor Experiences
within the Going-to-the-Sun Corridor of Glacier National Park

By

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Thesis

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Abstract

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Exploring Visitor Experiences within the Going-to-the-Sun Corridor of Glacier National Park

Committee Chair: Wayne A. Freimund

Visitor use on the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) corridor is one of the most critical issues that Glacier National Park faces. According to the park's General Management Plan, it should be addressed to safeguard the quality of park resources and the visitor experiences. 80% of park visitors travel along at least some part of the road, which is the primary park experience and one of the most spectacular highlights of the park. The road was built in early 1930, and now brings almost 2 million visitors annually into the heart of Glacier NP. Increased number of cars on this narrow historic road caused traffic problems such as crowding at pullouts and traffic jams, as well as safety issues. The situation with traffic worsened also because of the road reconstruction which was aimed to rehabilitate the road and solve traffic problems in the long run. A new 10-year reconstruction project started in 2007; as a part of it a free shuttle service was introduced. It poses important questions about impacts on visitor behavior, visitor use, and visitor experiences in the park. Understanding existing patterns and trends in the current context is important.

This exploratory research attempts to identify and describe the nature of actual and desired experiences from the perspective of visitors. It reveals the primary dimensions of the experiences, discusses the factors that influence them, and talks about connections, common patterns and trends.

Data collection and analysis for this study were guided by the method of Grounded Theory. Fifty in-depth interviews with diverse Glacier NP visitors in various parts of the GTSR corridor were conducted. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a system of coding that identifies themes through which interviews can be organized, interpreted and presented. Through this process, three main categories of visitor experiences were identified: "Glacier as a Unique Setting", "Motivations and Benefits", and "Human Interactions". They represent mainly social dimensions of visitor experiences and include some biophysical elements. Aspects that are associated with managerial dimensions are discussed separately with less depth within the forth category – "Managerial Issues".

The results of this study imply that there is a broad range of experiences occurring within this key corridor of Glacier NP. There is no single story and combination of the revealed dimensions; every visitor is different and his/her experience is unique. However, some common patterns exist, and several experience typologies are identified. Using tools such as the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is recommended to embrace the diversity of experiences, while protecting the setting from changes in the conditions, and better preserving and improving different types of visitor experiences in Glacier NP.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background

“Glacier National Park is a legacy to the American people and to the world” (Layman 1999, p. 3). Located in the northwest part of Montana, it is a region of outstanding scenic beauty, rich biological diversity and unique recreation opportunities. Approximately 95% of the park is wilderness (Layman 1999). About 2 million visitors come to the park annually, and visitation has generally increased each year since the park was established (NPS 2012). Public use always inevitably creates impacts (Merligiano 1999, Stankey & McCool 1984). The National Park Service Organic Act (1916) states that the mission of national parks is to protect resources and enhance the enjoyment of present and future generations. Park managers have a challenging task to manage the area in such a way that visitors get high-quality experiences while park resources are protected.

One of the most critical issues that Glacier National Park faces is visitor use on the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) corridor. Driving along the GTSR has become a premier experience for more than 80 percent of the visitors to Glacier NP (Layman 1999, p. 41). Since the time when automobiles became common and affordable, the road attracted tourists who wanted to see the spectacular views and scenic beauty of the interior of the park. On the Glacier webpage of National Park Service website GTSR is called “an engineering marvel that spans 50 miles through the park’s wild interior, winding around mountains and treating visitors to some of the best sites in Montana” (NPS 2012). The road was completed in 1933. In 1985 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1997 it was designated a National Historic Landmark (Layman 1999). Driving along the GTSR provides opportunity for spectacular park experience, it is the dominant transportation feature and the only route that directly links the east and the west sides of the park, going over the Continental Divide at Logan Pass.

From 1970s to 1990s visitation to Glacier NP increased by 50% (McCool 1996), and the number of cars on the road reached the figure of 660,000 annually (Layman 1999, p. 42). Increased traffic caused crowding at pullouts and parking areas along the road which is rather narrow due to its historical character. The demand for parking and pullouts often exceeded available spaces. People had to wait in order to stop in designated areas and enjoy the views, which resulted in parking in other places that caused damage to resources and safety problems. A 1994 study of visitor use conducted in the park showed that 43 percent of summer visitors believed that traffic congestion and parking shortages detracted from their visits, and many said that was unacceptable (Layman 1999).

The situation with traffic further worsened because of the road re-construction process which was initiated by the National Park Service in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration with an aim to rehabilitate the GTSR. Rehabilitation was required to preserve the historical character and significance of the road; it was also intended to (1) minimize effects on natural, cultural, and scenic resources; (2) maintain a world-class visitor experience; (3) provide for visitor and employee safety; (4) minimize the impacts to the local and regional economy (Baker and Freimund 2007). Most road construction can be done only in summer and fall, which is also the only time when the public can experience the GTSR because of weather conditions (Layman 1999).

Road re-construction is a rather long process. Although the first steps were undertaken in 1980s, much had to be done to improve the road. In 2007 a new ten-year construction project began to improve and rehabilitate the GTSR, with the highest elevations characterized by the most fragile environments being repaired now (2010-2012). Despite the fact that the road is not closed completely during construction, visitors may experience significant frustrating time delays, and changes in access to popular trailheads and scenic lookouts because of repairs and partly lane closures. In order to alleviate congestion at the popular spots, in 2007 Glacier NP introduced a free optional shuttle system as a part of the GTSR rehabilitation project. The idea

was to reduce the number of visitor vehicles from the road which would shorten queues at construction sites and provide park visitors a convenient way to access many destinations along the GTSR without driving a car.

Both road construction and implementation of a shuttle system raised new questions about visitor experiences. As the road and the shuttle are interconnected with other elements of the GTSR corridor system, they are inevitably impacting visitor behavior, visitor use patterns and park resources, and are having an effect on visitor experiences. Understanding this system of interactions, and in particular the nature of visitor experiences and a range of impacts on them in the modern context is important for management implications.

Problem Statement

One of the goals of Glacier park managers during the re-construction of the GTSR is to minimize disruptions to visitors and mitigate traffic, while the long-term goals of this process are to reduce negative impacts on park resources, guarantee high-quality experiences for all visitors and ensure safety. But both road re-construction process and implementation of the shuttle system themselves have already been affecting the nature of visitor experiences in the park.

Previous studies revealed that the shuttle system is impacting visitor experiences and visitor use patterns along the GTSR corridor (Johnson, Diamond and Freimund 2010). For example, the shuttle facilitates a one way hike along the trail, so more people are using adjacent hiking trails and some hikes are becoming longer within the corridor because of the implementation of the alternative transportation system in the park. The findings suggest that there could be significant increases in the number of visitors riding the shuttle in the future, which in turn can have more impact on the resources and visitor experiences within the GTSR corridor. This raises a further question about the level of integration of GTSR corridor system: how different elements of this system interact to impact visitor experiences and park resources, and how it can be used for park planning and visitor management in the future.

It is very important to understand that the road itself and the shuttles are only two parts of a bigger and highly interconnected system of the GTSR corridor, which also includes adjacent trails, visitor flows (those coming by cars, bicycles, motorcycles, tour buses, shuttles and on foot), infrastructure and facilities (viewpoint, pullouts, parking lots, restrooms, etc), transportation, construction and maintenance equipment, etc. Changes that occur in one element of the corridor most likely will bring about changes in the whole system. For example, opportunity to use the shuttle offered Glacier Park visitors an option to facilitate a one-way hike, which may result in increased pressure on longer trails that are adjacent to the road (and may be other trails as well), which in turn may have an impact on natural resources and visitor experiences. Understanding these connections has important implications for park managers as based on this information, they may adjust their policies in order to ensure that park resources are protected and visitors get high quality experiences.

Previous studies (Freimund et al, 2006-2010, Giordano 2002) mostly discussed the recreational use and tourist behavior on the road itself and actual shuttle experience. However, it was revealed that the transit system has had many more impacts – both positive and negative – on the road and the park as a whole. A more clear understanding of these interactions between different elements within the whole GTSR corridor system is necessary. In particular, it is not exactly clear how visitors currently define their experiences in various parts of the corridor; what specifically affects the experience (the road construction, the shuttle system, changes in use, or maybe there are other drivers and interventions as well); how they perceive these impacts; what are the patterns and trends; and how they see their desired experiences and setting conditions.

This study focuses on revealing different aspects of visitor experiences from the perspective of visitors along the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor. It aims to assist Glacier NP managers to gain a better and more integrated understanding of actual and desired visitor experiences and their dimensions, which can then serve as a platform for management actions.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter one provided some background and context of the study – mainly describing the problems being addressed.

The second chapter will give an overview and present some studies that have been conducted about a) visitor experiences in general; b) protected areas (PA) planning and management frameworks; c) visitor use and visitor experiences in Glacier National Park. At the end of this chapter main research questions will be outlined.

The third chapter will focus on methodology. It will describe the research approach, sampling frame and the processes of data collection and data analysis. The primary data collection method consisted of qualitative semi-structured field interviews that were conducted during two summer months of the year 2011.

The study results will be presented in the chapter four. The goal of this chapter is to identify and describe the nature of actual and desired experiences from the perspective of visitors; reveal the primary dimensions of the experiences; discuss the factors that influence them; and talk about connections, common patterns and trends.

The last chapter will summarize the implications of this study for park management and for future research. Social studies like this research are supposed to provide a scientific base for park planning and management, and the researcher's recommendations on visitor management actions will be presented.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The re-construction of the GTSR in Glacier NP and introducing a shuttle system raise important questions about impacts on visitor experiences, visitor behavior, use levels and patterns of use within the park during the period of construction activity and after that. This chapter is dedicated to exploring how visitor experiences and impacts on them have been investigated by recreation researchers; describes existing protected areas planning and management frameworks; and provides some background on visitor use and visitor experience studies in Glacier NP. At the end of this chapter main research questions are outlined.

Studies about Visitor Experiences

The concept of visitor experiences has attracted attention of social researchers over the last several decades. Many studies that were conducted in this area acknowledge that visitor experiences are complex, multidimensional, dynamic and multiphasic; they are influenced by numerous factors (Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001, Hammitt 1980, and others). “The wilderness visitor’s experience is a very special thing. It is delicate and subtle, and can be affected by a multitude of factors, many of which managers can control or influence” (Hendee et al 1990, p. 470). A number of studies were carried out to understand how visitor experiences are formed and which factors influence them; many studies were also devoted to defining, exploring and monitoring the quality of visitor experiences in natural areas. Over the last decades, four approaches to the measurement of the outdoor recreation experience have developed: satisfaction approaches that focus mainly on evaluation of on-site conditions, benefits-based approaches that focus on psychological outcomes, experience-based approaches that describe cognitive states of visitors, and meaning-based approaches that emphasize socially constructed meanings connected to the experience (Borrie and Birzell 2001).

a) *Definition of the experience*

What is the *experience* itself? Hull et al (1996) argue that “experience is an important part of what recreationists say they want, that scholars say leisure is, and what recreation resource managers try to provide” (p. 299). Lee, Dattilo and Howard (1994) discuss the concept of “leisure experience” which replaced just “leisure” as many researchers have begun to conceptualize leisure as a “state of mind” (p. 195). They believe that this change in operationalization of leisure characterized a shift from objective to subjective paradigm.

McCool (2006) argues that an experience in protected areas “may be defined in a number of different ways, but it appears most likely to be a social-psychological phenomenon, influenced by expectations visitors carry with them, the norms and values of their peers, and the attributes of the protected areas encountered during a visit” (p. 3). The experience is what visitors are seeking when choosing to travel to a particular destination.

While clarifying what an experience in outdoor recreation is, it is important to refer to the Recreation Demand Hierarchy (Driver and Brown 1978) which was developed to describe four levels of demand for recreation. The most visible and the most superficial is the demand for the activities – the form of recreation such as hiking or backpacking. Then comes the demand for setting – the place where the activities occur and which is managed by managers; the setting consists of a number of attributes sought by visitors that give the place a recreational value. At the third level, demands for recreation experiences are expressed: it means that people engage in certain recreation activities in particular settings in order to have satisfactory experiences.

“Visitors select particular setting attributes, put them together in their head, and then construct an experience containing such dimensions as adventure, challenge, solitude, stress release, companionship, appreciating nature, freedom, spirituality and escape” (McCool 2006, p. 4). The notion of satisfaction (defined as “the difference between a person’s normative definition of a preferred experience and what is realized”, or “attainment of the individual’s defined quality experience” – McCool 2006, p. 5) comes into play when managers want to provide satisfactory

visitor experiences for people. The last level is benefits – the improved conditions experienced by individuals, groups, or society at large (those that may be related to work, personal life, health, etc.).

The main idea of this hierarchy is that while participating in concrete activities in particular settings people can get opportunities for various experiences that then bring certain benefits for themselves and for society on the whole. Managing for high quality and satisfactory visitor experiences should take into account all these levels and interactions between them. In line with this hierarchy, four approaches to measuring experience's quality have gradually emerged, and the discussion about them will be followed below.

b) Four approaches to measuring quality of the experience

The earliest research in outdoor recreation was mostly descriptive in nature (Borrie and Birzell 2001), and scientists focused mainly on two lower levels of the pyramid - activities and settings. The quality in outdoor recreation has been linked with visitor satisfaction, which was measured and predicted through managerial manipulation of settings and activities. Satisfaction was usually weakly correlated to use levels and carrying capacity; it was viewed as a result of positive comparison between desired and actual settings. The unit of analysis was primarily groups of visitors, and individual differences as well as other factors like group dynamics, mood, feelings, were not usually taken into consideration. Over the years this “single” measure of visitor satisfaction was questioned, and it was suggested that a “multidimensional model of satisfaction that incorporates various settings and experience attributes might be more appropriate” (Borrie and Birzell 2001, p 30).

Satisfaction approaches evolved into benefits-based approaches that are focused on “visitor satisfaction with the psychological outcomes of the recreation experience” (Borrie and Birzell 2001, p 32). The so called “Recreation Opportunity Spectrum” framework was introduced which included physical, social and managerial conditions (will be discussed later in

this chapter). This approach recognized that there were no average tourists (“one site does not fit all” – Stewart 1998, p. 392) and focused on diversity of recreation experiences. Several researches confirmed the link between wilderness experiences and benefits. For example Hull and Michael (1994) studied the dependence of stress restoration from leisure and argued that “encounters with nature, therefore, evoke good feelings, trigger positive thoughts, and consequently restore the individual to a positive mental state” (p. 2). This is just one of the examples. The pyramid (activities-settings-experiences-benefits) was viewed as a whole within this approach, but still the complexity of visitor experiences was not fully recognized; it was assumed that in most cases people behave rationally regardless of external factors.

Experience-based approaches contributed to the better understanding of complexity and richness of leisure experience. In these approaches the unit of analysis is an individual with his/her own experiences. Instead of viewing leisure as a “still-life photograph”, it was viewed as “a lived experience with temporal and spatial qualities” (Stewart 1998, p. 396), and “sequence of transactions between individuals and their environments” was recognized (Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001, p. 202). “When people experience nature in leisure settings, they are not simply responding to a collection of physical attributes. Instead, they are involved in a transactional process in which the natural setting and the person “jointly define one another and contribute to the meaning and nature of a holistic event” (McIntyre and Roggenbuck 1998, p. 403). The real time description of the experiences at multiple points in different time and revealing emotional and cognitive states of people is what distinguishes this approach from others. It called attention to a broader range of factors than the previous approaches, and the link between these factors and their impact on the overall satisfaction of a visitor was identified.

One of the founders of experience-based approaches were Clawson and Knetsch (1966), who proposed that recreation is a multiphase experience. They argued that the total recreation experience is almost always much broader than the actual recreation activity on the site itself – the phase on which many researchers before them have traditionally focused on. “Outdoor

recreation is more than a treasured place, but rather a multi-phasic experience that unfolds across time” (Clawson and Knetsch 1966, p. 35). Clawson and Knetsch distinguished five different phases of recreation experience:

- *anticipation* (includes researching about a possible trip, planning and expectation; this phase can be much longer than the trip itself and can be very exciting especially if participants plan their trip in details themselves; however, even those who leave planning to a travel agent normally anticipate the trip and look forward to it for some time);
- *travelling to the site* (this phase is always present, however, the travel time can be very different depending on the available resources; for some people the travel itself is already the enjoyment and inalienable part of the travel experience);
- *on-site experience* (the main part of the trip, those activities and way of spending one’s time wherefore everything is undertaken);
- *travelling back* (despite the fact that the way back is often the same as the way to the site, emotions, feelings, environment and overall experience can be very different);
- *recollection* (after the trip is over, the memories remain, and participants of a trip will keep these memories and share them with friends and relatives; this phase also often provides the starting point for anticipation of another trip – the choice of the latter will often depend on recollection from the previous trip).

The total recreation experience is a sum of these five stages, and impression about the whole trip is formed through passing each of them. “In many ways, the whole outdoor recreation experience is a package deal; all parts are necessary, and the sum of satisfactions and dissatisfactions from the whole must be balanced against total costs” (Clawson and Knetsch 1966, p. 35).

The theoretical work of Clawson and Knetsch served as a basis for many other research works whose main goal was to prove this multiphasic nature of experiences and show their

complexity and dynamics. Moreover, recent research indicates that not only the whole recreation experience is multiphasic, but the onsite phase itself is complex and dynamic as well: “the leisure experience changes from phase to phase, and [...] it likely changes within the on-site phase” (Hull et al, 1996, p. 300). Actually the leisure experience is dynamic within any of the phases.

The advent of experience-based approaches allowed researchers to expand the concept of visitor experiences and view their complex and dynamic nature. These approaches elaborated on the fact that there is no “average” traveler with constant perception of reality. People’s emotions, mood, attitudes, feelings, attention states and cognitive functions fluctuate, “ebb and flow” throughout the experience (Hull et al 1996). The relationships between experience dimensions and other conditions are also diverse and changing.

The last approaches – meaning-based – study and analyze the meanings that different individuals construct about their experiences in the wild. These approaches are qualitative and deal with such things as personal stories, self-identity, place attachment and the role that the recreation experience plays in visitors’ lives. The meanings are constructed before, during and after the experience (Borrie and Birzell 2001, Patterson and Williams 1998).

c) A variety of studies that confirm the complex nature of the experience

The “Clawsonian” model served as the starting point for other important works that viewed recreation experience beyond its frames and much more complex.

Scherl (1990) identified different domains of recreation experience in wilderness as perceived by participants in Australia and studied the process of change in these perceptions. The domains included emotional state, self, social setting, physical environment, physical state, description of activities, effort and general thought – all of them change during the program. He also explored relationships among these domains. His main finding is that “the broad picture of the dynamics of the wilderness experience showed diversity and change” (p. 18).

Lee, Dattilo and Howard (1994) demonstrated the “multi-dimensional, transitory and multi-phased nature of leisure experiences” while studying immediately recalled leisure experiences (both pleasant and stressful) and post-experience recollections (which often differed from immediate ones). Interestingly, “people’s interpretation of leisure experiences often changed with the passage of time” (p. 205). For example, negative feelings about a particular experience (apprehension, nervousness, etc.) often decreased over time.

Several works were devoted to studying different mood dimensions across time and space as “mood provides a reliable and valid indicator of the quality of leisure and is especially sensitive to the dynamic nature of the leisure event” (McIntyre and Roggenbuck 1998, p. 403). For example, Hammit (1980) measured moods of visitors to a bog environment in Michigan, USA and reported the changes that occurred across the multi-phase experience. He then linked it to satisfaction. This research has shown that moods were an appropriate variable for recording change as a result of a recreation engagement.

Hull, Michael, Walker and Roggenbuck (1996) showed that onsite leisure experience has multiphasic nature by analyzing participants in various environments in Tuscan valley. They assessed different leisure dimensions – self-esteem, power of concentration, anxiety, love, calmness, dullness, excitement and feelings of freedom, and came to a conclusion that they “ebb and flow” over the onsite experience (though differently and to different extent). The mood, therefore, varied across the onsite visit, and environmental and personal variables shaped at least some moods during the engagement in recreation.

Another study that attempts to capture moods associated with leisure is the one by Hull and Michael (1995) who explored the relationship between leisure and stress reduction. They observed several mood dimensions – anxiety, tiredness, energy and calmness, and found that most of them changed during different phases of recreation. They called particular attention to the role of setting where recreation occurs – either in natural environment or indoors; and

although they found proof that stress reduction is attributed to contact with nature, they found no differences in restorative-like mood changes between leisure in nature and leisure indoors.

McIntyre (1998) gave special consideration to focus of attention of wilderness visitors. He analyzed short-term wilderness canoeing experience in Australia and assessed what people did in wilderness, how they were feeling while they were there (timelessness, care, solitude, oneness and primitiveness were analyzed) and what they were focused on (either tasks, natural environments, companions or personal thoughts). The feelings mentioned above varied to different extent throughout the canoe trip (they actually were significantly enhanced). It appeared that the predominant focus of attention in this case was the task, but the author linked it mainly with a type of the trip (short and active). It may be very different in other trips depending on the length, area, difficulty, group members, personal priorities, etc, but the idea is that it is connected to wilderness values which are facilitated through nature-based activities and can be dynamic.

Another very interesting work of McIntyre together with Roggenbuck (1998) examined person/nature transactions at selected points during a black-water rafting trip within a cave system in Australia. They measured focus of attention (nature, self, others, emotions, affect, task or activity), mood states (aroused, relaxed, sociable) and perceptions of risk (absolute, real, perceived) and competence, and found out that all these variables varied with environmental context and shaped overall quality of experience – thus, again, the dynamic and complex nature of visitor experiences was confirmed.

A somewhat similar study was conducted by Hull, Stewart and Young (1992) who assessed mood measures, satisfaction measures and landscape scenic beauty during the hike in Colorado, USA, at multiple points in different time. They also confirmed that the experience of leisure is transitory and complex, and people's interpretation of leisure experiences changes over time. The hikers were finally grouped into homogeneous groups depending on their experience patterns.

Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001) measured changes in four modes of focus (on self, others, task and environment) and four aspects of wilderness experience (oneness, primitiveness, humility (combined), timelessness, solitude and care) in Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in USA. The measurement took place at the entry, during immersion and at the exit phases of wilderness experience and demonstrated significant changes through these phases.

Weber and Anderson (2010) investigated the experience preferences of visitors to two urban and two regional parks of Australia, and how their attainment was influenced by activity and setting preferences. The results revealed the range of important preference opportunities that the parks provide, with four preferences being common for all four parks under study: enjoying nature, escaping personal/social pressures, escaping physical pressure, and enjoying the outdoor climate. The similarities between urban and regional parks were more pronounced than their differences.

Manning (2011) identified three mechanisms of coping behavior that visitors can adopt in response to crowding and conflict in outdoor recreation: displacement, product shift and rationalization. These behavioral and cognitive mechanisms are used by visitors to increase the overall satisfaction of their experience. Displacement involves a spatial shift within the area, or between the areas, as well as temporal shift from one time period to another. If visitors prefer to see less people on the trails, they might want either to choose less popular trails, or avoid hiking in rush hours. Rationalization of the experience takes place when people report high levels of satisfaction regardless of actual conditions, since recreation activities are voluntarily selected and sometimes involve a substantial investment of money, time and effort. Thus, people tend to order their thoughts in ways that reduce inconsistencies and associated stress. Product shift means that visitors who experience higher use levels than are expected or preferred may alter their definition of the recreation opportunity in congruence with the condition experienced.

d) Summary and implications for the reported research

National parks are special places that provide opportunities for unique and profound experiences; definition and monitoring of experience quality is an essential task in order to maintain these recreation opportunities. Many research studies that were conducted in this field revealed that there are numerous qualities of recreation experiences; different studies examined various variables and attributes and showed somewhat different results, but all of them proved that visitor experiences are multiphasic (consist of several phases and even sub-phases), multidimensional (diverse), multisensory (involve smells, sounds, not only what people see) and dynamic (change over time). Experience is a very complex phenomenon influenced by the variety of factors. This view was acknowledged for the purpose of this study. Four main approaches to investigating visitor experiences and measuring them have been developed, each of them has its strengths and weaknesses, and every subsequent approach is a step forward towards understanding visitor experiences. However, due to the fact that the experience is such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which is shaped by many factors, there is still much to be explored in this area – both in terms of assessing the quality of existing experience, identifying desired conditions, and monitoring the impacts. This study is aimed at making at least a small contribution to understanding of this phenomenon in the key corridor of Glacier NP in the modern context.

The interview guide that was designed for the purpose of this study (Appendix C) is based on these assumptions. It included the questions that:

(1) Revealed various categories and dimensions of visitor experiences (thus confirming the “complex” and “multidimensional” nature of the experiences) - for example, questions that asked visitors to talk about the most important aspects of their trip and identify what really mattered for them;

(2) Touched upon the temporal scale and the dynamic of the experience (which led to the understanding how the experience was formed, changed over time, and what were the phases of

the experience before and during the travel) - for example, questions about the planning process for this particular trip;

(3) Identified goals, expectations and motivations of visitors (which helped to understand why visitors came to a certain area and participated in a certain activity, and advised about the possible psychological outcomes from the experience) – for example, questions about the reasons to come to Glacier NP, main activities, and prior expectations;

(4) Suggested about the impacts on the experience that define the quality of the experience from the perspective of visitors – for example, questions about the detractor from the experience and possible ways to improve it.

The sampling frame for this research was also developed in such a way that different representative types of visitors were targeted and a broad range of experiences and their dimensions was explored. A detailed discussion about the sampling procedure will follow in the Chapter 3. In the next section an overview of existing management frameworks that were developed to help managers address specific visitor issues will be provided.

Protected Areas Planning and Management Frameworks

The purpose of the National Park Service is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (National Park Service Organic Act 1916). This twin focus both on public use and resource protection creates a challenge for park managers, as from the outset these goals can be conflicting. Much research has been done in order to find out how to ensure resource conservation and providing high quality visitor experiences.

“During the 1970s, wilderness use everywhere appeared to be skyrocketing” (Hall 2001, p. 39). It became popular to travel to national parks (that became symbols of “national identity” – NPS 2012); many people could afford visiting these areas because they had enough income

and possessed personal cars that brought flexibility in travel; outdoor activities were promoted; and PA managing agencies fostered visitation. As a result, the number of people travelling to protected areas increased a lot, and so did the impact on the resources.

a) Carrying Capacity

In the middle of the 20th century the concept of carrying capacity was a dominant framework that dealt with the issue of visitor impact on the resources. The idea is that resource managers have tried to protect the wilderness resources and visitor experiences through efforts to define the maximum number of people that the area can sustain. Carrying capacity can be defined as “the amount of use that can be accommodated in an area without significantly affecting its long term ability to maintain the social and biophysical attributes that produced its recreation value” (McCool 1994, p. 52). The term was borrowed from biology and the wildlife management and is aimed at finding a single “magic number” for the wilderness area (Manning 2007). The central question of this concept is “How many is too many?” Use limits can be set both to protect natural resources and to ensure unique quality of social conditions. The number of people that were travelling to national parks during the 1970s increased dramatically (Hall 2001), and by that time imposing such limits was seen by many researchers and park managers as an immediate and necessary measure to prevent deterioration of resources.

However, this approach turned out to be inefficient for several reasons. First of all, there are many other factors that influence natural resources and visitor experiences. For example, people’s behavior can be very different, and one person can create more impacts than ten people if he behaves inappropriately. The type of activity that people are involved in, the size of the group, the time of use and other factors matter a lot (e.g. horseback riders typically have more impact on wilderness ecosystems than an equal number of hikers, especially on fragile sites as lakeshores) (Dawson and Hendee 2009). In terms of social conditions, there are numerous other factors besides the number of people that can affect the experiences: visitors’ expectations and motivations, their values, their perceptions, and their behavior. For example, in the study of

wilderness carrying capacity conducted by Stankey, he concluded that the type of group encountered had a significant effect on expressed preferences for encounters independent of the number involved; small groups were usually preferred over large, even when the total number of individuals encountered was greater (Stankey and McCool 1984).

Manning (2007) points out that the carrying capacity of parks and related areas has three dimensions – resource, experiential, and managerial. The type of management is also very important: by appropriate rules and regulations, by the wise distribution of visitors, by providing visitor facilities (sometimes) and by educational programs managers can control visitors' behavior and change the impact on the resources and visitor experiences. In other words, there can be different visitor management strategies that will result in absolutely different levels of impact caused in the same area with the same number of visitors. Thus, the relationship between the use levels, impacts on the resources and visitor satisfaction is not straightforward (Stankey and McCool 1984, Merligiano 1990).

Eventually the carrying capacity paradigm failed to be an effective and useful approach to manage visitors (McCool 1994.) In the 1980s a shift in thinking about the need for and purpose of use limits occurred (Freimund and Cole 2001, Hall 2001). It was driven by several factors, in particular by slowing growth in wilderness use, a change in preference of management approaches that started to favor indirect management actions such as environmental education, and emergence of other planning and management frameworks that dealt with carrying capacity issue. These frameworks include the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Clark and Stankey 1979), the Limits of Acceptable Change (Stankey et al 1985), Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (NPS 1997) and others. All of them are aimed at exploring what kinds of resource and social conditions are appropriate and acceptable in different settings, instead of imposing use limits. The central question shifted from “How many is too many?” towards “How much change is acceptable?”, or more specifically “What are the appropriate or acceptable conditions for visitation and how do we achieve them?” (Borrie, McCool and Stankey 1998).

In case of Glacier National Park, the shuttle system was introduced in response to traffic problems – it was supposed to somehow limit the use of the cars on the GTSR and thus mitigate the traffic. However, although shuttles did partly decreased the number of cars, they also brought about many other side effects related to visitor use, visitor patterns, and impacts on visitor experiences and park resources (Johnson, Dimond and Freimund 2010). The carrying capacity concept alone is not enough to address these issues, and other more comprehensive frameworks should be considered.

b) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The idea about settings that was discussed above – that place which managers manage provides opportunities for experiences that are created by visitors, and that a diversity of settings provides the way to quality recreation experiences – formed the basis of this framework. Settings (physical places) are composed of a variety of attributes, such as type of facilities, user density, types of activities possible, etc; the set of these attributes is different at each setting, and so every setting with its unique set of attributes can facilitate or hinder certain experiences. By providing a diversity of settings with varying attributes over the area, and by making visitors aware of possible opportunities there, managers can encourage visitors to construct their desired experiences.

Although the notion that there is no average traveler was discussed in earlier papers (Wagar 1966, Shafer 1969), where researchers emphasized the importance to provide various facilities, settings and physical environments and manage a place for a variety of tourists rather than for a nonexistent average visitor, it was not until 1978 when the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) was formalized as a planning framework by two different groups of researchers (Driver and Brown 1978; Clark and Stankey 1979). After its initial applications and tests, ROS was then widely adopted by various world agencies in a wider variety of settings. McCool et al (2007) call it as “the most widely recognized recreation management concept around the world

and probably the most single influential concept in recreation management and planning for public lands and protected areas” (p. 46).

According to the ROS, a recreational setting consists of three types of attributes:

1. Biophysical – the natural characteristics of the landscape and extent of modification;
2. Social – the type and the amount of interaction with other visitors during a recreational engagement;
3. Managerial – the extent and type of on-site and off-site management presence and activity.

Each of these attributes varies along a continuum: biophysical attributes may vary from no change to highly modified environments; social attributes may vary from no encounters to many and frequent ones; and managerial attributes may vary from no rules and regulations to many of them. Thus, there is a spectrum (or diversity) of opportunities for visitors that can also be described as a continuum, from primitive to developed; these opportunities are described by the setting. The managers should provide a range of the opportunities and allow visitors to make decisions about the settings they seek along this continuum (McCool et al, 2007). “The fundamental premise of contemporary visitor management is that quality experiences are best assured providing a range or diversity of setting opportunities” (McCool 2006, p. 4) In other words, the more diverse is the spectrum, the more is the probability to ensure the quality and rewarding experience for a variety of visitors. This idea of three types of attributes that constitute a setting – biophysical, social and managerial – was helpful in this research to define main dimensions of visitor experiences.

The notion of diversity of opportunities is often reflected in zoning of settings, which is a commonly used element of many planning processes. It allows managers to think systematically about emerging issues and challenges, and address them differently in different zones. In this research the knowledge about the ROS concept is important in order to understand how the variety of revealed visitor experiences and their dimensions along the Going-to-the-Sun Road

corridor can be classified, and how this classification can help managers to address existing challenges and implement various programs aimed at providing high quality experience in the Park. How diverse are the current experiences in the GTSR corridor? Do any patterns or trends exist? Could the experiences be divided by special zones within the corridor? These questions were indirectly addressed in the Interview Guide (Appendix C). Recreation Opportunity Spectrum potentially can help secure the conditions needed to protect the diversity of experience.

Among other planning frameworks are *Limits of Acceptable Change* (LAC) and *Visitor Experiences and Resources Protection* (VERP); both of them are focused on the desired conditions and attempt to define a compromise between the protection of resources and providing high quality visitor experiences, with VERP being developed specifically for National Park Service units to address carrying capacity questions. There are also a number of other frameworks that deal with these issues (Visitor Impact Management, etc).

In summary, knowledge about these planning frameworks is necessary to analyze the results of the current research and its implications for Glacier National Park managers. In particular, the need to classify the diversity of experiences in the park can potentially be addressed by using the ROS framework.

Studies about Visitor Use and Visitor Experiences in Glacier NP

A number of research projects that studied visitor use and visitor patterns, and examined various aspects of visitor experiences were performed in Glacier National Park over the last several decades. The earliest studies were mostly focused on the use levels and portraits of visitors. One of the first surveys of tourists in the Park was initiated by Chief Park Naturalist M.E. Beatty in 1949, and was conducted in partnership with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at Montana State University; its main objective was “to learn more about the out-of-state tourist travel in the Park and its economic significance to the State of Montana” (Hoflich 1950, p. 3). The data collection method was a survey, when during the period between

15th of June and 15th of September, 1949, 1,131 out-of-state automobile parties totaling 3,495 persons who spent at least one night in the park were interviewed. Tourists were approached principally at cabins, campgrounds, and hotels in the Park. The results analyzed where visitors came from, how long they stayed, how much money they spent; and explored the main reasons for visiting Montana and Glacier NP.

Another early tourist survey was conducted by Montana State Highway Commission in cooperation with U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Public Roads and National Park Service in the summer of 1951. It also focused on determining the economic value of motorists, and obtained data concerning their travel habits, which supposed to be used as a basis for future planning (Highway Planning Survey 1951). Surveys were distributed at four locations in the Park: GTSR near West Glacier entrance; GTSR near St Mary's entrance; Many Glacier highway near the park boundary, and Chief Mountain Highway West of the junction with US 89. A total of 3,289 questionnaires were obtained during 3 months of project operation. Besides motorists, this survey also targeted Park visitors arriving by bus. Questionnaire cards were passed out to all bus passengers entering the Park on the same days each month as the automobile passengers were interviewed. Those who received the cards were instructed to fill them out and return to the driver; 230 cards in total were returned. This research revealed the distribution of travel to Glacier NP by states, purpose of coming to Montana and the Park, total expenditures, average length of stay, accommodation patterns, and daily and monthly traffic variations along the GTSR.

National Park Service conducted another study in 1968, when the numbers and types of people who entered Glacier National Park that year were summarized. The 964,493 visitors were broken down into categories such as campers, bus passengers, picnickers, fishermen and others (Giordano 2002).

Eisner (1977) focused more on the number of automobiles in the park, and proposed the way to reduce them. She summarized and evaluated public transportation systems in various

national parks in the US and then made recommendations for Glacier NP regarding developing and implementation of the shuttle system. It was one of the earliest studies that brought in the idea of the necessity to consider transportation alternatives for in-park travel in order to alleviate traffic congestion due to heavy automobile travel. The author found it interesting that later researchers (McCool 1996) compared visitation to Glacier in 1990s with 1977 and stated that visits to GNP increased by more than 50%, which resulted in various management problems. But Eisner already in 1970s talked about the anticipated management concerns because of the automobile-related impacts on park resources and visitor experiences and the necessity to provide a convenient service for visitors that would reduce private vehicle impact. Based on the analysis of the visitor flow data in Glacier NP that she conducted in 1975 and 1976 in the field, Eisner proposed a shuttle bus service which would address transportation needs in the Park and would also increase the interpretive contacts between park personnel and visitors. Eisner also emphasized the later need to survey visitors in order to evaluate the success of the shuttle and determine its future.

The Glacier NP Transportation plan refers to the study conducted in 1984 which was focused on the level of use on the GTSR, particularly during the peak summer months – as a main concern that this Plan was supposed to address. The analysis of the traffic capacity and visual analysis of GTSR showed that the average daily traffic figure for August 1984 was 4,790 vehicles at the West entrance station of the Park, and 3,220 vehicles at the East entrance station; it also revealed that although the roadway had not yet reached its traffic carrying capacity regardless of the constant increase in the use (a 4% increase in 5 years), the traffic was moving 10 to 15 miles per hour below the posted speed limit. The Plan supported the idea of a public transportation system in the Park in order to alleviate traffic congestion and provide more opportunities for hikers (NPS 1990).

McCool and Braithwaite (1989) conducted a study in Glacier NP that contributed to the better understanding of use levels and patterns in different backcountry settings in Glacier NP.

They used voluntary registration surveys and personal counts placed at 47 trailheads, and found out that approximately 157,400 people visited GNP's backcountry during the summer of 1988. Over 95% of them were day-users. A modeling technique that could be used in the future to estimate use levels was proposed (McCool and Braithwaite 1989).

Since the development of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, the US national parks were directed to produce timely revisions of their General Management Plans, within which they were supposed to consider the issues of visitor use and associated impacts (Miller and McCool 1994). Thus, the questions regarding the nature of public use and the potential impacts that they cause became even more crucial to the planning process for the parks, and for Glacier NP in particular. Since this time more attention in Glacier research was also paid to expectations, motivations, preferences and attitudes of visitors, and to visitor experiences per se.

For example, McCool and Frost (1988) looked at the effects of management regulations at Glacier recreation sites on visitor experience associated with the viewing of bald eagles during the fall migration season. Glacier NP provides outstanding opportunities to see the bald eagles, but on the other hand this endangered species needs to be protected from the unnecessary disturbance. In order to accomplish this objective, park managers imposed a number of regulations restricting visitor behavior. The authors explored how these regulations were perceived by visitors and if they detracted from their experience. They found out that if the visitor understood the rationale for regulation, there could be more understanding of it, and consequently, more voluntary compliance with this regulation. In other words, their results suggest that under certain circumstances, recreationists viewed regulations as a way to enhance the opportunity rather than detract from it. This could be tied back to the earlier discussion about the satisfaction, benefits and trade-offs. The public was willing to give up certain freedoms if there was a clear benefit identified (opportunity to see the unique bird that was maintained by the park managers; opportunity to learn about nature; protection of the endangered species that is also a national symbol). In this case interpretive programs, information and appeals that

accompanied restrictions were well received by visitors because they saw the benefit of these actions.

In 1990s two studies related to this topic in Glacier NP deserve special attention – conducted by Miller and McCool (1994) and Miller, Freimund and McCool (1997). They were partly driven by the “Statement for Management” document developed in 1990 as a part of the park planning process. It stated that “an effective long-range management strategy that is based on an improved understanding of the park visitor obtained by doing research on visitor demographics and preferences” was needed (Miller and McCool 1994, p. 2). Three important questions emerged from this need: 1) What are the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of those who visit the Park; 2) What expectations, attitudes, perceptions and preferences do visitors bring with them to their Park visit; 3) How satisfied are visitors with their Park experience?

The purpose of the 1994 study was to examine visitor characteristics in a comprehensive manner and detect specific seasonal variations. It documented the characteristics, preferences, motivations and expectations of visitors to Glacier NP and provided an increased knowledge about what Park visitors seek, and how they react to shifts in Park management. It also identified potential issues and challenges in visitor use and visitors’ perceptions of these issues. From this study it became clear that visitor experience opportunities are based primarily on three factors: (1) the resource setting, (2) the social setting, and (3) the managerial setting – the notion that is reflected in ROS framework described above.

The 1997 study continued to research visitors’ demographic characteristics, their needs and preferences, level of satisfaction, as well as reasons to visit the Park. It was also focused on identifying what constituted experience quality in the Park and which threats to a quality experience exist. Finally it examined conditions that caused visitor conflicts (such as crowding and traffic congestion) and explored visitors’ responses to these conflicts.

In 2001 a comprehensive GTSR Transportation and Visitor Use Study was conducted by a multidisciplinary team that evaluated existing conditions on the road, including transportation, visitor facilities, visitor statistics; and provided specific recommendations for visitor use and transportation improvement, with analysis of various options (Kracum et al 2001).

Giordano (2002) conducted a study that was primarily focused on visitor experiences and their aspects on the Going-to-the-Sun Road. His research was designed to assist park managers in determining future changes to GTSR by describing and analyzing the current experiences on the road. Through conducting 40 in-depth personal interviews at Logan Pass during 3 days in August 2001 with drivers, passengers in a car, cyclists and shuttle riders he attempted to answer three important questions: 1) What were the experiences of travelers on the road; 2) How did the travel mode affected the experience; 3) How might traveler's experiences be improved on the GTSR? He identified a broad range of experiences and their aspects; found out that the travel mode made a difference; and suggested eight distinct but interrelated emergent managerial issues that influenced the GTSR experience. It is necessary to mention that during the time when Giordano carried out his research, there was a different shuttle system in the park than the one existing today; the newer system was implemented later in 2007.

A new wave of Glacier research devoted to understanding visitor behavior, visitor use levels, and patterns of use within the GTSR corridor were conducted by Freimund and others in 2005-2010. They were aimed at exploring the impacts that the re-construction process and a new shuttle system have had. All these studies suggest that the transit system has had many more impacts on the GTSR than just the proposed reduction of traffic on the GTSR. Those impacts are both positive and negative, and they affect the road, the visitors and the park as a whole (Johnson, Dimond & Freimund 2010).

During these five years there were five phases of research. The first two phases took place in the summers of 2005 and 2006, their main goal was to examine recreational use at viewpoints along the road. More than 7000 observations have been made and more than 1280

surveys were collected, which provided a detailed understanding of visitor use of the GTRS and pullouts before the implementation of the new shuttle system – so that it could later be compared with the data gathered after the introduced transit system (Freimund et al 2006a; Freimund et al 2006b). Phase Three was conducted in 2007, just after the shuttle began to operate. 376 surveys were obtained. It provided an initial assessment of the service and focused on such questions as which activities do the visitors choose, how the decision-making process is made, what the quality of the service is, and how the experience of shuttle-riders and non-shuttle riders can be compared. This study provided some recommendations for improving the shuttle service based on the obtained results (Baker & Freimund 2007). Phase Three brought about the need for further investigation as it uncovered some interesting trends in the motivations and activity choices of shuttle riders. Phase Four conducted in 2008 focused on parking lots at two high-use viewpoints along the GTSR, that may have been impacted by the implementation of the shuttle system, and in particular by the addition of the shuttle stops at these viewpoints (Dimond & Freimund 2008). The results of this phase of research suggested that the shuttle is increasing the number of people hiking on popular trails that are made more accessible by the shuttle (e.g. Highline trail). Many people actually use the shuttle to facilitate a one way hike. The results also showed that the visitors feel that some trails are becoming overcrowded. The last phase of the study examined the role of the shuttle in influencing visitor activities – for example, their decision where to stop along the road, which activities to undertake, and the choice about hiking and backcountry camping. It also provided data how visitors used information related to the shuttle system, and which information sources proved to be most useful (Johnson, Dimond & Freimund 2010).

In summary, a variety of studies related to visitor use, visitor patterns and visitor experiences have been performed in Glacier over the years. However, only few studies (Giordano 2002, Baker and Freimund 2007) have provided an in-depth, qualitative assessment of visitor experiences on GTSR. Giordano's study was performed 10 years ago, before the new re-

construction process has started and before the new shuttle system was implemented. It was focused on the road itself, without revealing the nature of experience in other parts of the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor. In order to address today's challenges that Glacier National Park managers face, a better and more integrated understanding of existing and desired visitor experiences in different parts of this key corridor of GNP is needed. The current research aims to fulfill this niche; its primary focus is on revealing various dimensions of visitor experiences along the GTSR corridor and identifying desired conditions and experiences in its various parts.

Central Research Questions

Based on the nature of the problems discussed above and the articulated need for research, the following questions were selected to focus and guide the study:

- 1) What are the primary dimensions of visitor experiences in the GTSR corridor of Glacier NP as described by visitors themselves? How the experience is perceived by visitors?
- 2) Are there any common patterns and trends? What are the impacts on the experience?
- 3) How do the desired experiences in the GTSR corridor match up with the actual experiences?
- 4) Which management actions will best enable those desired conditions and experiences?

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will provide details of the study area, explain the research approach, sampling frame, and describe the processes of data collection and data analysis.

Study Area

The research took place in the GTSR corridor of Glacier National Park. The Going-to-the-Sun road, named by Park Naturalist George C. Ruhle in 1929 (Robinson 1960, p. 90), is a 50-mile long “trans-park” road that allows visitors “to see the spectacular vistas and scenic beauty of the interior of the park” (Layman 1999, p. 41). Development of this road has actually made Glacier available to all who want to travel to this national park: the road extends from West Glacier on the western side to St. Mary on the eastern side, and provides opportunities to stop at various places on the way and take day hikes that range from very short and easy walks (like Baring Falls, 0.3 miles) to quite extended and challenging itineraries (like Siyeh Pass, Pegan Pass or Sperry trails). It is also possible to start a variety of backcountry trips at different points along the road, or just drive through the park and enjoy its beautiful and scenic mountains.

The road itself is “a marvel of engineering accomplishment” (Robinson 1960, p. 90). It is the only trans-mountain road within the boundaries of the park, and the only American roadway designated both as a National Historic Landmark and a National Civil Engineering Landmark (NPS 2012). This narrow and winding road crosses the Continental Divide on Logan Pass at the elevation of 6,664 feet, a rise of approximately 3,000 feet in elevation in the last 9 miles of the climb up the west side. The character of the road itself is part of a spectacular park experience that is being preserved by Glacier Park managers. Each year millions of visitors are attracted to this area, drive this scenic route and hike adjacent trails (Layman 1999, NPS 2011). Now it is described in the Park Management Plan as the premier visitor experience and “one of the most amazing highlights” for Glacier NP (NPS 2012). Visitor use on the GTSR approaches its peak in July and August. One of the recent studies (Diamond and Freimund 2009) reports that 80% of

the Glacier Park visitors travel along at least some part of the road, so the demand for utilizing GTSR is high.

Increased visitation to Glacier in general in 1990s (the number of visitors to Glacier NP went up from 1,241,600 people in 1970 to 1,839,518 people in 1995 which is almost 50% increase – NPS 2012), and increased number of cars on this narrow historic road caused traffic problems (crowding at pullouts, traffic jams). The traffic worsened also because of the road re-construction which was initiated by the National Park Service in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration with an aim to rehabilitate the GTSR and solve traffic problems in the long-run. Due to the weather conditions, the re-construction can be done only in summer and the beginning of fall – the same time when the public can experience the national park. Increased visitation, heavy traffic and re-construction of the road potentially have an impact on visitor experience.

A new ten-year construction project was started in 2007 to improve and rehabilitate the GTSR. In order to alleviate congestion at popular spots and mitigate traffic by removing a percentage of visitor vehicles from the road, a free shuttle system was introduced in 2007; it services the area from the Apgar transit center on the west side of the park to the transit center in St. Mary on the east side. It was established “to offer a travel option for visitors to avoid traffic and parking problems associated with rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, and to offer an alternative to driving for park users” (NPS 2012). In its initial year of operation 29 shuttles drove three routes with a total of 17 different shuttle stops (Baker and Freimund, 2007). Due to the popularity of the shuttles, the number of busses has been increased in 2009. In 2011 buses were scheduled to run every 15 to 30 minutes dependent on location and time of day between approximately 7:00 am and 7:00 pm (NPS 2012). The service is two-way, there is no additional charge to ride a shuttle, no tickets are required, and transit stops are clearly marked along the Going-to-the-Sun road. Information about the shuttles is available at the Apgar Transit Center,

visitor centers in Apgar, Logan Pass and St Mary, and at National Park Service website (NPS 2012).

The Apgar route and the Lake McDonald Valley route service the west side of the park, and the St. Mary Valley route services the East side of the park. Large busses run between the Avalanche Lake parking area and the Apgar transit center and from St. Mary to Logan Pass. Smaller Dodge Sprinter busses ride between Avalanche Lake and Logan Pass (where the road makes sharp turns). The shuttle system is operational from July 1 or the first day the road is completely open through the Labor Day. The actual date of opening depends on the weather conditions, ability to plow the road and on-going construction work. In 2011 the shuttle system started to operate on July 1, but due to the fact that the road sector from Avalanche to Logan Pass was still closed until July 13 because of the severe winter conditions this year and thus challenging conditions to plow it, the first days of July the shuttles were operated only from Apgar to Avalanche and from St Mary to Logan Pass. It was the second time in the history of Glacier National Park when the road was open in its entirety so late, the first time was in 1933, when Glacier National Park celebrated the completion of the road on July 15. In 1943 the road opened July 10 because of war-time staff reductions (Missoulain 2011).

The initial ridership goal for the shuttle system was 800 to 1,600 rides per day. The first year, the shuttle system provided approximately 2,000 rides per day. By the third year, ridership was up to over 2,400 rides per day (Johnson, Dimond & Freimund 2010).

This research attempts to reveal the nature of visitor experiences in various parts of the GTSR corridor. The experience can be different in various parts of the study area. It is important to take into account the following zoning structure that currently exists in GRST corridor (Layman 1999):

- 1) *The visitor service zone.* It includes the Going-to-the-Sun road itself, developed areas along the road, Lake McDonald, St Mary Lake, and administrative facilities. It is managed to provide a considerable number of facilities for the use and convenience of

large numbers of people, and includes opportunities for accommodation, food services, boat tours, hiking and horseback riding. Interpretive activities include orientation to the park at the two primary entrances and exhibits that emphasize park values. It is the most high-use zone within the corridor.

- 2) *The day use zone.* It includes such popular trails as the Highline Trail, trails to Avalanche and Hidden Lakes, McDonald and St. Mary Falls, and others. Recreation opportunities such as hiking and horseback riding are available. Interpretation consists of guided walks and modest exhibits. The zone is managed to serve large numbers of visitors.
- 3) *The rustic zone.* It includes areas such as the Apgar Lookout Road, the Quarter-Circle Bridge, Packer's Roost, and the 1913 Ranger Station. Development is limited to sanitation facilities, administrative facilities, small parking lots, trails and trailheads, and unpaved roads. There are minimum interpretive services and exhibits.
- 4) *The backcountry zone.* It is managed primarily to maintain natural processes. Visitor use consists of hikers and backpackers, who are encouraged to "leave no trace". Development is limited to trails, campsites, primitive signs, and sanitation facilities.

Previous studies (Johnson, Diamond and Freimund 2010) revealed that the transportation system is somehow affecting all of these zones. However, it is not exactly clear what the nature of current visitor experiences is in different parts of the corridor, and what range of impacts on the experience exists there now (they are affected by the road construction and implementation of the shuttle system, but there may be other possible drivers and interventions). It is also not clear how different visitors to these zones define their desired experiences. In order to gain this understanding, interviews with park visitors were conducted in all four above-mentioned zones of the corridor, including a variety of day-use and backcountry trails (both short and remote ones); parking lots at Avalanche, Sunrift Gorge and others; shuttle stops and campgrounds along the road (such as Rising Sun, Logan Pass, the Loop. etc); and backcountry campsites (Granite Park, Snyder Lake and Sperry).

Research Approach

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the study. Such a framework helps a researcher to determine the methodology to be used for the study, directs her in choosing the concepts to be investigated and suggests research questions and the way to frame research findings (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

This research is mostly exploratory in nature. Its aim is to explore and understand the nature of existing and desired visitor experiences in GTSR corridor of Glacier NP. According to Babbie (2010), exploratory studies satisfy the researcher's desire for better understanding of a particular topic and yield new insights into it. In case of this research, an exploratory study of visitor experiences is desired to lead to a better understanding of an integrated system of the GTSR corridor and relationship between its different elements; provide a deeper insight on the existing visitor experiences and impacts on them; and clarify desired conditions for visitors in different parts of the study area. Based on these explorations, several recommendations for park managers will be provided, which can then serve as a platform for management actions, and hopefully contribute to successful park management.

The idea is to see the experiences through the eyes of visitors, understand how they perceive their current experience and what can affect it, and define the desired conditions in the park. The researcher was also wondering how these perceptions impact visitor behavior, visitor patterns and visitor experiences themselves. In order to reach these goals, an approach that would be open to a number of themes and ideas that may emerge was needed, which would get to a deep understanding and thick description of various aspects of an experience. She concluded that qualitative research approach, and in particular the method of grounded theory was best suited for this. It encourages a comprehensiveness of perspectives to emerge, and provides an ability to develop a fuller understanding of the experience and its different dimensions (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

The method of grounded theory was founded by two sociologists – Glasser and Strauss – who invented it for the purpose of building theory from data (Corbin and Strauss 2008). It is an alternative approach to hypothesis testing where theory is used to generate hypotheses that are tested through observations. Grounded theory, on the contrary, does not test pre-determined hypothesis, but rather is aimed at providing deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied by building theory that arises from analysis. Ideas emerge and develop from the data through comparative analysis and interpretation. It is a discovery-oriented process that is appropriate for exploratory studies.

This research approach implies that the researcher needs to be scientific and creative at the same time. Creativity is necessary to interpret data and come up with relevant themes, while the whole study needs to be guided by the general purpose and conceptual framework and be theory-laden. The grounded theory offers an inductive approach to social studies that attempts to “generate a theory from constant comparing of unfolding observations” (Babbie 2010, p. 307). So it is a theory-generated activity – an on-going process that cannot be predicted in advance. It brought together two main traditions of research: positivism and interactionism. By analyzing patterns, themes and common categories discovered in observational data and by constant comparison it attempts to derive theories. In case of the current study the grounded theory guided the researcher to develop themes and specific dimensions related to visitor experiences from the qualitative data obtained during the in-depth field interviews with Glacier National Park visitors.

Such in-depth interviews were the primary method of collecting data for this research. Aimed at developing a deep understanding of a topic and digging out the details, they provided an opportunity to thoroughly investigate the nature of visitor experiences and their possible dimensions. Through interviewing visitors, the researcher was able to get a participant to describe his/her experiences and how he/she feels about it. Upon these descriptions, conveyed through the words and explanations of the visitors, the researcher later made her interpretations.

She also made her own observations and conducted field notes that helped her to interpret the words of the interviewees.

Sampling Frame

Sampling in this study is the process of selecting interviewees. It allows representing the population which is being studied. The goal of sampling for this research was to target different representative types of visitors so that a range of experiences is identified and described.

According to Babbie (2010), there are two types of sampling methods – probability sampling which involves a selection of a “random” sample, and nonprobability sample which is based on any other techniques in which samples are selected in some way not suggested by probability theory. Probability sample is aimed at producing statistically generalizable results and is appropriate when a researcher wants precise, statistical description of large populations (Babbie 2010). It is usually used for large-scale studies and could determine, for example, the extent to which different types of experiences are distributed across the population of visitors. This was not the goal of this research. Rather, the researcher was interested in identifying and describing in rich detail the range of experiences of different representative types of visitors in the GTSR corridor.

The best way to achieve this goal was to use so called “purposive” sampling method, which is defined as “a type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be the most useful and representative” (Babbie 2010, p. 193). The idea was to select a diverse sample representing an array of different experiences in various park zones, and this method allowed the researcher to do that.

To ensure diversity in the sample the researcher used three different criteria: activity type (hiking, driving, boating, etc), type of group (families with children, couples, friends, single travelers) and the area within the GTSR corridor (she interviewed people in all four zones of the

park that were mentioned in the previous section). The nature of visitor experiences might differ according to other characteristics as well (such as socio-demographic characteristics, past–use history, etc), but these variables were not easily discernible before the researcher started to talk to people (they were revealed later during the interviews).

The researcher did not have specific number of people that she wanted to interview within a particular activity type, or particular group or area, but she tried to include them all, and her decision to talk to every new interviewee was based on the understanding of the existing sample that she had for that time. For example, instead of talking to more hikers, at some point she decided that she needed to learn more about the experience of those people who were on a boat tour, or those who backpacked and stayed for several nights in the backcountry, or in rustic chalets instead of tents or motels. In terms of the group types, she found out that middle-aged couples were the easiest parties to interview because they were always talkative and very friendly, and were eager to speak about their experience for a long time; however, at some point the researcher realized that she had enough of them, and deliberately was looking for other groups, like families with little children. This category of visitors was the most difficult to interview for her, because in most cases she saw they were busy with kids and did not want to bother them; one couple with an 8-month old baby whom she interviewed on the trail, had to divert their attention to him several times during the talk, and the researcher felt that some of their thoughts and ideas were interrupted. The researcher also found herself seeking out interviewees that came from different geographical regions: for example, during one of the interpretation talks that she attended, she noticed that there were people there speaking French, and after the program she asked them if they would be willing to talk to her. Another example: the researcher saw a young couple on the trail with Asian appearance, and also became interested to interview them. In the parking lot she paid attention on the license plates, and chose to interview a single traveler from New York that came all the way to Glacier on his motorcycle, and a couple from Massachusetts. Overall, the researcher felt as though each new interview

contributed something to the study – whether it was a new theme to develop, or a support for the already discussed themes.

The researcher chose interviewees among adult visitors (age 18 and over) who visited GTSR corridor during daylight hours from 06/28/2011 to 08/22/2011 – 56 days in total. During this time 59 interviews were conducted; however, the researcher later decided to work with 50 interviews because the remaining ones were either difficult to hear on the tape-recorder due to different kinds of noise, or were too short and not informative. The number fifty is a manageable number of interviews to process while still providing enough information to have a comprehensive range of visitor experiences.

It should be noted that the interviews were not distributed equally throughout the researcher's time in Glacier: some days she conducted up to 5 interviews, while on other days she took only 1 interview, or did not take interviews at all. That was due to the fact that part of the researcher's time in Glacier was devoted to another project - "Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor Planning in Glacier National Park" - implemented by Dr Wayne Freimund and three other people including the researcher, where her role was to collect data at parking lots on visitor use and visitor behavior (80 hours in total at Avalanche and Sunrift Gorge), and trail counters calibration (at Avalanche Lake trail and Siyeh Bend trail). This work was very helpful and useful for her to better understand visitor use patterns in the park. Unequal distribution of the interviews per day was also because of the weather conditions: several days were rainy and it was difficult to talk to people; however, the researcher tried to conduct interviews not only during perfect weather in order to capture the experiences of people that were affected by rain (the weather has been proven to affect experience). But most of her time in Glacier, "sunny and warm" weather conditions were prevailing.

Parties that were interviewed included 13 solo travelers, 8 young couples, 13 middle-aged couples, 5 groups of friends, 7 families (for example, cousins, brothers, uncle and nephew, mother and son, etc), 2 families with little kids, 2 parties that consisted both of family and

friends. 8 parties refused to talk, all of them because of time constraints. Four out of fifty parties were foreign visitors (two from Canada, one from Japan and one from France), three other parties were initially from other countries (Poland, New Zealand and Latvia), but for many years they have been living in the US. All other interviewees were Americans. More detailed information about the interviewees is available in the Appendix A: it lists a brief description of each respondent and the location of the interviews. It is important to note that the names used are pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants.

Regarding the location and activity time, the researcher also tried to be diverse: she chose the locations to broadly represent the range of conditions experienced in different settings. She interviewed people on the following trails – Hidden Lake trail, Highline trail, Loop trail, Avalanche Lake trail, Cedar’s trail, Apgar Lookout trail, Fish Lake trail, Sperry trail, Sun Point trail, St Mary’s and Virginia Falls trails, Piegan Pass trail, loop trail near St Mary’s visitor center. With some people that were driving along the road or used the shuttle she talked at the parking lots (at Avalanche, Sunrift Gorge, Jackson Glacier overlook); with backpackers – at backcountry campsites (Granite Park, Snyder Lake and Sperry Challet) or further on the trails; with those who camped – at campgrounds (at Rising Sun and Avalanche campgrounds), with those who used the boat – at Rising Sun boat deck, with one party of fishermen – near St Mary’s visitor center where they were fishing. More detailed information about the locations of the interviews is available in the Appendix A; the map of interview locations is presented in the Appendix D.

Data Collection

The primary data collection method used in this study was in-depth qualitative interviews with GTSR corridor visitors. Field interviews were conducted during two summer months – July and August – of the year 2011.

One of the goals of this study is to understand the nature of actual and desired visitor experiences from the perspective of respondents. That is why the researcher chose to conduct semi-structured and rather flexible interviews instead of following a single standardized set of questions. During interviews participants can describe their thoughts and experiences, tell stories and provide examples. A qualitative interview is “an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, including the topics to be covered, but not a set of questions that must be asked with particular words and in particular order” (Babbie 2010, p. 318). However, an interview guide identifying topics to be addressed in the interview and a series of possible questions for each topic was developed to ensure that interviews were systematic and focused on covering relevant information. Such an interview guide was useful to start the conversation with respondents, guide the whole discussion, keep it focused, and ensure the topics of interest to the research were discussed.

The topics for the interview guide were determined through careful investigation of previous studies of visitor experiences, and in particular Glacier social studies of the past years. They reflect questions that the researcher was interested in exploring within this study. She had a number of main questions and follow-up questions that were guided by the following assumptions (based on the “literature review” chapter of this thesis):

- 1) visitor experiences are complex and multidimensional;
- 2) visitor experiences have temporal scale and are multiphasic;
- 3) visitors usually have goals, expectations and motivations for their behavior (e.g. why they come to a particular area or participate in a particular activity); they also tend to derive multiple satisfactions or psychological outcomes from their experience;
- 4) there are indicators that help define the quality of visitor experience, and standards that identify minimum acceptable conditions; there are norms that guide visitors’ behavior; in many cases people are willing to sacrifice something so that their standards are met.

While the researcher always tried to ask the main questions, the follow-up questions were quite different depending on the way how the conversation developed; the sequence of questions also varied in each particular case. The researcher usually started the interview with quite broad questions asking to tell her about the trip that they were completing in Glacier and the reasons to come. From here, the interview progressed based on the interviewees' responses. The most challenging was to ask respondents such follow-up questions that allowed the researcher to delve deeper about the meanings of visitor experiences; some people were quite reserved and brief about that, although others were eager to talk about their experiences at a rather deep level. Because the interview was in part guided by the response given, the interview length was dependent on how much the interviewee had to say, as well as on how much time people had to talk (the interviews were not scheduled in advance, and sometimes they had certain time limitations, for example they had to be back to their campsite by a certain hour or catch a shuttle). However, in most cases the respondents were not in a hurry. Most interviews lasted between 15 to 20 minutes, some of them were longer – up to 25-40 minutes. At the end of each interview the researcher also asked a brief question about the respondent's background. She asked them to tell her a little bit about themselves so that she could write a small paragraph about people whom she was interviewing, and in most cases they told her where they came from and what they do in life. This information was supposed to help the researcher to interpret the data and better understand different aspects and meanings of visitor experiences.

Just after the researcher arrived to Glacier National Park, she pre-tested the interview guide to see how people reacted to the questions and what was missing, and then re-evaluated it to make sure that the topics were relevant to the main research questions, and specific questions were asked appropriately. The diversity of dimensions within the nature of experience that reveal its complex, dynamic and multifaceted character was supposed to emerge from the interviews. The final version of the interview guide is provided in the Appendix C.

All interviews were conducted in the field, either with one person or a party at a time. Initially the researcher thought that most of the interviewees would be with solo travelers, but as people usually travel together or in a group, in the majority of cases (37 out of 50) she was interviewing parties that shared the experience (couples, groups of friends or family) (Appendix A). Sometimes party members started to discuss with each other various aspects of their experience that they went through together, and it led to thicker descriptions; interestingly, in some cases people disagreed with each other, or on the contrary, supported each other's opinion. All interviews were recorded with the permission of each participant. Nobody refused to be recorded.

The researcher approached people at the sample sites and started talking to them. The choice of participants was based on the judgments so that she get different types of people with different experiences, and also on the whole context (the researcher was trying to figure out beforehand if people would be willing to talk to her – if they were in a hurry or not; if the place was comfortable for the conversation – if they could sit somewhere on a log or a bench, or just stand in a quiet place and not be disturbed; if there was no noise from streams, waterfalls, wind or cars, and etc). All these issues she figured out in the process of data collection, and after 4-5 first interviews she was able to pick the most convenient places for the interviews. She found out that the best spot to conduct interviews with hikers was in some distance from the trailhead (could be different depending on the length of the trail), where it was quiet and there was no noise from the road, and where there was a place to have a short rest. She approached people on their way from the hike to the parking lot when they were already finishing the hike, and they were usually eager to have a little break and share their experiences. Other people she has interviewed at the campgrounds, backcountry campsites, parking lots, boat decks, or near visitor centers. She tried to be diverse both regarding people and location within the GTSR corridor.

It should be noted that as all interviews were conducted on site when people were literally getting their experience, the researcher could only capture points that referred to “on-site” phase

of visitor experience (Clawson and Knetsch 1966, p. 35). Although almost everybody spoke about trip planning and their expectations (these questions were among the main ones in the interview guide), and thus the researcher could get some information about “anticipation” and “travelling to” phases of their experiences, she was not able to capture the later experiences during the “travelling back” and “recollection” phases. It could be considered as one of the limitations of this study and may be explored in future to better understand visitor experiences along the whole continuum.

Before conducting the interview the researcher introduced herself as a graduate student from the University of Montana and explained the research project that she was implementing in Glacier NP. After that she asked their permission to tape record the interview so that it could be transcribed later. She also ensured that anonymity and confidentiality would be provided and never asked the real names of people. It seemed like in many cases this allowed the participants to be quite open during the interviews, and some of them even talked about some violations of park’s regulations without any fear (for example, camping in non-designated areas).

In general, the researcher saw her main role as an interviewer in 1) guiding the conversation; 2) providing comfortable atmosphere during the talk and encouraging openness and honesty in the responses; 3) clarifying all ambiguities that might emerge during the interview; 4) making sure that she gets the data relevant for the study.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed by the researcher, and then she listened to them again to ensure that the transcription was accurate and that she did not miss anything. She used Express Scribe computer program for transcribing, as it has an interface that allows listening to the interviews at a slower speed and has some other convenient options.

The next step was to read each interview very carefully and code it. Coding means “extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and

dimensions” (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p. 159). The main idea of this process is to construct concepts (words that stand for ideas) out of data. Concepts can be of different levels, ranging from higher-level and more general (called categories/themes) to lower-level and more specific (sub-categories/sub-themes). While openly coding an interview, a researcher is supposed to open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them: he/she scrutinizes the raw data in an attempt to understand the essence of what is being expressed by the words of the interviewees. All concepts, regardless of level, arise out of data. This is how the grounded theory works: detailed analysis of qualitative data and specific excerpts leads to theme development; themes are broad ideas that bring together common codes and their meanings (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

While working with each interview, first of all the researcher carefully and deeply analyzed every part of it and explored which ideas were contained there (the process called “data interpretation”). She worked with small sections of the interview one by one – either with parts of a sentence, the whole sentence, or a paragraph, depending on the context and the meaning of the data. Then, she gave these ideas conceptual names that stand for and represent the ideas contained in the data. In other words, she tried to identify the essence or meaning of data, and name it. It often happened that she first came up with one code word to describe the meaning unit (she either pulled out these “names” from the actual words of the participants or assigned the word which she thought was the most appropriate), but then she found that a later interview would have a better word, so she would then go back and change the code word to a new word. Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasize the importance of “thinking outside the box” (p. 160, with reference to Wicker) and putting aside preconceived notions about what to expect to find in the data. The ideas should evolve, and the data and interpretation of it should guide the analysis. It is very important to be open for new ideas and “search for the right word or two that best describe conceptually what the researcher believes is indicated by the data” (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p.

160). The same authors also indicate that in this process “the greatest tools researchers have to work with are their minds and intuition” (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p. 160).

In this kind of analysis, as every researcher has his/her own interpretation about what is being said, other researchers may have different ideas if they read through the data, and may not necessarily agree with each other about the meanings and themes. A good qualitative study should meet three requirements: be rigorous, insightful and persuasive (Patterson et al, 2002). In order to ensure that, the researcher attempts to be very clear about the process that she is going through while interpreting the data and drawing her conclusions; she includes multiple excerpts so that the reader could assess her interpretation and see a coherent pattern emerging; and she also includes any contradictory excerpts where present to represent all the views and give a rich and comprehensive story. The research should also have practical utility, which implies that the interpretation answers the questions motivating the research.

For deep examination of data, coding and interpretation, the researcher used “NVivo 9” which allows working with a great amount of text and helps sorting it. As she conducted 50 interviews that lasted on average 15-20 minutes each, it was helpful to organize a data in such a way that she could easily refer to different codes/sub-codes, see the number of quotes from various interviews that speak about similar topics and have similar meanings, and have an opportunity to easily make changes in the structure of codes in the process of analysis if she found it necessary.

Field notes with observations that the researcher was making after each interview, as well as additional notes that she was writing after listening the interviews again and again, helped her with interpretation of data and finding the right meanings of it. She created a Word document for each interview where in the form of memo she described the visitors whom she interviewed (their approximate age, gender, appearance, behavior, etc), weather conditions during the interview, the place where they talked, any interruptions if they occurred, her thoughts about potential interpretation of the words of the respondents, and other details. She also created a

summary table in Excel where she made some comparative notes about the itineraries of different visitors, their comments and ideas about different aspects of park's management, and recommendations for improvement of their experiences. In order to deeply analyze various themes, she then also created other Word documents where she summarized all excerpts from NVivo about each theme, identified the key excerpts (that may be the excerpts that the best articulate the point; the most supporting/interesting/significant/contradicting quotes), and wrote brief memos labeled with the name of each concept. She also looked at the interrelationships of the themes, which led to a more insightful analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend "asking questions, making comparisons, throwing out ideas, and brainstorming" (p. 170) in memos which usually stimulates the thinking process and helps the analyst to get inside the data and have some kind of a "mental dialogue" (p. 169) with it.

Such analytical process is supposed to result in rich and dense descriptions of visitor experiences and help to gain a better understanding of their complex, dynamic and multifaceted nature. It is aimed to see the experience through the eyes of different visitors, develop important themes and deeply explore various aspects of these experiences (both actual and desired), which in turn should contribute to providing high quality visitor experiences in Glacier National Park in the long-run. The results of such analysis and discussion about it will be provided in the next chapter. The last chapter will focus mainly on implications of this research for park managers.

Chapter IV: Results – Dimensions of Visitor Experiences

Overview

This chapter provides the story of visitor experiences in the Going-to-the-Sun Road corridor. It reveals the nature of actual and desired experiences from the perspective of visitors, identifies which dimensions constitute the experience for different people, and discusses connections between dimensions, as well as corresponding impacts on the experience.

It is important to realize that the themes discussed below are not a homogenous experience, they are different components of experiences of different people. One individual does not experience all of them. In other words, there is no single story or one combination of these components, every person is different and his/her experience is unique. This section tries to show the diversity of the experiences and various dimensions (themes and sub-themes) that emerged from the analysis of the interviews and interpretation of the interview data.

There were some common patterns and trends that have been revealed about the experience of different people across the interviews. Similar aspects of the experience were combined into broader dimensions, eventually making up three main categories – “Glacier as a Unique Setting”, “Motivations and Benefits”, “Human Interactions” (Table 1). Aspects that are associated with managerial issues and related mainly to the impacts on the experience were combined into the fourth category – “Managerial Influences” (Table 2). It is discussed with less depth than the first three categories, but these aspects are also important while talking about the experience. Some of the themes from this category (for example, “Bear Safety”) are closely connected with the themes from “Human Interactions” and “Motivations/Benefits”.

The ROS framework, described in the second chapter, is based on the notion that any recreational setting consists of three types of attributes – biophysical, social and managerial (McCool et al, 2007). All interview participants somehow touched upon biophysical, social and managerial aspects of their experience in Glacier: they talked about special natural things that they were impressed with; commented over different rules and regulations and various facilities

of the park; and brought up lots of notes regarding social issues. Selection of quotes and their subsequent assignment to categories was based on the notion that a good qualitative study should meet three requirements: be rigorous, insightful and persuasive (Patterson et al, 2002). Given that, the available number of quotes, their importance in the light of the research questions raised earlier, and also the personal opinion of the researcher guided the decisions about the emerged dimensions.

Often themes emerged from the multiple excerpts regarding a particular issue, other times it was the perceived importance of a quote, or contradictory quotes, which brought up a new dimension. In making excerpts' selection and combining them into broader dimensions the researcher was trying to uncover the questions about visitor experiences that guided her study. It should be noted that the interpretation of data has been made through the lens of the researcher and her perception of the importance of these themes and their subsequent applicability for the park management. In other words, the "horizon of meaning" and "forestructure of understanding" (Patterson et al, 2002) of the researcher played a role in the analysis and interpretation of data. However, where possible she attempts to be clear about the process that she was going through while interpreting the data and drawing her conclusions: she includes several excerpts so that the reader could assess her interpretation and see a coherent pattern emerging; she includes contradictory quotes, where applicable, to represent all the views; and she provides quotes that can give an important insight into the experience even if the number of quotes about this issue is limited. The main idea of this chapter is to give a rich and comprehensive story of visitor experiences in the GTSR corridor of Glacier National Park.

Three main Themes Dimensions discussed below represent mainly social dimensions of the experience. But actually each of them incorporated a number of biophysical, social and managerial elements, so somehow all these aspects are discussed in this chapter. For example, natural aspects such as mountains, glaciers, trees, and etc., turned out to be important components of "Glacier as a Unique Setting" theme, while "Motivations / Benefits" and "Human

Interactions”, and especially desire of people to see other visitors and their perception of other visitors, are influenced by bear issues and bear regulations which are managerial dimensions.

It should be noted that the dimensions are not hierarchical, but they all are very much interconnecting and interacting. The interactions frequently occur between the dimensions, and it often has certain impacts on the experience. It should also be realized that not all interview responses are reflected in the following dimensions.

The second main dimension (Motivations/Benefits) has the largest number of themes and subthemes (Table 3). From the analysis and interpretation of data, sixteen different motivations / benefits of actual and desired experiences were revealed. Three of them – “Escape and remoteness”, “Learning”, and “Challenge” are discussed with slightly greater depth. They were identified as most prevalent throughout the data among motives and benefits, judging by the total number of quotes, insightfulness of quotes, the diversity of sub-themes that emerged, and by the researcher’s perception of their importance for park management. It should be noted that this decision was driven mostly by the researcher’s observations, interpretation of data and personal judgments, and no statistical analysis has been made in order to identify the rank of various motives and benefits in terms of their importance for visitors. The current research is aimed more at discovering and showing the diversity of visitor experiences, identifying possible impacts on them and revealing common patterns and trends that exist, as well as understanding why those experiences and impacts on them occur. Semi-structured interviews and the fact that researcher encouraged her interviewees to talk about those aspects of their experiences that were important and impressive for them personally, brought about many quotes (both in terms of the number and insightfulness) that touched upon various aspects of escape and remoteness, learning and challenge. That is why they are discussed in a slightly higher level of detail.

The first section of this chapter will discuss Glacier NP as a unique setting where the experiences occur; the second section will explore various dimensions of actual and desired visitor experience, and the third section will focus on human interactions.

Glacier as a Unique Setting

- 1. An emotional place**
 - a) Special love for Glacier
 - b) Memories from the past
- 2. A novel environment**
 - a) "So different from home"
 - b) "Different from what we've done before"
- 3. A diverse setting**
 - a) Variety of landscapes
- 4. Beauty**
 - a) Scenic beauty / Magnificent views
 - b) Scale of landscape / Mountains
 - c) Water
 - d) Trees / Smells
 - e) Glaciers
 - f) Wildflowers
 - g) Wildlife
- 5. "Wild" and "pristine"**
 - a) Wilderness experience
 - b) Human-nature connections
- 6. Glacier as part of the national park system**
 - a) "National Park lovers" / pride
 - b) Economic aspects

Motivations / Benefits

1. Escape
 2. Learning
 3. Challenge
-
4. Solitude
 5. Peace and quiet
 6. Self-discovery and self-searching, re-thinking life, renewal and revival
 7. Intimacy and involvement with nature
 8. Adventure
 9. Exercise and energy
 10. Fun and entertainment, "multisport" vacation, participation in variety of activities
 11. Inspiration
 12. Humility
-
13. Enjoying wild nature
 14. Enjoying beauty
 15. Enjoying togetherness
 16. Meeting new people

Human Interactions

- 1. Visitor density**
 - a) "Too many people"
 - b) "Not crowded" / balance / adaptation
 - c) Right of access to everybody
- 2. Visitor behavior**
 - a) Friendly and nice people / alike people / good to meet people
 - b) Bad behavior
- 3. Internal group issues**
 - a) Togetherness
- 4. Travelling alone**
 - a) Escape and solitude
 - b) Flexibility and independence
- 5. Detraction from the feeling of remoteness**
 - a) Cell-phones
 - b) Helicopters
 - c) Other people at campgrounds

Table 1. Visitor Experiences - Three main Themes Dimensions discussed in this Chapter.

Managerial Influences – Impacts on the Experience

Bear Safety

- a) “It’s good to see people around”
/ “not familiar with bears”
- b) “They overdo bear thing”

Road conditions

- a) Traffic and construction
- b) Signage

Shuttles

Trail conditions

- a) Maintenance
- b) Trail markers

Information

- a) Advice and help from rangers
- b) Interpretation talks and ranger-led hikes
- c) Professionalism in information
- d) Visitor Centers
- e) Websites

Accommodation facilities and Restaurants

Cleanliness

Restrictions and Regulations

- a) Backcountry permits
- b) Campfires

Table 2. Visitor Experiences – Fourth Dimension “Managerial Influences”.

Motivations / Benefits

Escape and Remoteness

1. **Desire to escape**
 - a) Escaping everyday pressure
 - b) Desire to be in a remote area and feel it

Learning

1. **Learning**
 - a) Learning about nature
 - b) Learning from rangers
 - c) Acquiring skills
2. **Teaching others**

Challenge

1. **Desire for physical challenge**
 - a) "I wanted challenge as such"
 - b) "I wanted to prove that I am in good shape" / Testing yourself - "Can I do it?"
2. **Desire for mental challenge**
 - a) "Cookie-cutter experience is not interesting"
 - b) Confronting the fear of bears
3. **Feeling of challenge**
 - a) "I felt like I have accomplished something" / "it was such a reward" / "it made me feel special"
 - b) "I felt grateful that I could do that"
 - c) Feeling of competition – "we've beaten others"
4. **No challenge**
 - a) Looking for the comfort
 - b) Relativity of challenge

Table 3. Visitor Experiences – Dimensions of Escape and Remoteness, Learning and Challenge within Motivations/Benefits category.

Glacier as a Unique Setting

The first words that one can read about Glacier National Park, when opening its official webpage, are as follows: “Crown of the Continent. Come and experience Glacier’s pristine forests, alpine meadows, rugged mountains, and spectacular lakes. With over 700 miles of trails, Glacier is a hiker’s paradise for adventurous visitors seeking wilderness and solitude. Relive the days of old through historic chalets, lodges, transportation, and stories of Native Americans. Explore Glacier National Park and discover what awaits you” (NPS 2012). Surely, it attracts millions of people all over the world – it is among the ten most famous national parks in the country (NPS 2012). With no doubts Glacier is a grand, special and unique place which hardly leaves anybody indifferent to its beauty.

But what exactly is special about this setting? Why do people come there? Do they visit Glacier because they want to experience this particular place and hike certain trails, or is it because they just like hiking/backpacking, and it does not really make a difference whether it happens in Glacier or any other “hikers’ paradise”? How do different people define the beauty? What are the dimensions of it? This research makes an attempt to find answers to these and other questions related to “Glacier as a special setting”.

Glacier as a Unique Setting

- 1. An emotional place**
 - a) Special love for Glacier
 - b) Memories from the past
- 2. A novel environment**
 - a) “So different from home”
 - b) “Different from what we’ve done before”
- 3. A diverse setting**
 - a) Variety of landscapes
- 4. Beauty**
 - a) Scenic beauty / Magnificent views
 - b) Scale of landscape / Mountains
 - c) Water
 - d) Trees / Smells
 - e) Glaciers
 - f) Wildflowers
 - g) Wildlife
- 5. “Wild” and “pristine”**
 - a) Wilderness experience
 - b) Human-nature interactions
- 6. Glacier as part of the national park system**
 - a) “National Park lovers” / pride
 - b) Economic aspects

Table 4. Dimensions of “Glacier as a Unique Setting”.

Analysis of data discovered 6 main themes within this category that are discussed below (Table 4). The numbers near every quote refer to the numbers in the Appendix A, where more information about each interview participant is presented.

1. An Emotional Place

a) Special love for Glacier

Approximately one third of the interview participants were repeated visitors to Glacier National Park. For some of them it was the fourth or the fifth visit, and they said they would keep coming. So why do they go back? What makes this setting special?

Several people named Glacier their “the favorite place on Earth”, “the best park” they have ever seen. Rick, who grew up in Montana, was very proud to show it to his girlfriend from Arizona:

“Well, I was born in Montana, and so I would come here a lot growing up, and it’s one of my favorite places on Earth, I think it’s one of the most beautiful places I’ve been to, so I take people back when I can.” (31)

He explained that it was *“Because of.. I think the grandness of it, and the incredible beauty everywhere you look. Whether it’s, you know, as she was saying, wildflowers, or mountains with glaciers.” (31)*

Gleb, the fisherman who was travelling in the company of friends, describes it this way:

Gleb: “Because we were up there 5 years ago and we fell in love with it, so we knew we would come back ... Well, see, I’ve been to Yellowstone numerous times, but I had to get to Glacier, and Glacier is like 10 times better than Yellowstone. It’s... it’s just so beautiful! Everything in this park is beautiful. The mountains, the trees, the walk of the cedars, everything is so vast.” (39)

Garry, his friend, who was interviewed later, had similar feelings and named Glacier the best national park:

Garry: “Lord, what can I say about Glacier? It’s probably the best national park I’ve seen! And I’ve seen quite a few of them on the West side of the United States. And this is probably one of the best ... It’s beautiful, I fell in love the first time I was here, why wouldn’t you want to come back here?” (38)

Some people came to Glacier because they have heard from others that it is the best park, and that is why they wanted to come and experience it themselves:

Tim: “Well, this guy, he says like this is the best national park in whole Unites States, he says it’s his favorite, he’s been here for like 10 years, every year.” (43)

Interestingly, in all these quotes interview participants talk about “beauty” – Glacier is their favorite place on Earth or the best park, because it is so beautiful. Beauty is what made it special for them, what generated their emotions; this is why they love Glacier. This theme is closely connected with the 4th one in this section – “Beauty” of Glacier, discussed below.

For some it was family love:

Alex: “Because my step dad worked here when he was in college, so he always loved this park and he takes his kids here, so we’re having kind of a family get-together, and we chose this spot, because it’s sort of a place that that side of the family I guess really loves.” (26)

Those people who have not been in Glacier before, often were so impressed by the park that already started making plans for future visits, and were looking forward to tell about this wonderful place their friends and family members:

Neal: “It’s been great. I am sure everyone we are gonna talk to, we’ll have them to put Glacier in your bucket list - put it on and get up there and see it. Because it’s a great place.” (13)

An interesting comment was made by Bob and Brenda, the first-time visitors to Glacier, who called it “one of America’s best kept secrets” and had a little discussion about whether they would really want to tell others about this secret:

Bob: “This is special place. It’s too bad I waited till I was 50 years old to come here. I missed out a bunch.

Brenda: I think I would say to my friends – we travelled in the world to have this kind of experience, you can have this wonderful hiking alpine experience in your own country. Don’t forget that you can do it here, which may be is important.

Bob: That’s a really good point, I agree with that. And I think that was what we said last time – that’s almost like Glacier is one of America’s best kept secrets, and it’s almost like you don’t want to tell people about it.

Brenda: But you kind of feel you should because I don’t think people realize what’s here.”(25)

Glacier is a special, secret place for them because of the unique hiking experience that they were able to have here.

Peter, a retired teacher from Iowa, who keeps coming to Glacier National Park throughout the years, calls it his “church”:

“I can’t get enough of being in the woods. And not only do I love to be on these trails, I love that the trails have so few people. Cause I am not here to listen to other people on their cell phones, or talk to each other. I am here. Yes, this is my church.” (17)

So Glacier NP could be “the favorite place on Earth”, “family love”, “America’s secret” and even “the church” – that is what makes it special, generates certain emotions and encourages people to come back.

b) Memories from the past

A number of people talked about history and memories that they had from previous visits. It often was the reason to return – even after 10 or 20 years:

Edward: “You know, for us – and we’ve been up here 10 years ago, we hiked with a guy who had a tragedy in his life, his wife committed a suicide a couple of weeks ago, and he said I want to take a picture of you on top, and he took a picture, and we was gonna send it to us and we gave the address and so on. But we never got the picture, we didn’t really expect it, so we always had this thought about going back and it was one of our favorite hikes in the first place, and we wanted to take a picture on top as the memories of 10 years ago when he was with us, so it was one of our favorite hikes in the park.”(33)

Natasha: “Well, Nikolai had expressed he’d come here many years ago on a trip, and he remembered it was really nice, but it was raining, so he didn’t get a chance to see much of the view, and he had always wanted to come back again and see it.” (12)

One story deserves a special attention. Alicia, a woman in her 50s that was hiking alone to Virginia Falls, last year had a tragedy in her life: her daughter passed away. But before that they were together in Glacier and were trying to go to the falls:

“And I drove to this end because a year ago my daughter – I have twin daughters – and her husband and my grandkids, we were all hiking here, and we’ve got rained out like that – half a mile right about here, from the waterfall, so we never made it to the waterfall, so. My experience this time was... it today.. one of my twins died a year ago, and today is her one-year anniversary, and so in honor of her I made it all the way this time, and it’s been beautiful, long, hot, but beautiful.. So I wanted to come up and finish what we started a year ago, before she died, and spend some time with her here.” (22)

That was probably the strongest emotional attachment to the place that was revealed throughout the interviews. Alicia is from Kalispell, she was born and raised in Montana, and she had many

memories from her childhood about Glacier. She was very open and recalled several stories about that which she was really willing to share:

“When I was a little girl, my dad just had taken our whole family camping over here – every summer for two weeks in a campground that is just down the road here. So... I don’t know. Cause we just hopped in the car, and we were 30 miles away from the park, so we just hopped in the car, and we’ve come up here for a picnic, take a boat out, go fishing, tubing, you know. Fishing is a biggie.

I remember the first time when I was 10 years old, driving through the park. I was scared to death because they didn’t have all the rock walls along the side, this was like 40 years ago – they didn’t have rock walls alongside the road up there, so you could look right down the ravine, and I was scared to death the very first time. And my dad told me this all joking over – “you see, watch for falling rock”. He told me “yeah, you’ll see it all along for falling rocks”, we didn’t get them on the car while driving and stuff, but he told me it was an old Indian story, and it was falling rock, it was a little boy who had wandered away, and his folks are still looking for him, and I was still 10 years old, and I still believed it until I was like 30 years old, you know.. But it was just an old little story he used to tell about falling rock. “Watch for falling rocks!” So we’d all be looking through the windows watching for a little Indian boy in the wood, you know.”(22)

So memories from the past and personal events that happened in Glacier can be strong factors defining the park as a unique, special setting.

2. A Novel Environment

a) “So different from home”

Glacier is attractive for many people because it is a new environment for them, something that they do not experience every day, very different from home. It often brings about excitement about the mountains, spectacular scenery and wildlife, but sometimes results in certain concerns about hiking in unknown bear country.

For Antony from Florida it is primarily the terrain, and the combination of different types of environment that he obviously does not have in his home state:

“I just wanted to hike, I wanted to do... I’m coming from Florida, everything is sea level, and this is just so different, this is prettier to me than Yellowstone, but it’s more a stark beauty, kind of in your face more. Yellowstone also is a bit more commercial unless you get out into the backcountry areas.

And the terrain, I mean there is nothing even remotely like this in Florida. And open space. Probably the biggest empty space in the county I live in is the Super WallMart parking lot at 4 in the morning, I mean it’s just so grown, and so commercial there. So to me it’s just so pretty and it’s so different and it’s really... this park is kind of like God made it. It never changed, people have not screwed it up except for a couple of dams they’ve done in the park, and those made really pretty lakes, so I guess it’s a trade-off.

The mountains, the snow, just seeing such a completely different type of environment! Like yesterday I drove through and I did some hikes, but it was sunny and pretty the whole day, and the park is completely different. You know, you do the Sun Road and you can see so far off, and you know, you come around a curve and it's kind of goes forever. And today you know you're part of the time in clouds, it's misty, it's colder today as you climb higher. But I just enjoyed you know getting out in the woods." (10)

Yan, who is coming from China, was talking about everything that was different for him – closeness to wildlife, the way how people behave, perceptions of life. This is probably not only about Glacier, more about cultural diversity, but being in this particular national park facilitated this understanding and these observations:

"You asked what surprised me – for me it's more than I expected. And it's the first time I saw animals so close to them, and taking pictures. She [the goat] is like a friend so far. She looks at me, and it's the first time when I feel so close to nature, to the animals. And all of these things are very unfamiliar.

I am not familiar with these things because I am from another part of the world, I am from China, we've got 12 hour time difference. Well, it's totally different. We have mountains, we have natural views, but I really have to say Americans do well in this. You know, I was surprised to see a couple bring their baby – I think may be not one year old, and I was surprised because in China the parents, or parents of parents normally won't allow this. So it looks like everything we do every day in Asia is to get away from risk, get everyone from danger, so that their children play safe, in the comfort zone. And here I saw – it's totally different things. The parents just allow their boy, their little boy to go very near to the edge, just stare and look at the lake. I am just thinking that if I was able to allow this for my children – probably not. It's very culture diversions, very different." (42)

b) *"Different from what we've done before"*

American national parks are often called "America's best idea" (Runte 1996, quoting Stegner, Wallace). On the national scale people are encouraged to experience the parks of their own country, and a lot of people are indeed used to spending their vacations in the parks. It is common to explore the national parks, there is a lot of literature – guidebooks, web resources, films – that are devoted to this kind of travel and helps people to plan their vacations. So it is not surprisingly that parks' visitors tend to compare the parks that they have been to. One of the most common comparisons is between Glacier and Yellowstone, it is evident in many quotes that have already been provided and will be referred to later. But people also compare it a lot with Yosemite (also known as hikers' park), or Grand Canyon, or other famous parks.

Seva: "I expected it to be more like Yosemite, or Yellowstone, but it's totally different ... It's more Alpine environment, it's not as developed, and everybody seems to come for the nature part, not as much as sightseeing, so. It's a little bit different than bigger parks." (32)

Morgan: "Actually I don't know if it is better, it is as good, but it is a little bit different. There are more mountains here than in Yosemite, and fewer people than in Yosemite, which is good." (14)

Luck: "There is nothing like this back where we come from. We go to Smoky Mountains occasionally, and hike down there, and that's nice, but it's nothing this rigid. And this just seems much more extreme, and a lot more exciting actually. And the flora and fauna are so much different from what we see." (6)

Some people discussed the whole region of Rocky Mountains, of Montana, that they were not familiar with before, and it made it interesting and exciting to explore.

Mila: "Actually I travelled to a new state, so I was just really looking for things that I've never seen before. And the same thing – the glaciers, the mountains, it's all new to me, so it has... exceeded my expectations.. I mean I'm in awe, it's just gorgeous." (21)

Jim: "It's new, it's a new environment for us, just a chance to experience something a little different than what we've used to... And I think for me the alpine meadows because of the wild flowers, and then the wildlife, and this is such a different environment for me.. Just climbing up to rocks – it like you get to this high meadow, and it's just now trees, but it's just the flowers. We saw grizzly bears roaming around – that to me was really amazing. A little bit different from what I'm used to." (48)

Alex: "I guess I've been to lots of different mountain ranges in US and Europe, so I was kind of expecting it to actually be more like Rockies in Colorado, where I've been a dozen times, and it's totally different. I mean first of all the peaks are so, you know, sheer from the glacier, all the cliffs, you know. Usually, with the exception of Europe, usually they are a lot flatter, so that was one thing. Also the vegetation and stuff. I've been to Southern Montana, and it was like this, but you know, down in the Rockies it's not quite like this. So, at least I think so." (26)

3. A Diverse Setting

a) Variety of landscapes

Diversity and variety of landscapes were often named by interviewees as one of the biggest impressions of Glacier NP. There is indeed a lot of diversity in terms of scenery, ecosystems, wildlife, and activities that one can do and see in the park. Often people named a combination of all that Glacier has to offer that draws them there, sometimes they were more specific. The diversity of landscapes was probably the most common one:

Brenda: “The reason we hiked it the second time – and this is our second year and second time – is we were really thrilled with the flowers from last year, there weren’t any this year, so we are hoping to see more wildflowers, but it’s just such a beautiful view once you get up to the top. It’s not too long, but a good elevation gain, diversity of environment – forest up to tundra.” (25)

Karen: “We didn’t know what to expect of Montana, we were surprised when we drove up, of the variety of landscapes. We came off the interstate, and drove up last night. And it was spectacular, that was really amazing!

Kara: Yeap, from the lakes, and the forest, from the mountain, you know. All that is such a variety. We weren’t expected such a variety, yeah.” (29)

Sonya: “Oh, that’s what it made us think of yesterday – the lush greens, but at the same time the icy peaks, and snowy peaks.. Oh Gosh, it was just like being in Switzerland, we’ve never been there, but I think that’s what it looks like.” (32)

Charles: “We come from Yellowstone, and it’s very good surprise to see big mountain and diversity of the forest, of different landscapes and inhabitants.” (20)

Eric: “Well, it’s probably a little bit the diversity of the topography that we went over. We were in the forest for so long, and then all of a sudden we are above the tree line with grand panoramic views, so. I’d guess it would be the diversity of the topography.” (33)

Mora: “You go up – pretty steep just for a while, and then there is meadow, but you are looking across the valley, you have beautiful mountain views, and then you go into the woods, so then there is a waterfall, and then it’s get higher, and colder, and snowy, and by that time for us it was raining and hailing, and it’s just so different – that you can be walking up in the snow! It’s so cool!” (14)

Not only was the diversity throughout the space mentioned, but the diversity in time as well. Glacier NP is a wild and pristine place, and it can be very unpredictable. But this actually adds to the experience: Glacier is a unique place, a place full of surprises, where you don’t necessarily know what you’ll see. It’s the idea that you might always see something interesting and unexpected, feeling of anticipation:

Irina: “Every time you come here, there is a difference, every time you come, you see it in a different way: snow, sometimes more water, sometimes less water, every time is different. You never know what you’re gonna see, you never can be prepared – like “Oh, let’s go there”, and you’re looking, and it’s never the same, it will be different, and you will be, you know, impressed by just how different it could be, it could be more snow, it could be less snow, it could be no snow, it could be mountain goat, it could be a bear sitting on the road, it could be coyote. You don’t know what’s gonna happen, and that’s I think, it’s the beauty of the parks. They are the same, but they are different. It’s not uncertainty, it’s like beauty of, it’s here, but it’s gonna be different, it’s gonna be a surprise for you. Each turn will be a surprise for you.” (7)

Sonya: “Just to feel the breeze. And the smell, such a smell. And you hear the rustle. And you always have that anticipation to seeing a moose or a bear. A little frightening, but at the same time you’d like to see them.”(33)

Even the variety of weather was mentioned as something unique for Glacier:

Tina: “And things like rapidly changing weather conditions – like on our first day we had sunshine, rain and hail. And you know, you have a lot of rapidly changing weather conditions, and I am not up that degree, not where you have that much variety in one day.” (43)

4. Beauty

a) Scenic beauty / Magnificent views

Not surprisingly, interview participants enjoyed being surrounded by beautiful scenery of Glacier National Park. Almost everybody talked about beauty and how impressed they were. “The most beautiful place I’ve ever seen”, “incredibly beautiful”, “fabulous scenery”, “breathtaking views”, “spectacular mountains”, “stunning landscapes” – these words were repeated multiple times throughout the interviews. It has been already mentioned that visitors have special love for Glacier, call it “the most favorite place on Earth” mostly because of its unique beauty. These are just two more of numerous quotes related to beauty:

Matt: “For me – the result, the mountains, the falls, or whatever you choose to see – that is there. Because I can overlook, you know, a lot of inconveniences as long as you get that one moment when your breath is taken away. Anything else does not really matter in comparison to that. Oh yeah. The summit today was just absolutely... You come over the ridge, and you see a whole side of the park, you know, you don’t get to see because of the mountains on your way, so you go look over, and it’s just like “Oh, my”! And it just goes on forever! It’s beautiful, it’s really is!”(16)

Sam: “I’ve just heard all my life that this is the most beautiful part of the Rocky Mountains – Glacier and Waterton parks, and I think I just wanted to see. I am a photographer. Yeah, we just wanted to see this part of the country, and you know, experience sort of more primitive way than we live in a city.”(47)

A lot of people coming to Glacier are willing to hike, to climb the summits in order to get this moment that “will take their breath away”. Scenery was named by many interview participants as one of the highlights which is important for them while going to a national park and which impressed them most in Glacier. But “scenery” and “beauty” are broad words that can have different meanings. Interestingly, people could not always clearly explain what they meant. While usually interviewees started to talk about mountains and views in relation to this, Ryan, a technical climber, offered a rather specific definition:

“For me the most erotic smell that I’ve ever smelled is my sweat mixed with granite dust. That’s the most beautiful smell in the world. But there is another smell – sleeping on top of pine needles. Those are the two most beautiful smells in the world. And so my definition of beauty – it’s not something up there, it’s the mixture of me – what I am, what I am doing, my interrelation with this, and so beauty is me sweating and striving going up a beautiful trail. That is my definition of beauty. Beauty always involves me striving, me pushing myself. And the God made me that way – I am not typical I think.” (49)

As far as views are concerned, many visitors talked about openness, and some mentioned vertical views:

Maria: “Mine was, like the vertical of the landscape. Because in Denali everything is so big and so spread out, you don’t get the big vertical views. Here you get all the vertical views. Kind of like Yosemite: you just get to see the mountains – just tower up over you, and I just love that, I just think it’s really pretty. So it’s vertical views that are just incredible.” (50)

b) Scale of landscape / Mountains

Rather than describing small details, interviewees tended to focus on grandness, magnitude and vastness of landscape. *“The grand vista kind of thing” (Tim - 15), “this large vista to look at” (Eric - 33)* was amazing, according to many interview participants. That was especially true for visitors from the East Coast and other countries.

Noa: “And also the scale. Because, you know, Japan is a tiny country, so. Although we have a lot of beautiful nature, the size is totally different. Here – big sky, big mountains and big trees. That’s why I like it here.” (37)

Marta: “The best part? The rapids that I saw in the beginning. I think that was just so cool. There is just nothing like that in the East. I mean we have some mountains, but there is nothing... Nothing is big enough. I mean everything is just bigger out here.” (36)

Luda: “We were seeing the pictures, so we kind of knew.. But when you’re here, and you’re surrounded by all this, it’s something to see a picture on, you know, the computer or the book, but when you’re here, it’s just so much bigger.” (6)

Nora: “And perspective-wise... You know, it’s big, but then somebody walked out on to the snow, and you’re like I didn’t realize it was that big, the perspective. Sometimes it’s a little difficult to see when it’s kind of far away, until you actually see a human being up against it, and you realize how huge it is.” (13)

Mountains were a prominent theme in describing the beauty of this place. Glacier NP is definitely famous for its mountains, so not surprisingly almost everybody talked about them. In addition to awe about them, many people mentioned a special color of the rock formations, their

form and snowy peaks. Also, the fact that they could be surrounded by the mountains, be so close to them, be “right there”, was pretty impressive.

Sonya: “Just to be able to see the magnitude of the mountains, and to be right next to them, and just look up and see how glorious they are. That I think is beautiful, you don’t experience that every day in St Louis.” (32)

Antony: Well, the mountains are bigger, you are more right in the mountains, the terrain changes so much.. I mean in Yellowstone too, but a lot of it you get to get out in the backcountry to see how it changes from the valleys to Alpine meadows, to you know higher up, here it’s a real evident. You can get close to it.” (10)

c) Water

Many people mentioned waterfalls, creeks and lakes as what impressed them most of all. The year of 2011 was very snowy which resulted in high flows in the rivers. Interview participants spoke about the amount of water and its color.

Mike: “The waterfalls there, going down from the mountain, are awesome.

Marta: The rapids at the beginning of this trail – that took my breath away. That was.. just the colors! Or my gosh, the colors!

Mike: But it’s just. how fast the water is moving. I’m like OK, that’s why I came out to Montana!” (36)

Dina: “The color of the lake.. When we looked back and looked at Lake McDonald, it was such an amazing color.

Dick: It was like the Mediterranean look. We have never been up there, but it’s like the same color.” (9)

Sam: “I think yeah, the water, the amount of waterfalls, and it sounds like you’re not gonna see it all the time, but this year you see it all along, because there is so much snow up here” (47)

Presence of water sometimes determined the route of visitors. Leo said that he and his wife “do a lot of trails primarily to waterfalls.” (19)

For some it was just the love:

Alicia: “Water, I just love the water. I love water.” (22)

d) Trees / Smells

Glacier NP provides the opportunity to see old-growth forests. Famous Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Spruce, Cedars and other species are easily found in the park, especially in the

Western part. Not so many places in the world are left where it is possible to see huge old-growth trees on the accessible trails. Interpretive “Trail of the Cedars” is one of such examples:

Kevin: “I like the Cedar walk a lot more [than Avalanche Lake trail]. The Cedar nature trail – I thought that was, you know, the huge old trees – that was wonderful! I actually liked that more. The lake was nice, but the Cedar trail with these trees, these old growth trees were... On the East Coast there are very few old growth forests, pretty much none. So to be able to see, you know, the old growth forest and huge trees, it’s pretty impressive.” (18)

Peter: “I can’t get enough of being in the woods. I like trees. I don’t know them. You know... They are just certain ones – like spruce, I love spruce. Redwoods, you know. But there are lots of others that I just don’t know what they are, but I just enjoy being among them. Even the ones that are dying.” (17)

Fresh air and smells, in particular forests smells, were also brought up by a number of people as special things that added to their experience:

Luck: “I don’t know, I think the smells of the forest, I guess it’s hemlock – there is a lot of hemlock in certain areas, that kind of smell is very nice. And the fragrance... There was kind of a spicy fragrance we came across in some meadows, and we didn’t know what it was, but it was very pleasant. That kind of adds to the experience.” (6)

e) Glaciers

The name of the park – “Glacier” – attracts those who want to see glaciers before they are gone. And although “Glacier National Park is not named so much for its small glaciers, but for colossal work of colossal glaciers in the past” (NPS 2012), it is still one of the draws there. In 1850, Glacier Park had 150 glaciers; today there are just 26 (NPS 2012). As climate change and global warming are discussed a lot in mass media, people are curious to see the glaciers before they disappear. Some interviewees named it as the primary reason for coming to the park:

Nora: “We heard that the glaciers were gonna be melting, so we wanted to experience it before the glaciers melt, but there is so much beauty here, even when the glaciers melt, it’d still be worth coming, it’s just so beautiful, the hikes were so beautiful, the scenery.” (13)

Luda: “Well, we wanted to see the glaciers before they disappear.” (6)

Others did not name it as the main reason to come to the park, but being there, took this opportunity to explore glaciers:

Kevin: “Yeah, there was an article in New York Times, actually I think a couple of days ago, about Glacier. Someone had done a full, you know, long piece on Glacier, and the whole point of the article was a travel piece, but it said, you know, basically all the glaciers are gonna

be gone in 10 years, and so I was actually lying there reading it on my phone and was thinking “Well, we actually had to go tomorrow”. Because, you know, OK, maybe we’ll be back here in 10-15 years, but maybe glaciers are gone, and so you know, on this visit we want to make sure we saw glaciers.” (18)

Kara: “I just heard that it was an incredible place, and there are many things to see, and I had also, you know, learned a lot about glaciers around the world, and they are receding, and I was just saying “I’m so glad we’re here and we’re seeing it”, because, you know, since we’re from Maryland, I don’t know what the next time is when I’ll be here, so I would want to take the opportunity to see the glaciers.” (29)

Interestingly, the expectations of glaciers were not always met. Some people imagined them larger and were disappointed by the size and amount of glaciers:

Kara: “They all... I mean they were much more sparse than I expected. I know, I thought, for some reason I thought that we will be able to drive up into a mass of glacier and will be surrounded... But it is like... of in the distance, it’s like special thing. So it was different.” (29)

Brian: “Well, After seeing glaciers in Alaska.... I, you know, I realized that glaciers were a lot smaller here, but, you know, but it was like: “Where is it?” But, but you know, it was, it shows you what made the park, even if they are not still here, that’s what created the magnificent scenery.” (44)

Charles: “The main reason? The name, I think – Glacier. Because we knew the place, and we imagined there is a lot of snow up, like in Europe, and it’s a surprise to see less, smaller glaciers.” (20)

Melissa: “I found out that the glaciers are still covered by snow, so I can’t actually photograph them... I did expect that I’d see the glaciers retreating, I didn’t know there was a heavy snow fall this year across much of the North West. I guess my expectations were that I get to see the glaciers, so I was very surprised when I was told today that I could not actually see them. But I’m OK with that, and in a way that’s a good thing, because with global warming there isn’t still so much less snow.” (21)

Others commented that it was rather difficult to distinguish between snow and glacier:

Sonya: “This has been the hardest part for me - telling what is just a snowpack, and what’s a glacier.” (32)

f) Wildflowers

Wildflowers were quite often mentioned as special things that added to the experience.

Rita: “We’ve seen probably a dozen of different wildflowers. Incredible wildflowers surrounded by the dead trees from the forest fires, so it’s just really interesting. Purple carpet of dead forest.

Rick: Yeah, if you go ways further on that trail, you’ll be in this completely dead forest – like white bark pines were dead but the entire forest covered with these purple flowers.. – it’s really surreal.” (31)

Edward: "I think we were surprised by the wildflowers that we've seen. And at the time we were here before we couldn't see any at all. So it's the matter of time I guess because there is a late season starting here and we appreciate it." (33)

A few visitors specifically mentioned the bear grass, "*which was pretty cool*" (Zina - 46).

For some people it was a particular reason to come back to the trails that they hiked before. Interestingly, in comparison with the previous respondent (Edward), Brenda expected flowers and did not see any which was a surprise for her, while for him it was a surprise to find the flowers. It is definitely the question of time when people travel.

Brenda: "The reason we hiked it the second time – and this is our second year and second time – is we were really thrilled with the flowers from last year, there weren't any this year, so we are hoping to see more wildflowers, but it's just such a beautiful view once you get up to the top." (25)

g) Wildlife

Wild animals - and especially the bears – are one of the symbols of Glacier National Park. "Entering the Bear Country" – these signs can be seen at every trailhead. Visitors can hear about the bears a lot in relation to Glacier, and it is not a surprise that many interview participants were seeking an encounter with a bear:

Jim: "We saw tons of wildlife, especially tons of bears, which is good. So this is one thing that you really want to see when you're out here. It was one of the biggest highlights." (48)

Nori: "We gonna see a bear. Seeing wild animals is the first priority for me." (37)

Some were disappointed that they still have not seen one:

Dan: "It was good, we saw a lot of big horn sheep, and there was a mule deer down by one of the paths, and actually the only disappointment that I have not seen a bear yet." (24)

Rick: "We haven't seen a bear – I was really... kind of disappointed." (31)

At the same time many visitors were concerned about bears, saw them as a danger and sometimes were not able to do remote hikes because of the fear they had. More discussion about this, as well as the effects of "the bear thing" on visitor experiences will be provided in "Human Interactions" section of this chapter.

Irina: "I was kind like walking and I was afraid of grizzlies because I don't know if you heard, the grizzly bears are bad this year, so I was walking, and I was like "Oh, my gosh", I

hope there will be no grizzly bears. But they are around. May be, you know, I will be, may be feel safer if there were more rangers around. Because of grizzlies this year. And there are mountain lions, you know, all over the place.” (7)

Sometimes seeing the evidence of bear presence made people alter their routes as they interpreted it as a proof that bears were around. For example Len and Linda from California, who initially wanted to hike to Snyder Lake, had to turn round when they saw a bear scat on the trail because they were afraid of bears. They later said that this “bear sign” was the most memorable special thing on the whole trip.

Other animals - mostly sheep, mountain goats, moose and elk – were mentioned by visitors a lot as well in relation to their experience. Notably, they are all rather big animals and can be called charismatic megafauna of Glacier NP.

Alex: “Well, at Logan Pass I’ll definitely remember all the sheep and goats, especially the goats who got kind of staying in the trail and kind wait for you to get out of the way, so. It took me a while, I’ve got around of a couple, so that was fun.” (26)

Rita: “I would say probably the moose – seeing the moose and its offspring.” (31) [was most memorable from the whole trip].

It was especially impressive for many visitors to see all these sheep and goats so close:

Leo: “And actually I got a picture of her next to one of the mountain goats, it was like may be that tree from us. Yeah, we didn’t think they would be so close.” (19)

Bella: “We didn’t really realize that they would be so not shy. When we first saw then we were trying to get closer to see them, but then they came right up to us”. (45)

Seeing various wildlife and somehow interacting with the animals was one of the highlights and added to the experience for most visitors:

Eric: “One thing that I really have enjoyed is we’ve seen a fair amount of wildlife, we saw a grizzly bear, a mother with three cubs at Iceberg day on a trail – it was the first day, and we’ve seen moose, mountain goats. Or were they sheep? I love seeing wildlife, and so that really enhanced my experience here.” (33)

Sonya: “I love the wildlife on Hidden Lake. You should have seen these little hoary marmots, but they stood there.. You know, they came to the side of the walk, and they would turn like they were posing, and then they’d turn back again, and they’d look right at you, they were beautiful! And the mountain goats through the same way, it was just so entertaining to see this. That was one of my highlights.” (32)

The natural features discussed above were the primary dimensions of beauty that were revealed throughout the interviews. But it is more than just the sum of its parts; Glacier is a unique setting because it has all of them.

5. “Wild” and “Pristine”

a) Wilderness experience

Many interview participants described Glacier as a place where natural qualities dominate. For them it was “natural”, “undeveloped”, “pristine” and “wild”. In many cases that is why they come there, and like it - because of this feeling of wildness:

Bob: “I think because it has the feeling of wildness. You know, there aren’t a whole lot of trails, there are great trails, but there is so much of the park still just left for nature, and so we get... the trails allow us to get to see that nature, that naturalness, that wilderness. But you know that the wilderness is all around you. And that’s not true at many other places. I don’t know of any other places in Lower 48. It’s just being in touch with nature. The best part of wildness – you never know!”(25)

Eric: “I like the fact that the park is pretty much left as we found it I guess, there is not a lot of satellite buildings sprinkled all over the place, it still a pretty wild area.” (33)

Dick: “To see... I like nature in its true form, as undisturbed as possible, and I think that was really... I think, you know, people in Glacier did a good job in that. They put in trails, but not much more than that, and I think it’s really important, I thought it was good.” (9)

For Dan and Mora it was the most important aspect why they go to a national park, and they definitely found it in Glacier. They, as well as some other interviewees, seemed to view naturalness as fundamental quality of the park which should be protected and preserved.

Dan: “Just to see it in its natural environment as much as possible, like it was cool – the story about the road being designed by an architect other than an engineer, and it just blends in scenery. As far as what’s important, that would be the biggest thing – it’s just to keep it as much the way it used to be as possible.” (24)

Mora: “I’d say nature left as it is, so that we can see what it’s supposed to be before man ruins it all.” (14)

Few people, vice versa, were talking about the lack of such feeling on some trails. This is closely intertwined with the human interactions’ dimensions and is a rather judgmental aspect:

Travis: "I enjoyed Hidden Lake, the second half. The first half of it I was kind of cursing myself because I felt like that I came here to have a more wilderness experience. But I felt disappointed at first of Hidden Lake to be on this trail that has so many people, the first half of it, I mean it was like a parade. But the second half of it opened up, and so it felt nicer, and I was on my own for sections of it." (23)

John: "The St Mary campground. It was kind of (?). I mean for a national park I thought it'd be more pristine, and spots were seem kind of like a BLM campground in a way, but not bad at all." (48)

The notion of wildness is indeed very individual. Some people would first say that they like it very much to be pristine, and then started to talk about accessibility of trails, or gas stations, or accommodation facilities. Some of them realized that it was tricky, and used to talk about minimum development and some sort of balance between providing the access and keeping the park pristine. This is one of the most difficult challenges for park managers – how to determine this “minimum level”. The idea of zoning, and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, is one of the tools for dealing with that. It will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.

Lenard: "Being out like this, and seeing things undisturbed, but well taken care of, you know, like trails being in good shape, and the roads, and everything. And just being able to get out and enjoy the park, and being accessible." (4)

Gail: "I think it's nice to... Keeping the habitat wild is very important. But it's tricky, because I want that, but I also want to be able to get here on my own, and in this case there will be no space for me... So I want both I guess." (11)

Brenda: "I think I expected more people and more developed. And so to come here and see it not developed for the hotels, the chalets, and such very minimal, was nice, I did not expect that. I guess our comparison will be Yosemite, spectacular and beautiful place, but very commercial. When you get into the valley there, it's very commercial. When you get to one of the little stops here, it's very minimal. That was very nice, I think it's important to keep it that way." (25)

Natasha discussed the detraction from her experience since she expected the park to be wild, and was surprised to see helicopters there. Other people mentioned cell-phone that took away from wilderness experience. These detractions will be more thoroughly investigated in the next section on Actual and Desired Experiences, in particular when talking about Escape and Remoteness. These dimensions are clearly interconnected.

Natasha: "The most memorable? I think may be the helicopters? It's a negative experience, but it is... If I were telling somebody else about the trip and what was it like, that would be one of the things that I would mention. On the back of our book that has the trails in it,

it refers to this park as one of the wildest parks in North America, then sure I wasn't expecting all these helicopters constantly going by back and forth, so that's made an impression on me." (12)

Often people described naturalness as a sort of value that should guide visitor behavior and management decisions.

Brenda: "One thing I really like too is that they transformed the Red Buses into natural gas – it's good, good step, and the shuttles and everything – trying to move more amount of people around without the cars, that's really good." (25)

Max: "Keep it natural – I mean cafes and all that stuff – keep it out of the park." (30)

b) Human-nature connections

In relation to naturalness, some people were talking about human-nature interactions and the place of humans in the world – thus, they touched upon more fundamental assumptions of life.

Sam: "You know, there are variables of weather, and physical conditioning, and you know, things are out of your control – that kind of makes nature prominent in your life, because usually it isn't. People are so isolated from nature in their daily life that you just don't get to experience the nature like that. And you know, it's also an understanding too that there is a lot bigger world. The elements have complete control of what's going on, and you are not the top dog out here. The top dogs are grizzlies and mountain lions, and you get to pay attention to what's going on." (47)

Yan: "Look at nature! We are human beings, and we are just a small part of the world. No matter how hard we try, we still are a small part of the world. Look at what nature can do – it's cutting the lake like a knife, it's amazing! And these trees – can we build them? We can destroy, but we can never bring them back. So we feel the limitations of ourselves, and once we feel the limitations, maybe we will become more peaceful. Because we won't feel anymore as heroes or God – like "I can do anything I want to do". I am just a small part. Even the goat – it can run faster than me here. I was doing much better than the goat in my office, but what was the meaning of that? Just do simple comparisons! Because you've got a different environment, it doesn't mean that you are better than the goat in the end, right? It doesn't mean that I am better than a goat, she is good at her region, I am good at mine, but we are put together, this world should be a part of mine too, so that means "hey, I am just doing good in my small world, and I am only a part of it, I need to open it up". And I think it will change some attitude to a lot of things – how we treat nature, how we treat animals, how we treat people." (42)

The main idea that can be seen here is that humans are just the part of the world, not the "kings" of nature. Visiting the place like Glacier teaches us humility and appreciation of the bigger world.

6. Glacier as part of the National Parks system

a) National Park lovers / pride

As mentioned earlier, for many visitors Glacier is a part of the whole system of national parks of the United States. Interview participants talked about their general love for parks and desire to explore them. Some were wearing T-shirts from other parks, Kara and Karen proudly mentioned that they had National Parks' Passports. It seemed like they perceived it as some kind of national identity and were really proud of travelling there. It was nice for them to meet other people for whom visiting national parks was also an enjoyment. A few interviewees visited several other parks on the way to Glacier. Visitors from other countries emphasized the role of the national parks in the US and their good management.

Sam: "I am always impressed with the national parks, they are really the gems of the country, we love the national parks." (47)

Lera: "It's funny because we are wearing T-shirts of lots of different parks, and somebody is like "Oh, you went to Utah, oh you went there? We were there!" It's like people who do parks, do parks. And we don't mind paying a little more to get into a park." (19)

Stasia: "This is our fifth national park on this trip, we're feeling very fortunate." (3)

Tim: "To me, I think the national parks in the US are really great because it's very well organized, you know the road system is really good, the map that you get is really good. In general I find the quality of information is excellent in the US. For example in Australia we don't get as comprehensive information, and even the newsletter, and what's happening, and all that. And the trail conditions are pretty good too in the US – the signs and other things are pretty OK. So that's my experience about national parks in general." (15)

Edward: "And I think it's one of God's marvels – the parks, and that they are preserved for children to come, it's important to give experiences, you know, and to tell the stories, and show the DVDs and spread the word on how great this place is." (33)

b) Economic Aspects

Being national parks' admirers, some people supported them a lot and even proposed increasing the entrance fee in order to keep the national parks and allow people to enjoy them. Interestingly, the researcher never asked any questions in the interview about financial aspects, but several people brought up this issue. Some interview participants admitted that having

national parks “*was good for the economy of Montana*” (Irina-7, Alicia-22), and was “*the best use of tax dollars*” (Antony-10). Others were hoping that “*more of the national budget would go to the national parks*” (Sam-47), and that “*rangers will be better paid*” (Sasha-47). Nobody suggested decreasing the entrance fee. The only person who was talking about his reluctance to pay – in this case for camping - was Ryan, the technical climber, who said that he “*does not really believe one should have to pay in order to sleep*” (49). However, this statement seems to deal more with his lifestyle and his self-image as a very free and independent person.

Bob: “And you know, one other thing comes to my mind, and it’s the constant fear I have with the budget talks and all that. In California they just closed 70 of our state parks, and two of our favorite parks were in our list, and August 31 they are closed. And whatever Park Service needs to do to keep the parks open – they can easily double or triple. I mean we do an annual pass, so it’s 100 dollars, but if we have to pay 200 or 300 dollars – OK, no problem. If instead of 24 dollars per day or week – it’s 50 dollars per week, or 75, it’s still a great bargain. Just keep them open, and do what it takes, and people will still come.” (25)

Leo: “We pay 25 dollars for 7 days to come here, and even if you double that, it’s still cheap.” (19)

Summary of “Glacier as a Unique Setting” Dimension

Glacier experience is unique. People come there and love the park for various reasons, and it has different meanings for different visitors. However, several broad themes and subthemes emerged across the interviews that are related to this category.

For many visitors Glacier NP is “the best place on Earth”, “the love”, “America’s secret” and even “the church”. They keep coming there because of the special meanings that it has for them and emotional attachment to the place. Often it goes from the memories about the past and some special, personal events that happened in the park. Sometimes it’s just the aesthetic beauty that generated these emotions, but the feelings that these interview participants shared about Glacier in relation to the beauty seemed very strong. Regardless of the reason that produced the emotions, for many visitors there is no replacement of this place.

The nature of the Glacier National Park experience is one of the “novel environment” that is different from home and other regions of the world; the “diverse setting” with a variety of

landscapes that are so interesting to explore; “wild, pristine and natural place” that is full of surprises; and the land of “scenic beauty”, “magnificent views”, “grand vistas” and “spectacular mountains”. Numerous natural things that can be seen in the park usually add to the experience, be it unique smells, waterfalls, lakes, old-growth trees, wildflowers or wildlife. Glaciers and wildlife, especially bears, sometimes serve as main reasons to come to this place and are one of the highlights of the experience. A chance to see glaciers before they disappear; an opportunity to find yourself so close to mountain goats and other animals; an experience of being “right in the mountains” is what Glacier, in particular, is valued for. But it is also valued for all other things mentioned in this section. Interview participants mentioned a variety of things regarding how Glacier looks, smells and sounds. Finally, Glacier is different from other parks, but at the same time is a part of the whole National Parks’ system of the country and national identity.

Often, the Glacier experience is a part of a bigger life experience that confirms that notion of “multiphasic”, “multidimensional”, “multisensory” and “dynamic” nature of experience, discussed in the Literature Review chapter. Events, that happened in the past (like personal tragedy, or some pleasant family events that occurred here) have a longer effect on people, make them think about this particular place and come there in future. Some people compare Glacier with other national parks that they visited during this trip (like Yellowstone), or parks that they travelled to in previous years (Yosemite, Denali and others mentioned in the quotes), which makes it a life-long experience with remaining memories that they keep and share (recollection phase).

It is a unique setting, with unique opportunities, a sum of all its parts that actually add a meaning and transfer this geographical space into a particular, special place that is beloved by so many people in the U.S. and in the whole world. While Glacier NP is a part of the National Parks system, it also impresses people as being different from other mountain parks, because it provides opportunities to be “right in the middle of the mountains”, perceived by many people as “wild and pristine”, and has all these components of beauty discussed above.

The next section will explore more thoroughly which motives do various visitors have when they come to Glacier, what exactly they are seeking there, and which benefits and outcomes the park can provide. In other words, it will focus on actual and desired experiences.

Motivations / Benefits

This section discovers why people visit Glacier National Park, and which benefits they seek and gain there.

As Literature Review chapter suggests, approaches for measuring the quality of visitor experiences evolved from those that were based on activities and recreational settings (two lower levels of Recreation Demand Hierarchy, referenced earlier - Diver and Brown 1978), to so called “behavioral” approaches that studied why people participated in outdoor recreation (Borrie and Brizell 2001, Manning 2007). They discovered two upper hierarchies of demand for recreation – motivations or experiences, and benefits.

These approaches suggest that there might be multiple motives for people to be involved in outdoor recreation, and multiple potential benefits gained from such participation. The main idea of the Recreation Demand Hierarchy is that people participate in activities in different settings to fulfill their motivations

Motivations / Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Escape 2. Learning 3. Challenge <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Solitude 5. Peace and quiet 6. Self-discovery and self-searching, re-thinking life, renewal and revival 7. Intimacy and involvement with nature 8. Adventure 9. Exercise and energy 10. Fun and entertainment, “multisport” vacation, participation in variety of activities 11. Inspiration 12. Humility <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Enjoying wild nature 14. Enjoying beauty 15. Enjoying togetherness 16. Meeting new people

Table 5. Dimensions of Motivations/Benefits.

that lead to the desired psychological outcomes. In this vision, recreation is defined as “an experience that results from recreational engagements” (Manning 2010, p. 168).

The behavioral approach to recreation is based on expectancy theory, “which suggests that recreation-related behavior is goal oriented, and that people participate in recreation activities to fulfill motivations and achieve benefits” (Manning 2010, p. 188). A number of studies, including those cited in Chapter 2, indicate that there could be a variety of motivations and benefits, and that recreationists can be segmented into groups based on their motivations/benefits.

It should be noted that other studies (McCool 2006) call the third level of the hierarchy “experiences”, which implies that the actual experience might be different than initial motivation; this notion is acknowledged for the current research.

This research has made an attempt to discover the nature of desired and actual experiences of various visitors that come to Glacier National Park. By asking about the reasons to come, certain expectations about Glacier, and images of this place that interview participants created in their minds (which to large extent depended on their goals and motives, and their initial idea of a setting, activities and the whole time in Glacier), it was revealed that interview participants had rather different reasons and motivations to visit this place, and benefits that they were seeking varied from escape, solitude, peace and quietness to fun and entertainment. The research also tried to explore the level of satisfaction with the trip, which partly depends on the outcomes and benefits that visitors get, and how they correspond with the initial expectations (McCool 2006).

How do expectations match up with what Glacier Park’s visitors really get during the trip? How do they feel about their actual experience? Is it different from the desired one? What were the real benefits and outcomes? How satisfied were the visitors with their trips? What needs to be done so that they are completely happy with their experiences and that the desired conditions are met? These questions were addressed in the interview guide.

Sixteen main dimensions of the experiences were discovered (Table 5); three of them – Escape and remoteness, Learning, and Challenge - appeared to be predominant ones, judging by the total number of quotes, insightfulness of quotes, the diversity of sub-themes that emerged, as well as by the researcher’s perception of their importance for park management. They are discussed with a slightly higher level of details than the others. Four last dimensions – enjoying wild nature, beauty, togetherness, and meeting new people - are discussed in other sections of this chapter – in “Glacier as a Unique Setting” and “Human Interactions”.

1. *Escape and Remoteness*

Escaping everyday pressure, getting away from people and civilization was one of the dominant themes in many interviews, when people were talking about their experience.

Nina: “I guess it’s just getting away from home, and not thinking about all the work, and cleaning, and, you know, all the stuff that needs to be fixed, or all the obligations you have. So just getting away, just being outside a lot.” (28)

Alan: “Well. Ok. I live in Manhattan which is a very busy place, and being in Manhattan apartment – relatively small, and it’s me and my wife, and two kids, two teenagers. You know, we’re always around people, so when I get away, I like to really get away.” (2)

Nora: “We live in New York big city, so getting away from the big city is very important – just to getting back to nature from all the hustle and bustle, just relax – that’s important.” (13)

Sasha: “You know, we are daily scheduled, and it’s so nice to break away from that. It’s nice to be able to get a break from work and like really get a break.. You know, you go on different vacations, you go to different cities, and you still have your cell phone, if you have a Blackberry, you still get emails from work, and you never really get away from what’s going on. I think the backpacking is perfect as I’ve got 5 days when I cannot be in touch with anybody. I told the people whom I work with “I will not be able to get any signal, you won’t hear from me, you won’t get any emails, I am completely out of touch”. And lets me really relax.” (47)

John: “I just love backpacking, to be out in the backcountry and be self-sufficient, and get away from people, and traffic, and cars and things.” (48)

<p style="text-align: center;">Escape and Remoteness</p> <p>1. Desire to escape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Escaping everyday pressure b) Desire to be in a remote area and feel it

Table 6. Dimensions of Escape.

The Glacier experience is special in this regard, because it is out of cell phone and internet signal in most areas (although not everywhere), so it does provide the opportunity “to really get away”, what was underlined in these quotes. Not every natural area can provide this opportunity. Interview participants also tended to compare Glacier NP with Yosemite, Yellowstone and other parks which they found “more developed”, “more commercial” with more shops and accommodation facilities (a number of quotes above), so it seemed that the feeling of remoteness and escape is harder to attain there.

Most of the interview participants described remoteness by referring to physical distance from towns or development such as roads, cell phones, etc. It was a desire to feel the remoteness, to feel that you are away from all of that:

Brian: “And then today I hiked all over the pass the other way, which was really nice because I felt like I was, it felt more remote. I hiked up toward... toward Gunsight Pass, and the overlook over the lake there. So about a 2-mile hike from the chalet, you know, up to the top, and then maybe another mile down, and then I just set an hour there because it was just.. I was so peaceful and quiet, and the view was just magnificent.” (44)

Although “escape” was a common motivation across sampled visitors, not all of them were able to feel it to the extent that they were hoping for. A number of factors intervened, such as helicopters, cell-phone signal, presence of other people, and inability to hike remote trails because of the bear concerns, which prevented some interview participants from feeling remote. These factors will be discussed in “Human Interaction” and “Managerial Issues” sections of this chapter. This is an example when an actual experience is not always the same as the initial motivations of people when they choose to participate in particular activities in certain settings in order to get the desired psychological benefits.

2. Learning

As illustrated above, Glacier NP is a diverse setting, it has a variety of ecosystems, and different types of landscapes can be found there. Therefore, it provides an excellent place for those who want to learn more about natural processes:

Learning

1. Learning

- a) Learning about nature
- b) Learning from rangers
- c) Acquiring skills

2. Teaching others

Table 7. Dimensions of Learning.

Edward: "Every walk has been great. Even the short ones, the Avalanche Lake – if you stay in the trees, and you know, look at end of the little walk and read some of the descriptions and learn something." (33)

Kara: "Just at the valleys, and the glaciers were really beautiful, and.. and learning about the ecosystems was really interesting." (29)

Peter: "I've learned a lot through the park system. And I like it. Whether it is the geology of the place, or whether it's the animal life, or whatever. I've learned a lot through the park system, and it's very important."(17)

Peter is talking about the park system, but he mostly refers to Glacier, where he keeps coming throughout the years. Many visitors mentioned that they learned a lot from rangers and different interpretation programs that they provided:

Dan: "The ranger Lee was very informative. He was really-really informative. I mean he knew a lot of staff about the glaciers that we didn't know, we learned a lot!"(24)

Alex: "I did that yesterday [a boat tour], so it was pretty cool. And you can see... That was really cool because you got to see the whole mountains, and you learn a lot. They talked about the park, how was it made, and different little interesting facts about it, so it was pretty cool." (26)

It is necessary to mention that interview participants gave very positive comments about rangers in Glacier NP and almost everybody mentioned that they were "doing a great job", "very friendly", "knowledgeable", "professional", and "above average". That added to the experience, and for many people satisfied their desire to learn. Nick, a return visitor to the park, was also talking about the progress in interpretation programs and communicating the message to visitors of nature understanding and appreciation:

“I think they are doing a much better job in interpretation. Like the guy who was talking the last night. They care much more it seems to get you to understand... Simple things he was talking about in Two Medicine.. Thinking about animals and realizing which animal just as each person is a personality. They cannot just say that all coyotes are the same. Because different coyotes like to do different things – just like people. They eat different things, they have different kinds of habits and tendencies, some are more scared, like people, some are more bold; and to start thinking about them not as just that’s what coyotes do, that’s what bears do, that what, you know, nut crackers do.. So they work, they are trying a lot harder than they used to help people understand nuances and subtleties about nature. And try to bring this life a bit more, and give more reference for it – like the guy last night said if he was a ranger here 30 years ago, his job would be to kill wolves and mountain lions as a pest, and then they’re talking about how it’s changing. They sort of promoting that idea of getting to think about wildlife differently. This is good.” (28)

A number of interview participants (backpackers) mentioned that they learned more about the outdoors and acquired skills that they were lacking before:

Natalie: “I’ve never done a permit – like where you have to get a permit, I’ve never done it. The last trip I did was where I did not talk to ranger, we didn’t watch the video. We’re relatively unprepared. Now I know how unprepared I was for that trip. So I think that now I know more. I feel it’s pretty important. Because if you feel safe, you can enjoy yourself more; if you feel stressed and panicked, you’re not being able to see, to enjoy.” (50)

Some visitors were excited not only to learn from Glacier, but to teach others as well. For example, Bridget, who lives in Missoula and comes to Glacier quite often with her husband, was very excited to show it to her family from the East Coast:

Bridget: “The waterfalls above the lake, they are beautiful, the scenery of course. About a half way on the hike there is a big old avalanche path from this past winter, so that was very interesting just to see, and teaching them what an avalanche is, and to bring things, and to just really introducing them to the environment, the scenery, the mountains, and everything. It’s a great place to learn.” (40)

Katie, a geography teacher, took a chance of being in Glacier on vacation to learn more about glaciers herself so that then she could teach her students. The same was true about Mila, also a teacher:

Katie: “And I’m a teacher, and I actually teach my students about glaciers, because it’s part of our curriculum, so I really enjoyed taking a lot of photos for my classroom.” (18)

Mila: “I’m a teacher, and I am teaching science, and I wanted to work the first-hand experience so that kids could have a better understanding. As if I have a better understanding I can relate it better to them ; I’m teaching 4th grade.” (21)

3. Challenge

Travelling to any natural and wild area is some kind of a physical challenge, as one should be ready to survive without accustomed amenities; sometimes it is necessary to hike for long distances in order to get to a particular destination; and in the wild a man is a visitor, while the wildlife is the principal. This challenge can be very different: some people ascend high and snowy mountains, live in the wilderness for weeks or raft through life-threatening streams. For other people it's a challenge just to find themselves far from civilization for several hours. Different people perceive challenge differently.

Interview respondents in Glacier

National Park sometimes were excited about the physical challenge as such:

Natalie: "I think I was also excited about the physical challenge. I mean it's hard. Maybe you're excited about it later, but I was excited about doing something that was physically demanding as well. Not just getting, not just enjoying nature." (50)

They were testing themselves and wanted to prove that they were in good shape:

Eric: "I think this time I'm trying to prove that I've not gotten as old as my age says I am." (33)

Natalie: "I was just curious to see what I would feel physically." (50)

Challenge should not necessarily be physical only. For example, John was talking about the mental challenge and his desire to avoid "cookie-cutter experience" in the wild:

Challenge

1. Desire for physical challenge

- a) "I wanted challenge as such"
- b) "I wanted to prove that I am in good shape" / Testing yourself - "Can I do it?"

2. Desire for mental challenge

- a) "Cookie-cutter experience is not interesting"
- b) Confronting the fear of bears / risk taking

3. Feeling of challenge

- a) "I felt like I have accomplished something" / "it was such a reward" / "it made me feel special"
- b) "I felt grateful that I could do that"
- c) Feeling of competition – "we've beaten others"

4. No challenge

- a) Looking for the comfort
- b) Relativity of challenge

Table 8. Dimensions of Challenge.

“I like that.. I mean I don’t like when people do everything for you, so having to do things on your own. I mean hopefully it’s the wilderness, and you get to figure out some things by yourself, and you don’t want it to be just cookie-cutter experience that you know you can just turn your brain off, and other people take care of you. It could be a little bit of a struggle, but it feels more rewarding – when you had some challenge, and you’d have to overcome it.” (48)

Sam had a rather specific challenge: he wanted to confront his fear of grizzly bears, in other words he was looking forward to taking the risk:

“When we arrived here, we were only ones in a campground. And this is, you know, I have a good imagination when I am camping out, and this campground is sadly famous for bear attacks in 1967. And I’ve always wanted to come here for 44 years, just to kind of confront my fear of grizzly bears, you know.” (47)

To certain extent, risk taking is also implied in a number of outdoor activities as such, because dangerous situations might occur in a natural area, especially in the “bear country” which Glacier is – be it related to bears, or to hiking/backpacking in the wild and unpredictable environment.

One of the most common perceptions of challenge is that it brings about the feeling of accomplishment:

Julia: “I like challenges! I think once we got up there, to big hill up there, we knew that it had to be up there somewhere, so to turn back would be, you know.. If it was just around the next corner, and we would have missed it, we kind of wanted to complete the task, I think, by the time we’ve got up there. We’ve gone so far up already. I don’t know. The sense of accomplishment.” (8)

She speaks about “completing a task”. Usually, when people travel to the wilderness, they perceive it as a certain task, certain goal, and when they reach this goal, it brings them this sense of accomplishment and reward. They begin to respect themselves, their self-esteem may increase. It can be confirmed by the words of Brian, who said that he felt “*very relieved*” when he hiked up to Sperry chalet which was 8 miles from the trailhead.

“But yeah... I was very... My shirt was soaking wet when I got there. And, it was a good feeling, it was a feeling of accomplishment. At the same time, you know, is this feeling kind of being worn out.” (44)

Both Julia and Brian speak positively about their feelings when they got to the place and completed the task, however it is obvious that it was not easy for them, but they liked it.

Other visitors describe it this way:

Sonya: "Yesterday on our hike to Hidden Lake it was... it was just.. You know, we started up this, and kept feeling like "I can't do it, I just can't do this" because of the ice and snow, we were slipping and sliding, trying to find a hole to put your foot, and we've got to the top, and it was such an accomplishment! It just made us feel like "hi five", you know.. It made us feel so good. I felt like I was something special." (32)

Dana: "I felt good, I felt the sense of accomplishment. I mean when I was younger, I could hike way further than this, but now when I have this problem, I can't hike that far, so I felt a pretty big sense of accomplishment, and also a little bit worrying about how I am gonna feel tomorrow." (41)

Some people, in particular older people, felt grateful that they were still in a good shape to hike, and it was again a reward to know that they can handle it:

Eva: "Oh, I'm so grateful to be able to do this, I'm just really grateful to have the opportunity and to be physically fit enough to do it." (33)

Marta: "Yeah, I mean this is the first time for me being here. And it was the first time ever really hiking at West, so I think a lot of things just really exceeded my expectations. For me, I like knowing that I can handle it." (36)

One interview participant brought up the notion of competitiveness, talking about "beating other guys" on the Red Eagle trail:

Rick: "We've beaten some guys that... There were other guys that started at the same time as us."(31)

Interestingly, although some interviewees spoke about the challenge of their hikes and how they like it, at the same time some people sometimes focused on the issues of comfort and easiness. For example, Julia and Amanda chose this backpacking trip because it was "*easy and convenient...without having to walk very far*" (8); Brian decided to hike up to the chalet for 2 nights because it was "*a very nice opportunity to get to do some hiking and not have to carry as much equipment*" (44). It looks like they are seeking for some kind of a balance between the challenge and degree of comfort. It also suggests that the sense of challenge, as well as many other dimensions of visitor experiences described in this chapter, are rather relative and personal.

4. Solitude

Interview participants frequently mentioned that they were looking for solitude, wanted to be alone and were not there “*to listen to other people talking*” (Peter -17). That was especially true for backpackers and day hikers on remote trails, but not necessarily. For example, Peter spoke about solitude walking along St Mary’s Falls trail – one of the easiest and most popular trails in the park.

Sometimes the combination of solitude and being among people was mentioned as a good balance. In “Human Interactions” section a more detailed discussion is provided about the reasons for that, because actually in many cases different people mentioned both their desire to escape, hear peace and quiet, and at the same time the desire to meet people and socialize.

Bella: “One night we kind of had the whole campsite for ourselves. It was interesting, the night before we’ve had a lot of company, and it was fun too, and then it was nice the next night it was just us.” (45)

Glacier NP indeed can provide excellent opportunities for solitude for those who are seeking it:

Alicia: “The important thing is just to be able to relax, take my time, not being in a hurry, take my time and enjoy the beauty, the trees, the sun, and the waterfalls, and the water. I love the lakes, I can sit by a lake and skip brooks forever, you know. The solitude. I love... when I have my grandkids with me, I love watching them play, you know. It’s just the solitude of the park, the beauty and the solitude of the park. I totally got that today.” (22)

However, some people indicated that they did not find the level of solitude they wanted:

Tom: “Glacier is really-really busy, and I think that.. I guess it’s probably good for the park, but personally I’d like more solitude. Because we’ve got here on the middle of the week, on Wednesday night, and we thought it might be a little bit quieter, but it still was really-really busy. This time of the year and all that.” (43)

5. Peace and quiet

This dimension is closely connected with solitude and escape. But some visitors specifically mentioned that “peace and quiet” were the most important aspects in terms of quality of their experience, and one of the reasons to come to the park:

Brian: “You know, just the ability to get out and feel... feel I was in a remote place, and hear the peace and quiet.” (44)

Victoria: "This is one of the reasons to get out in the woods [not to see people], and peace and quiet." (34)

Brian was hiking to Sperry Chalet that is located in a rather remote area with potential opportunities for peace and quiet. He felt like he got it, although there were some detractors (helicopters and cell phones, discussed below). However, in other areas along the GTSR corridor, for example, in Logan Pass in the middle of the day, peacefulness is hardly attained:

Garry: "I like, you know, the peacefulness, it's very peaceful here [Avalanche Lake trail in the evening]. When we were over Logan Pass on Saturday, that was not so peaceful. I mean this construction brings a lot of people. This parking lot over the Logan Pass was crazy!" (38)

Some interview participants described quietness as something really important for the national parks in general, and suggested that park managers should maintain it:

Nick: "Not having the phone work is nice. And when we get here, I think I like the rules about keeping things quiet. The camps are nice and quiet at night. And not... some camps like state parks around Montana can be... pretty loud music, or... Actually it's pretty good in most places, people are respectful, but in the national park they do a very nice job in keeping things quiet, and dark - without the whole lot of bright lights." (28)

6. Self-discovery and self-searching, rethinking life, renewal and revival

Some visitors perceived their trip to Glacier as a chance to rethink their life, recover from everyday pressure, renew and recharge – both physically and mentally:

Julia: "I think it's just our chance to catch up with our lives and to be away from our children, and, yeah, you know.. Just to regroup, renew, enjoy nature, get some exercise." (8)

Brian: "Because I got to do... do a little more self-searching and self-discovery... You know, I had intended to take my... my teenagers, but they were busy with other things, so I just... came on my own. So I was trying to think about things, and where I am in life, and... and not have to worry about, you know, what the kids are doing, and it's my first vacation in a long time on my own. So it was... It's a good one. It's been life changing, and that I think that, I realized at this point in my life that... that I need to continue this kind of things. Because, you know, the body does not stay the same if you don't keep it in shape".

Anna: "Oh yeah, it's so refreshing, we've charged our batteries." (27)

Sometimes it was unexpected – like for Yan who did not actually plan a trip to Glacier and did not know anything about this place before, he just came there for a free day during his business trip. But finding himself in nature, he started to think differently about some things.

That was a surprise for him, and he mentioned it several times throughout the conversation. It seemed like coming to Glacier was a totally new experience for him that facilitated some very deep thoughts about life that he was happy to share:

“I found myself here – I mean the life, the feeling of life. I feel alive not, you know, just sitting at a desk or near a desk and doing the work, it’s different. I don’t know how to express it. We work every day, we study little things, and in the end we realize that “Hey, it’s not useful!” Or it’s not for life itself. I mean this is for life, the nature is close to us, and we study these electronics, science fiction, but the further you go, you feel more empty, tired, like yourself is like a robot, slave. So it’s quite good to be here. Just being here is good enough just to be in a quiet, to think about your life, just think about your future.

In the end I will carry a lot of things home and bring them to my work, to my families, to myself. And I will feel myself at least more relaxed, so I’ll be more happier, maybe I will be more efficient at work. Often people are doing the same things and they do not mind that they are fixed, and change sometimes makes you think about it in a different way.

Happiness comes both from your psychological and physical points of view. I mean your body – I was taking fresh air, and did this exercise, so I feel more relaxed and my body feels more healthier, and health brings you happiness – because there is no pain. And psychological – just look at the mountains, look at the sky. We’re fighting each other – with our colleagues, with other companies, we’re fighting every day. Sometimes it’s like “Wait a minute! Is that necessary to fight every day?” (42)

Later on he spoke also about personal growth, mental health and well-being as possible benefits of interacting with nature.

7. Intimacy and involvement with nature

Being more intimate with nature, feeling that “you are a part of it” was one of the experiences that backpackers and remote hikers were talking about:

Maria: “Because you can’t... you’re more intimate with it. You’re definitely more involved in it. And you... you’re out there for longer. With the day hikes it’s nice, but then you go to your car, and you’re dealing with people who are annoying, and they want your parking spot, and you not just... This is better – you just... cannot get to check out and go and play in the woods, and you don’t have to worry about really so much other people.” (50)

Dina: I think I liked it more actually [doing a strenuous hike to Mt Brown lookout in comparison with just driving along the GTSR and stopping at popular places]. Just getting more... I don’t know, experiencing more, being able to actually see what other people have talked about, come up and hike, seeing the animals, you know, like right there. So yeah, it was good, good trip. I liked seeing not just the touristy parts of the park, but actually getting out into the actual nature part of the park and seeing... and kind of being a part of, I guess. You know, just seeing more of the nature part of it, and... I don’t know, the little waterfalls, the streams, and the snow, and just... like I said just getting away from the touristy part and actually getting into the back, more the back part of the park and seeing more of that. It’s very interesting.” (9)

8. Adventure

The sense of adventure was not uncommon for many interview participants. Some found it while bushwalking near the backcountry campground:

Julia: "And we didn't really know where we were going, because there was really no trail. So we were just following the river because we knew that the lake was up at the waterfall. We like the adventure." (8)

others pursued the "adrenalin rush" through doing very extreme hikes on a terrain that "you know nothing about". Ryan tells the whole story of his adventure while climbing Heavens peak:

"And it was a week ago, I was on this trail, and I was looking back – you know Heavens peak? And Heavens peak looks absolutely delicious from this trail, and that's why I decided "Oh, I want to get to the top of that mountain". I mean who wants to get to the top of that mountain? Forget it! But when you see a real mountain – Heavens Peak, I said "Wow, how can I get to the top of that mountain"? And so I have the guide book which is written many years ago, and when I got back down into the car, I read the guide book, and it only talked about a sense from the other side of the mountain, and I got the impression "oh, it's an easy way to get off the mountain", but I thought "Oh, this is a nice side of the mountain, and the road takes me all the way around half of the mountain, and I said "Oh, I think I can get up there". So I did that mountain. And so going down in the shuttle I saw where the stream comes down, and all the way down, and right from the shuttle I could get it. I can park my car, and wait across the little river down there, you know about a mile north of Avalanche, and so I saw my route. And it was a route that was absolutely, totally unmentioned in the guidebook. But it didn't bother me, I said "wow, you know it's really an adventure-some". It's always adventure-some getting into terrain that you know nothing about. And here again is one of the keys to mountain climbing. And again for me it's boring going along the route that you know everything about. It's slightly boring going on a route that you know other people have climbed, but it's totally exciting with a huge adrenalin rush – and I think a lot of us, climbers, like adrenalin rush – getting on terrain that you think "ha, has anybody in the history of this mountain been so foolish to attempt this route?" . So it was exciting, it was exciting, I got other route, and may be nobody else was this foolish to get on this route! But it went, I was able to... I didn't even know whether after getting over to the glacier and getting above the glacier, whether I was able to get on the face? And I found the moraine, a moraine that took me to the face, and I saw it was broken up, and basically if I am half mile from the face, I look up and it looks quite steep, and you don't know where it's gonna go. And then you say "but I know mountains", and I say "Well, I just get to get close". You know, it's just really vertical rocks, and then looking up at that face which is another 2000 feet above me, you know – will I go? Will I be able to, you know, thread my way safely, you know, through these rocks, to get up to these different layers? Because it's always a layer, you see the rock to get up to the next layer, and the layer goes for 15-20 feet, and then you have another layer, and so that was a real exciting trip, because it took me 3 hours to get up to the stream bed, and hiking through this absolutely atrocious, huge plants that were growing horizontal, and fighting my way Devil's club, scratching my legs, they still have not recovered from all the scratches, and I had the illusion that I was gonna keep my feet dry. Forget it! Sometimes the vegetation was so thick, and then everything that touches the water gets slippery.. So I was climbing the whole day with wet feet. But it didn't matter." (49)

9. Exercise and energy

Several people mentioned that they were looking for exercise and energy:

Alla: "I went somewhere different every time – it was Avalanche, or Highline, or Hidden Lake, or over to Many Glacier to do Cracker or Iceberg, or over to Two Medicine area. It was to come to get some energy, or exercise, and just enjoy the beauty and get away from everything, and you know... It was either doing a peak, or... I feel much better being up here." (27)

Alicia: "Oh yeah. We come up camping, usually on the 4th of July, and we do hikes through all, through outs, I mean it's beautiful country, it's great exercise." (22)

Interestingly, sometimes thoughts about the future on-site experience encourage people to prepare for it, so the influence of the actual experience begins long before the experience itself. It is another evidence of the multiphasic nature of it:

Sam: "And it keeps you in good shape too. When you know you are gonna go backpacking this coming summer, you know, I guess I would better do some running, or weight lifting, so it's kind of a nice incentive to have this, and look forward to, and prepare for it.

Sasha: Some people do marathons, we backpack." (47)

10. Fun and entertainment, "multisport vacation", participation in variety of activities

"Having something fun to do" was also one of the reasons to be in Glacier:

Dina: "We kind of wanted something to do that.. he hadn't done before, something that I have not done in a long time, it was close enough.. you know, we didn't have to travel a long distance to get there.. This trip up here going around Flathead Lake and stuff was kind of pretty. You know, we were just looking for something fun to do for a day or two." (9)

Gleb: "Just having fun! Getting out and just seeing as much as I can." (39)

Anna: "Just to go and have safe, fun experience and enjoy the beauty." (27)

Glacier NP provides opportunities for different outdoor activities. Seventeen different activities were revealed from the data – those that people participated in (Table 9).

backpacking	driving	photography
biking	fishing	picnic with dogs
boating and kayaking	glaciating	snowboarding
bushwalking	hiking	star gazing

camping and RV	horseback riding	whitewater rafting
climbing	motorcycle travel	

Table 9. Revealed activities of the interview participants.

So it's not surprisingly that some interview participants, like Andrew who came to Montana with his big family, perceive Glacier and the area around as a place of "multisport vacation", where everybody can find something fun for himself:

Andrew: "No, I didn't have any real expectations, I mean we've done a lot of great things, we have caught fish, we've hiked the Hidden Lake and back, and we saw mountain goats and rams. My son, who is three, glaciated for the first time, so we've had a very good trip so far.. You know, we were just... I guess our expectation was to come and to be able... for a very wide range of ages to be able to do lots of different things – from short day hikes, some fishing, some sightseeing, some of the older kids could even ride a mountain bike outside the park in Whitefish, that's sort of thing, so. Sort of a multisport vacation for multiple age ranges from 3 to 71.

Oh, it's great place for family vacation because there is a lot of different things to do. It pretty much satisfy anybody on any given day – there is something that they can do, even if have to split up. Like yesterday a couple of people went mountain biking in Whitefish, and I took my son to the Alpine slide, and you know, some people went whitewater rafting, so there is a bunch of different things to do." (35)

11. Inspiration

Getting inspiration in nature is a well-known fact: many poets and artists have been written about it. This is an example how Glacier can inspire about the life through its wildlife:

Yan: "I only saw this in the geography, in the TV. But I saw this real, giving baby fish, and I saw how this fish – sorry I don't remember the name - the kind of fish that swim all the way from the lower river to the upper river, and it give birth, and after that it die. So they become very skinny. They lose all their fats, all their energies – they just give it to birth, wow! So that inspires me a little bit about life itself." (42)

12. Humility

Glacier NP can be a teacher. In this particular case it taught a lesson of humility – something that probably this interview participant was not expecting before. Although in theory some people might seek humility when they travel to nature (and view it as a motivation), for Ryan it was an unexpected psychological outcome:

Ryan: "Nobody has been so foolish as to ever be here before", and I am kind of foolish, and it could be a dangerous down climbing, because if I got off a route, I could really be screwed, and so I was really careful. Thanks goodness I don't have to come down the same route! Because this is really ... this route finding, and going through all that devils-club, and all that terrible, awful brush crashing down below, and slipping and falling on that stream again. And then I looked up, and you know what I saw? I saw 15 minutes ahead of me, I saw a mountain goat. On that face! You know, there was a little bit of vegetation, and there was that mountain goat, and I says "Alleluia! If a mountain goat was able to get up here, there is a perfect green pass on the way down". Wrong. I got up to the summit ridge, and I realized that mountain goat, God damn, it's a better climber than I am. It was absolutely dangerous up there. And I saw the way that may be the mountain goat got up, but there was absolutely no way I was gonna get down that way. And I didn't have a rope. So I learned a little bit of humility." (49)

Summary of "Motivations / Benefits" Dimension

This section illustrated the diversity of motivations that various visitors to Glacier National Park have, and multiple potential benefits that they are seeking and gaining. These are two upper levels of Recreation Demand Hierarchy discussed above, which suggests that while participating in concrete activities in particular settings people can get opportunities for various experiences that then bring certain benefits and outcomes for themselves and for the society in general. Managing for high quality and satisfactory visitor experiences should take into account all four levels of hierarchy and interactions between them.

Sixteen different motivations / benefits were revealed that people were seeking and getting in Glacier. It is not just a place where people come for fun and entertainment; many people are looking for solitude, peace and quiet, self-discovery and self-searching, intimacy and involvement with nature; sense of adventure; exercise and energy; inspiration and humility; escape, learning and challenge. The first three dimensions were the most diverse with several sub-themes that emerged.

It was rare that one person had just one of these motivations/benefits, frequently several of them were revealed for the same interview participant, and sometimes the motives were rather contradicting (for example, solitude and at the same time meeting new people; challenges and easiness; desire for being in wild nature and desire for accessibility), so it shows the variety of dimensions within a person, not just across the visitors.

As discussed earlier, Glacier NP is a unique setting, and this section showed that it provides opportunities for all these experiences. A combination of unique aspects that the park as a setting has leads to a unique combination of motives/benefits that a person might seek and gain there. For many people Glacier National Park as a setting is not replaceable for getting psychological benefits which they are looking for.

Satisfaction – a measure of quality in outdoor recreation (Manning 2010) which is defined as “realization of expectations”, or “attainment of the individual’s defined quality experience” (McCool 2006, p. 5) – explores how the desired and actual experiences match up. In general, Glacier NP visitors were rather satisfied with their experiences, and often stated that they exceeded their expectations. However, some factors that did not lead to the desired outcomes were revealed. In other words, sometimes the actual experience was not the same as initial motivations.

The next section will focus specifically on human interactions.

Human Interactions

Glacier National Park receives more than 2 million visitors annually (NPS 2012), and 80% of them travel along the GTSR (Layman 1999). Contacts with other visitors inevitably occur, so understanding various aspects of social interaction in the GTSR corridor is extremely important. How do visitors feel about other people on the trails and at campsites? Are they mostly looking for solitude or do they prefer to meet other people in the park? What is “too crowded” for them? Are there any additional aspects other than the actual numbers of people that matter for the experience? What are the desired social conditions for various visitors in different parts

of the GTSR corridor? These and other questions were addressed in the interview guide, and many people started to talk about various aspects of human interactions when they were asked about their impressions during the trip and recommendations for park managers.

Analysis of the interviews showed that human interaction in a natural area is a rather diverse topic. It is much broader than just the numbers of people. In this section five main dimensions that emerged from the data will be discussed: (1) visitor density; (2) visitor behavior; (3) internal group issues, (4) travelling alone, (5) detraction from the feeling of remoteness (Table 9). The last one is closely connected with the “escape and remoteness” dimension from the previous section.

Human Interactions

- 1. Visitor density**
 - a) “Too many people”
 - b) “Not crowded” / balance / adaptation
 - c) Right of access to everybody
- 2. Visitor behavior**
 - a) Friendly and nice people / alike people / good to meet people
 - b) Bad behavior
- 3. Internal group issues**
 - a) Togetherness
- 4. Travelling alone**
 - a) Escape and solitude
 - b) Flexibility and independence
- 5. Detraction from the feeling of remoteness**
 - a) Cell-phones
 - b) Helicopters
 - c) Other people at campgrounds

Table 10. Dimensions of Human Interactions.

1. *Visitor Density*

a) *“Too many people”*

Visitor density is associated with the number of people met (either seen or heard) in a particular area, and perceived level of crowding. In order to define which factors influence the way how people evaluate use levels, and identify the social effects of visitor crowding, it is necessary to turn to different reasons of travelling and motivations of visitors. On the one hand, many people travel to a national park in order to escape from their everyday experiences and routine, find themselves surrounded by nature and not being disturbed by other people. They usually do not want to see too many people. For example, Brian, a civil servant from Portland, Oregon, in response to the question “What matters for you when you consider a trip to a national park?” explained that it was:

“The chance to get out, and.. and feel I am away from everything... Just the ability to get out and feel... feel I was in a remote place, and hear the peace and quiet.” (44)

Another visitor, Matt from California, who came to Glacier NP with his father, said that

“Being remote was definitely one of the things I wanted; I like, you know, the wilderness, not the crowds.” (16)

Travis, an environmental advocate from Washington DC, who came to Montana on a business trip and decided to take a short trip to Glacier on his free time, was very explicit about the factors that are important for him when he travels to a national park:

“For me it’s being able to get away from people – if not when you are sleeping, at least when you are hiking or doing something.” (23)

This desire to escape, to get away from people and civilization is even stronger for backpackers - those visitors who go to backcountry and stay in the wilderness for the overnight and more, not only do day hikes. This can be confirmed by the words of John, a visitor from California who went backpacking for almost a week with his brother:

“I just love backpacking, to be out in the backcountry and be self-sufficient, and get away from people, and traffic, and cars and things. (Jim, his brother, adds: “cell phones”) Yeah, cell phones.” (48)

Amanda, a mother of 3 kids in her late thirties who was on a backpacking trip to Snyder Lake with her sister in law, was brief about that:

“I like it – that there is nobody else here actually.” (8)

Rick, a young traveler from Montana who went backpacking along Red Eagle trail together with his girlfriend from Arizona, explained why they decided to go to the backcountry:

“It was nice to get away from the crowds at the Going-to-the-Sun Road” (31),

and also emphasized that crowds were the only detraction from their park’s experience in the front country.

Antony, solo traveler from Florida, being on his fifth trip to Glacier NP, said:

“The more you see people every day, the more you get tired. I want to see more just trees, and streams, and waterfalls.” (10)

For these and other visitors whose primary motives were to escape, find solitude, peace and quietness in the park, happening upon other groups may ruin their experience. Often they were complaining that there were “too many people” in the park. For example, Max, a young fisherman that was travelling with his friend, was talking about the detraction from his experience:

“The people. Too many people. But I don’t know, I have not been here, I did not know, and I’ve got here and I was like “Holy, it’s like Yellowstone or something.” (30)

Zina, a young Californian girl who came to Glacier NP with her husband to celebrate their first anniversary, was not very happy about the number of people on Highline trail:

“It was very-very busy, and it was not so pleasant. I’m not a huge fan of tons of people for sure.. You know, when people are right behind you hiking, or people do not move over the same path, it’s gonna be frustrating.” (46)

Similar feelings were expressed by Travis about Highline trail and Alla about Avalanche Lake trail:

Travis: “I felt disappointed at first of Hidden Lake - to be on this trail that has so many people, the first half of it, I mean it was like a parade.” (23)

Alla: “Several times I’ve been up there, it’s been insane, just like a steady walk of people.” (27)

Some visitors were disappointed with the number of cars on the road:

(29) *Kara: "There were a lot of people, and it was tough, because it was very congested."*

Lenard: "The only thing I was a little disappointed with...we had to wait quite a while yesterday to get in through the gate." (4)

Alan: "I guess part of the problem it's, you know, the road gets charged with all people and that's a little bit tough, so.. I mean I wish there wasn't so much of that." (2)

Some people clearly stated that they did not expect Glacier to be so crowded:

Mike: "Well, yeah, I obviously did not expect it to be this crowded."(36)

Marta: "We came up around noon, and a couple [campsites] were already full. It really made me understand that wow, that is a really like a famous park, it's a national park. So we had to pass a couple of campsites. But I mean, to me... you just put things into perspective that "OK, don't expect that, because you're in a really popular place". Like don't... You cannot assume that everything is gonna be available any time, because there is a lot of people coming all over, so." (36)

Travis: "I was picturing it to be I guess a little less trafficy. So when I first stopped in Apgar village, it was such a traffic jam. And I was sort of... my heart sank because it was... it seemed really... it was just so crowded - and people, and tour buses, and people wandering around, and I just felt like "Oh no, this is more crowded than Missoula was, just a moment, this is not fun, this is not, you know." (23)

Alex: "I didn't realize it was gonna be so busy..." (26)

Toma: "And then just I guess the parking things. Like parking issues was kind of a negative thing - it was kind of surprise, I guess it's because I am not used to that. Where I typically go is just state parks, not as popular, not so many people all at once." (43)

Several visitors mentioned that Glacier seemed crowded for them, but they expected it:

Gleb: "Too many people. [he talks about the detraction from his experience]. But that's, you know, to be expected... I mean, because school starts up in another, you know, couple of weeks, so everybody is getting a vacation in." (39)

Ben: "Of course it's [Avalanche Lake Trail] one of the most popular trails in the park, so yeah, it's gonna be crowded." (40)

Maria: "I'm kind of used to it, so like in Denali it was pretty crowded – because you have all kind of to go along the main road to get into the park, and then a couple of other national parks.. All national parks I've been too."(50)

Andrew: "Down below I saw a bunch of people who were hiking in and out of the falls.. I mean, you know, it's a national park, so.. Any time I go to a national park I expect to see a lot of people on the trails, and that's totally OK." (35)

All these quotes suggest that a number of visitors perceive Glacier as a crowded place. However, others on the contrary mentioned that it had few people, they felt fine, and especially in comparison with other national parks Glacier is not crowded at all.

b) *“Not crowded”/balance / adaptation*

As many out-of-state and foreign visitors go both to Glacier and Yellowstone national parks when they come to Montana, they tend to compare these parks in terms of numbers of people (one of the examples – the above mentioned quote by Max (30). Several interviewees also compared Glacier with other popular parks that they have visited before, like Yosemite, Grand Canyon and others:

Victoria: “I’ve backpacking here since I was in my 20s, you know, on and off... And we just fell in love with it years ago, it’s just... It’s less crowded than so many of the other parks. I mean I’ve been all over. But compared to Yellowstone and some of the other parks... Rocky Mountain Park in Colorado... This is less crowded. Because we’re at the peak of the visitors right now, but my husband and I will come in May, and it’s almost like our own park, you know. Our park! You know, and we come back in September-October, and really, there are just so few people here. And that’s one thing I really like about it compared to some of the other places in the US that are too close to big cities. This is harder to access. You know, it’s not like Yosemite right outside the San Francisco, or Rocky Mountain near Denver, it’s just... It’s off the beaten path, and so I think fewer people come here.”(34)

Stasia: “And we like parks that are a little bit more out of the way with not quite as many people... Because we live in the East, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is just packed with people, it’s bumper to bumper traffic and you can’t move, and it’s just people everywhere. And even when we went to the Grand Canyon, that was beautiful, but there were quite a lot of people. And Yosemite – it was beautiful, but when we tried to get out, it was bumper to bumper traffic and so as we’ve come North – we just left Mt Rainer, and we’re finding fewer and fewer people and we like it. Yeah, I think the farther North you go, the fewer people you run into, and we appreciate that.” (3)

Morgan: “There are more mountains here than in Yosemite, and fewer people than in Yosemite, which is good. But they both are at the top of my list.” (14)

Other people, when talking about the things that they liked most of all in the park, mentioned “not many people” as one of the highlights:

Irina: “View, you know, the beautiful views, peaceful, not many people, you know; I don’t want to see people.” (7)

Even Avalanche Lake trail, which is obviously one of the most crowded trails in the whole park, was considered to be fine. It shows how judgmental personal assessments are:

Alan: "You know, I would say this trail [Avalanche Lake trail]...there were quite a few people, you know. Whereas in the morning I didn't see anyone. It didn't bother me with all the people, I mean a couple of times it was a little tough to get around people. In rally there is a lot of people, so this is nothing." (2)

Those people who had a chance to hike more remote trails (like Alla, referenced earlier, who was interviewed at Piegan Pass trail and talked about "a steady walk of people" at Avalanche in comparison with Piegan), used to talk about crowd issues at popular trails, whereas other visitors who actually confined themselves to famous trails only (like Cedars and Avalanche Lake, St Mary's Falls, Hidden Lake trails) often said that it was fine. Alan, who rode his motorcycle all the way from New York and visited a lot of different places on the way both in US and Canada, stayed in Glacier just for a couple of days, and by the time of the interview hiked only to Avalanche Lake. So he found it fine, especially if compared to Harley Davidson motorcycle rally. Obviously personal judgments also depend on the time of the day and the season of travel, but in this particular case Alan was hiking at around 4 pm, which is still considered to be a busy time.

An interesting observation was made by Sasha and Sam, backpackers travelling together:

Sasha: "Today it was nice to hear what the ranger was saying, but there was so many people.. It was nice to listen to them, but I kind of want to stay away from.. I don't know, I kind of want to stay away from people on a trail, but in campsites I like people be in the campsites.

Sam: "Yeah, I like being behind people rather than have people behind me, because I feel like they, I don't know, pushing me along, or whatever." (47)

It reveals that people perceive other visitors differently at different elements of the GTSR corridor. In this situation it was annoying to be among other people on the trail where probably one is looking for more interaction with nature and does not want to be "pushed along", but in the campsite the visitors wanted to have an opportunity to chat and feel that there were people around. The same idea was spoken by Ryan, a solo technical climber who deliberately chose extremely hard trails where almost nobody had been hiking before (he climbed Heavens peak, which he called "a real mountain"). He spoke with a lot of excitement and even with pride

about the route that he has chosen: *“Ha, has anybody in the history of this mountain been so foolish to attempt this route?”* which mostly deals with aspects of challenge discussed above, but at the same time shows that he really does not enjoy standard routes where other visitors can be seen. He was interviewed near Granite Park chalet, on his way to the lookout after doing the Loop trail, which he was not at all excited about: *“It was OK. But I mean who wants to get on top of that mountain? Forget it!”* It looks like he was hiking there just because he had some time, and he spoke about that trail with some sort of disdain. Speaking about personal relevance, other interviewees (Gail and Greg - 11, Tim and Tina - 15) referred to Loop trail as *“tough”*, *“strenuous”* and *“rather remote”*.

Ryan, on the other hand, later on talks about camping and his great desire to spend time with people, share dinner and campfire, and just chat:

“One thing is – I am all alone here; I mean yesterday I met this Italian couple, but unfortunately they were not camping. It would have been really great to go to a campground with them, and have a campfire, and I have wine in my car, and it would have been super to share it with them. So I was disappointed, I was looking for somebody interesting to camp with, and I drove through the campground just looking for somebody who looked interesting, and I was even thinking that if I saw a lonely motorcycle, I would even stop there, but I have not even seen a lonely motorcyclist. If I see these guys at the campground, I might stop and say “Hey, come on, I’ll pay your 5 or 10 bucks, you don’t mind to share the campground fee? And I will make a campfire for you guys, and I will even share my wine, and I even have Guinness left to share”. So that was my big disappointment. Last night I just didn’t find anybody interesting, you know, the great majority of people in campgrounds are, you know, young families, and people who would not appreciate the intrusion of some person like me. That was my little disappointment.” (49)

Other interviewees brought up similar notion of ambiguity. For example, Maria and Natalie – college friends – went backpacking because they *“did not want to worry about so many people around”* (they talked mostly about trails and car camping), but then said that *“meeting everybody and having dinner together”* at their backcountry campsite was one of the main highlights of their trip. Thus, the same person, regardless of the party he is travelling in (either alone or with others) sometimes wants to escape and not see anybody around, but other time is looking for the company and enjoys meeting people.

Several visitors were talking about the “perfect balance” that they found in Glacier:

Bob: "I think the more well-known trails tend to have more people. Like at Otokomi we probably saw 10 people during all day. Compared to doing Half-Dome in Yosemite, where you may be walk by 3000 people. You constantly go. You even do not say "Hi" to people. Because here everybody stops, you start chatting, you find out where people come from, and so it's just a nice break. It's almost a perfect balance here." (25)

Neal: "It's been nice because there happen people, so you know there are people around, but yet there are times when you feel like you're walking in the woods together too, so it was just us alone. So it's been a nice balance." (13)

Sam: "I like it. Because I don't like it when it's too crowded, or if you are the only one there. This is just the right amount." (47)

While some people speak about this balance in Glacier NP in general, in particular in comparison with other parks, others tend to create personal comfort within the park to find this balance, when they choose less popular trails for hiking, or prefer to hike early in the morning / late in the day to avoid the crowds. So they somehow adapt to the situation while seeking high quality experience and the balance for themselves. In literature this strategy is called "coping behavior" (Maning 1999), when recreationists alter their behavior in some ways in order to avoid crowding. There are three primarily forms of coping behavior: displacement, rationalization and product shift. Displacement, which takes place in the following examples, "involves spatial and temporal changes in use patterns" (Manning 2010, p. 111).

Garry: "No, no, not crowded at all [at Avalanche in the evening]. I like, you know, the peacefulness, it's very peaceful here. When we were over Logan Pass on Saturday, that was not so peaceful. I mean this construction brings a lot of people. This parking lot over the Logan Pass was crazy! So we decided not to stop there." (38)

Victoria: "And we picked... well, my husband and I have been there, and we picked some of the less travelled trails, we went to Triple Divide Pass just two days ago, and we saw less than 10 people the entire day. Just because you have to go up to Cut Bank, you know, it's just more a drive, we went up seeing that point of the Two Med area, it's just less crowded. So because we come here enough, we can kind of choose, we know where to go, we've been to so many hikes, so we'll just wait and do this other time where they are less crowded." (34)

Tom: "Glacier is really-really busy, and I think that... I guess it's probably good for the park, but personally I'd like more solitude. Because we've got here on the middle of the week, on Wednesday night, and we thought it might be a little bit quieter, but it still was really-really busy. This time of the year and all that. And again, we're doing this hike a little later in the day, it was definitely quieter, I'm glad we didn't do it earlier when it was super busy." (43)

c) *Right of access to everybody*

It was discovered that even if people were not very happy with visitor use numbers, many of them admitted that it is a national park, everybody should have an access, and it is not possible to blame other people that they want to enjoy it. It corresponds with the mission of National Park Service “to provide for the enjoyment of present and future generations” (NPS 2012), and many people understand it. Answering the question about the feelings regarding other people’s presence, the following statements were made:

Alla: “It’s fine. Because you want everybody to be able to enjoy this beauty...” (27)

Brenda: “You know, it was kind of crowded, but it was OK because it was very accessible to a lot of people, which is important.” (25)

Karen admitted that they were just one of the visitors, and anyway it was good that the park was accessible to everybody:

“May be just the number of cars, but really how can we comment on cars? I mean we have a car and we’re one of them, you know, so... The fact that it’s accessible meant that we could come.”(29)

Mila, a school teacher, appreciated the fact that there are a lot of opportunities for kids in the park, and actually for all kinds of people. The same point of view was expressed by several other interviewees (Kara - 29, Neal - 13, Tina - 15, Lera - 19) who talked about access of Glacier for old people, families with kids and disabled people which was definitely a good thing from their perspective.

Mila: “I was also very surprised by the amount of people. You know, I’ve done hiking in lots of different areas, and this is... there are more people here than I’ve seen in other places, and that’s just really good to see that people really want to be involved in nature and understanding of it, and are enjoying it, you know. And of all ages too! You know, we’ve seen little kids, we’ve seen the elderly walking with sticks, and I just think it’s great that there is lots of staff for everybody.” (21)

An interesting connection with deeper and more profound concepts could be made from these assumptions. People can partly sacrifice their comfort and tolerate other visitors in the park even if they would prefer less people, when they know that it brings about larger benefits to the

society and leads to health, happiness and education. Eventually it results in greater knowledge and understanding of nature, its greater appreciation, and positive changes in the society:

Sage: "You know, it's always can be crowded if you all end up in one spot. Let me tell you something which is probably more important. You look at these young kids around. If their parents take them out to parks and they take them to different places, they seem to have a whole different approach to humanity and people who they pass. Three quarters of the kids we see, will say "good morning", "hi". And you go to a city, and you can't even say "hello" to anybody. So people who bring their kids out here, have really got... getting them educated. And I think they have the same right to be here as I have."(1)

It was interesting to find out the opinion of frequent visitors to Glacier NP about the numbers of people that they see throughout the years. Those visitors who keep coming to the park, noticed that the number of people obviously has gone, which they were not always happy about. Peter, who was in Glacier NP five times and calls it his "church", notices "more and more people" there and regrets that it is getting so crowded. He has to get to the trails and campgrounds earlier in order to see fewer people and get a site. According to his words, the park has become competitive:

"You know, it's also hard to get a campsite, you have to go earlier and earlier. I want to be at 7 o'clock at Many Glacier to get a campsite.. So, it becomes more competitive. And I don't come here to be competitive".

He later expands on this topic and adds:

"More people, and more rude people. Less people who would say "hello" to each other. On a trail it's a different kind of a person, but there are a lot of people out there who never go to the trail, they just snapped their pictures, and are not very... I don't know... they are rude. It seems that they don't have respect for the people who are here, nor the animals who are here, nor the whole place. It's like Disney Land." (17)

Alicia, who grew up in Kalispell and has been coming to the park since her childhood, speaks about the difference with the previous visits:

"More people, there is more people. The shops are bigger, you know. It didn't used to be quite so... what's the word... so much advertising." (22)

She then continues with explaining how she feels about that:

"There is a 50/50 on it. I like it because tourism is our big... one of our big things here. If it wasn't for tourists, we wouldn't have an economy, and I like it for that. The only thing I don't like when they come here, and they fall in love here, and then they move from New York, California, or whatever, you know. And that's rich people, and Montana is not a rich state as you well know, we're pretty medium class people, and low class, so. You know, that raises our

taxes, where some of the old people would have to leave – you know, our local people. But other than that, it's what keeps us going – is the tourism, so. And you meet a lot of great people, I mean a lot of cool people.” (22)

This quote can serve as a transition to the next important dimension of human interactions – “visitor behavior”. Analysis of data and its interpretation suggested that there are a number of additional aspects other than just the actual numbers of people that influence the experience. Behavior of other people is one of them.

2. Visitor Behavior

a) Friendly and nice people / alike people / good to meet people

As it was noted above, the feelings of solitude, escape, peace and quietness are very important for many visitors of Glacier National Park – both for hikers and backpackers. These are one of their major motivations to come to this place, and visitors do not want other groups to interfere and destroy such feelings. However, for others, on the contrary, travelling to a national park is an opportunity to meet new people and socialize. In this case coming to a park is the same as travelling to any new destination which usually provides a chance to meet different people and interact. For example, Dan and his wife, who drove from Seattle in RV with their two dogs and camped at Rising Sun for several days, named “*meeting different people from all over the world*” (24) as one of the main highlights of their trip. Rita from Arizona also said that “*just seeing all the different types of people who come here from all over the world, from the people who work here to the people who visit*” (31) was very important for her. Another example: Maria, a young backpacker from New Jersey that was in the park with her college friend, in response to the question about the best part of her day said the following:

“I like just meeting different people from different walks of life who are all enjoying the same things that you're enjoying. And they are coming from different sections of the park, so you can talk to everybody about different things.” (50)

Interestingly, both Maria and Rita are backpackers, not just a hikers (which often means that they go to more remote areas), but still the presence of other people was desirable for them.

The same is true about Brian: his experience was somewhat in between day-hiking and backpacking as he spent two nights in Sperry Chalet – a very rustic historical house located 8 miles from the road in the wilderness which one can only access on foot. While explaining the reasons for coming to this chalet and sharing his impressions, he said:

“I met a lot of really good people from all over the countries being up at the chalet. We all ate dinner together. So, and they have a social hour in the evening, so you get to talk about your adventures, and you see different people each day, and they all are from all over the country, so that’s really nice, it gives you a really good perspective.” (44)

Although seeking for remote experience and hiking rather far from the main road, those visitors were eager and looking forward to interacting with other people. At first sight, some sort of ambiguity can be seen here, because those desires are rather contradicting. The same interviewees first spoke about the escape, *“the ability to hear the peace and quiet” (Brian -44)* and *“not dealing with other people who were annoying and wanted your parking spot” (Maria and Natalie - 50)*, but then they brought up this positive notion of *“meeting different people”* in the backcountry and hearing about their adventures. They might be rationalizing their experience. Probably it could also be explained by the fact that not all people will go to remote areas and in particular to the backcountry, and as long as you are there, human encounters are usually nice and become desirable:

Jim: “You know, like in most places when you pass the day hikers, it’s usually... you know, everyone in the backcountry is usually really great, and I think this was no exception. It’s like everyone at the backcountry is like... for all is really friendly, fun to hang out with, share the stuff – yeah, it’s really great”; John: “Interesting hearing about other people’s itineraries, where they come from, and where they’re going, and then their background. The people have been really enjoyable.” (48)

Sasha: “I think what is really neat though too is that it is so different atmosphere, because everybody seems really pretty happy about being out here, everybody is really friendly, we say “hi”, people will say “hi” back, and you know, we were sitting down with the other people at the camp, we had dinner together, and found out more about where people are from, what made them come out here, and kind of what we are doing now, but we did not record it. And it’s kind of comradery with people who are out here, and we are doing the same thing, and you know it’s not something that a lot of people will do, and so obviously people have an interest in it. And it’s to kind of chat with people who have somewhat of similar view of experience, and experience nature.” (47)

Usually, when you meet someone in a more remote area of the park, you know that you have something in common with these people (at least it is likely that all of you are fond of outdoors, adventures and challenge). But it is not necessarily true about meeting people in the front country areas and in visitor centers. Moreover, the number of people in the backcountry is usually less than in other zones simply because not everyone wants and is physically able to get there. It could be one of the reasons why human encounters for backpackers are more desirable, than for other park visitors. Rick and Rita, who first mentioned the crowds that detracted from their experience in Glacier national park, later on said that

“All people that we met in the backcountry were really nice – very personable and interesting.” (31)

In general, the majority of people interviewed (not only those in the backcountry), while talking about other people that they have met, emphasized overall friendliness. The phrase that *“everybody up there was very friendly and nice”* was repeated numerous times throughout the interviews. Here are just some of the examples:

Nori: “They all are very kind, and always say “hello” to each other, and are very nice” [he talks about comparison with Japanese parks]. (37)

Marta: “It was nice to say “hi” to everybody, everybody is nice, everybody is making sure they are on their own side, so that was nice.”(36)

Yan: “And I think it will change some attitude to a lot of things – how we treat nature, how we treat animals, how we treat people. It will be nice – everyone coming back, they say “hi”, “hello” – that was great, so friendly!” (42)

Irena: “Avalacnhe Lake was quite crowded. But everybody is very cheerful and well-behaved, and nobody is dropping litter.” (5)

Dina: “I don’t know... It’s been very... I mean it’s been positive, the people we’ve seen and met on the trails or, you know, in the lodge and staff, everyone seems polite, and friendly, and nice, and just respectful.” (9)

A lot of visitors mentioned that the friendliness of rangers and their willingness to help also was very important to them, and positively affected their experience.

Eric: “All of the park employees that we’ve encountered were extremely cordial and pleasant.” (33)

Natalie: “They’ve been super friendly, and it’s really nice.”(50)

Seva: "Everybody is very friendly and helpful, and they are doing a very good job for 4 months a year. Anything we would say, it's probably very minimum. Because they are really good, they are doing a great job. All people here – people at the gates, and rangers, seem to be better than average – they are very-very nice and knowledgeable." (32)

In fact, nobody has mentioned any rude behavior of rangers, but there were a number of comments about bad behavior of other visitors that detracted from the experience.

b) Bad behavior

As noted earlier, a lot of visitors mentioned that people were usually friendly and nice and had much in common with themselves, so in many cases they were eager to meet with them, and it did not detract from their experience. Rather, the behavior of certain individuals was often really disappointing and negatively influenced the experience.

Peter from Iowa, the park's frequent visitor, was very upset about "*rude people*" that he sees more and more often. Although Peter admitted that in a national park you should be ready to see other people, he was rather concerned about other visitors' behavior and manners, and got very upset that many people did not respect each other and were loud and demanding:

"I think it's just regret that there are a lot of people... a lot of people who don't really respect one another. They are not courteous. They do what they want. Like I was in front of that guy who was on a motorcycle... There was a guy driving a motorcycle, and he was on the back. And the guy on a motorcycle stopped about 12-14 times. No warning, no nothing. Just to take pictures."

"You know... I can't stand loud talkers. Especially once you can hear like a half of mile ahead of you, screaming at each other.. That's very undesirable." (17)

Interestingly, in Glacier NP rangers usually tell people to make noise in order to scare the bears away, but for some visitors it might be frustrating and annoying. Peter also seemed to be judgmental about other people's behavior and how they spend time in Glacier: "*Most people never go more than 50 feet from their car*". Then he explained his thoughts about this matter in more detail:

"You know, I was thinking the last couple of days, is that eventually these people will go there one time, and then they won't go again. Because they have to roll, and the trails can be dirty, there are no showers, you know there are lots of things... Women in particular will say "no", and their husbands will say "OK, let's go to Disney Land instead." (17)

He took it very personally, because Glacier National Park was so important to him. As Peter is a frequent visitor in the park, he was not indifferent to its future. He was convinced that this trend (*“more people, and more rude people, less people who would say “hello” to each other”*) will continue if park managers won’t deal with the issue. He suggested *“throwing out people who are too loud and too demanding”*. However, it is evident that “to throw out” people from a national park is not an easy task, and probably it is not what park managers want to do anyway. But it creates a real challenge for park staff: how to manage the area in such a way that all expectations are met, people have access to the park, but at the same time everybody gets high quality experience? Implications of this research for managers will be discussed in the next chapter.

Other people, who most likely did not take it so personally as Peter, still mentioned their frustration with “some jerks” when answering the question “What detracted from their experience?”

Morgan: “There was a couple of jerks... I was trying to take a picture of the waterfall, and these guys were getting on the rocks and climbed them – probably what they shouldn’t have done anyway. But that’s something that you probably can’t control. But that’s stupid.” (14)

Antony: “I had one bad experience here. A night before last, late, the campers on the spot next to me was a retired couple, and they came in late, and they had picked up these two hitchhikers – a girl and a guy from St Luis, Missouri, so they let them stay at their campsite, because they were staying in a camper, and they didn’t have any food, any water, so I gave the food, water, and invited for dinner, and they gave them breakfast, and then they wanted a ride to St Mary, so I drove them up to St Mary’s, and the girl got out, and she stole my bear spray and my camping pants from the back of the car. And her boyfriend was asking me for more food, so I was getting him more food, and as she was getting her packs out, she stole my bear spray and my camping pants. So that made me mad. I just hate that. So bad karma for them.” (10)

Brad: “I guess we were a bit frustrated with some people who weren’t hanging their food when they got to that campsites.” (45)

Sonya: “Oh, my Gosh! We were staying in St Mary’s, and there is a little bar – I don’t know which you call it, and they were so loud. On Wednesday night it fell like they were sitting out on a porch, it was so awful. And you couldn’t sleep. At first we thought that someone was having a horrific fight outside, and then we started realizing Oh, that’s supposed to be music! And it wasn’t very good. That was horrible. We expected it last night, but it didn’t happen, so we’re thinking tonight is gonna be the night it’s going to happen again. We were so exhausted, it just destroyed us. I was so tired, I was started to go to sleep, but...” (32)

Thus, in many cases not the presence of other people as such mattered for the experience, and not the exact number of other groups encountered. Rather, it was how people behaved: how they spoke, what they did, if they were friendly or rude. One person with bad manners (like those mentioned in the quotes above) could easily ruin the experience, while meeting several nice people that other visitors had much in common with, actually added to the experience. This should be taken into consideration while talking about management implications – probably, more educational programs are necessary in order to improve the behavior. A more detailed discussion about that will be provided later.

3. Internal Group Issues

It is important to understand that relationship between individuals in one group may also affect the experience. Sharing is a great part of the social, friendly atmosphere. When people live through the experience together, it encourages more interaction at all five stages of the experience. First, people may exchange information during the planning stage, together they go through the excitement of preparation, discuss various alternatives and come to a decision; then at the “travel to”, “on-site” and “travel back” stages they literally live together through every aspect of the experience; and then at “recollection” stage they recall what they saw, what they did, all the adventures, and share their pictures and stories with other friends/family.

As more than half of the interviews occurred with two or more people at a time, some party members tended to discuss with each other various aspects of their experience and shared their impressions – sometimes supporting each other’s opinion, sometimes arguing a little bit. Often it led to thicker descriptions of the experience.

Togetherness was actually one of the main reasons to come to Glacier NP for some interviewees. Thus, Maria and Natalie – two college friends that studied together, but now live in different states – were very excited to spend time with each other, and named it as the primary reason to be in the park:

Natalie: "Yeah... We haven't seen each other for a year. We're college friends. We always wanted to come here... And instead of just... kind of see each other at home... And I was really excited about spending time with her.

Maria: This is a way for rather than seeing each other at home.

Natalie: I think I really... wanted to spend time with her, and have a shared experience. We have not, yeah...we haven't done anything like this before." (50)

Julia and Amanda – two sisters in law that live close to each other, but are very busy with families and kids, do a backpacking trip together every year, in order to escape from everyday routine and enjoy nature. "*Spending time with my sister*" was named as one of the most important expectations of this trip.

Sam and Sasha – uncle and nephew – also do a trip together every year, they specifically travel to a national park and "*do like a 40-50 mile trip*". They seemed to be very close, Sam even said that "*we are both cut from the same mold in a lot of ways, my sister jokes that she is raising me, so we've got a lot of similarities, a lot of things that keep up close, you know*". Sasha then expands on this topic and explains why they travel together:

"Another thing for me – we get time to spend together which we normally don't have. It's the great part – we get to talk, and he and I live in different cities, so it's a great way for us to catch up, and just talk about really anything – you know, understand what's going on in our lives. And he is a photographer, and I learn how to. I would love to do it, and it's nice when we come out, I am like his little assistant. I try to pick up as much stuff as I possible. And every time we go out, there are new tips and tricks about what to do in this situation in order to get better photographs. He helps me on that. And it's just all around – good time.

And that type of thing I think is really... as far as our bond together, and how close we are, I think that really helps. We have that common that we want to see the world and we see the world in a lot of same views."(47)

The "*comradery*" was named as the primary reason for coming to Glacier by four ladies at Piegan Pass, and Dick and Dina (mother and son) referred to it while speaking about their main impressions about this trip:

Dina: "I just think so far it has been an amazing experience, and good for us. I mean we just spent time together and talked and talked and talked about all kinds of stuff, so that part of it has been really good too." (9)

4. *Travelling Alone*

While sharing the experience was a big deal for some people, others were travelling alone – either on purpose or because they did not have company.

Alicia, who lost her daughter last year, was deliberately seeking the opportunity to be alone, “to be alone with God”:

Alicia: “Yeah... Just... Well, for all reasons. I do have a busy life, I’ve been raising my 3 grandchildren for 6 years, and my daughter died a year ago, it’s been really hard, and it’s.. Yeah, it’s just nice to come up and be alone with God, and my thoughts, and, you know, nobody hollering that... And being alone with my thoughts, being able to talk to my daughter, you know. The aloneness.” (22)

Escaping from the everyday life and being independent is what Alan, the motorcyclist, is looking for when he usually travels:

Alan: “Well. Ok. I live in Manhattan which is a very busy place, and being in Manhattan apartment – relatively small and it’s me and my wife, and two kids, two teenagers. You know, we’re always around people, so when I get away, I like to really get away. But I think also what I like is I like to do what I want, when I want.” (2)

Flexibility is very important for him, he even emphasizes it through his license plate:

Alan: “When you’ll have to be in a group of people, and you’re subject of the time, and I like.. Part of the reason I’m taking this trip by myself, I like to do what I want and when I want. Did you notice my license plate? What’s the words, did you notice? “Alone one!” You see? ... That’s a joke that I kind of have it here... A lot of motorcycle people like to ride in groups, and I like to ride alone because people who’re riding in groups, they stop and they get to talk, and instead of talking about what they’re gonna do I’d rather go out and do it.” (2)

Although there are certain advantages of travelling alone, Alan admits that there are also some difficulties associated with it:

“But then it gets tough... you know, the only thing that is getting a little tough is that you know you’re on your own, and when you want to go for dinner, it’s nice to have somebody. You know, I sit in the bar, I talk to people.” (2)

This notion of flexibility and independence also sounds in the words of Dana, when she talks about her feelings regarding travelling alone:

“Well, I think it’s interesting travelling alone. And sometimes you feel – oh, what am I doing? Because you see everyone travelling together. But it’s a special feeling. And I’ve travelled alone a lot. Sometimes I like it, sometimes I don’t. Or sometimes I like it less, but. There are not always people available if you don’t have the family. And still there is a way to experience this is just to do it by yourself. I mean I am gonna meet with my friend in a week, but..

I've always had it in my life, and I'm pretty independent, and I'm learning more and more how to do it, so..." (41)

Maybe she would prefer to travel with company, but she does not have a family, and this is the only way to do that. For her it is also some kind of a challenge, because she has got a chronic illness and is lame in one leg. Alex, another interviewee, was hiking alone too, because he arrived to Glacier earlier than the rest of the family:

"Well, I guess I prefer to travel with my friends... But being on a family trip, and get here earlier than some people, you know, I had to take advantage, so I don't mind hiking alone. People are really friendly." (26)

Both Dana and Alex seemed to feel fine about it, although being alone was definitely not the main reason for them to come to Glacier. Besides, they spoke about some bear concerns, which will be discussed in the next section.

5. Detraction from the feeling of remoteness

One special theme was brought up by several interview participants, which is closely connected with "Motivations and Benefits", but is related to human interactions, and in particular to technology which takes away from the experience that people are seeking in Glacier National Park. As shown earlier, for many park visitors it was very important to escape from everyday pressure, feel that they were far from civilization, and "hear the peace and quiet". However, sometimes cell-phones, helicopters, and other people in the campgrounds prevented the visitors from experiencing that. They named it as one of the main detractions:

Brian: "And... and the other thing that took away from the remoteness of the experience was the fact that I've got a cell phone signal up there. At half way between the Sperry – between the chalet and the glacier. So I stopped and called my mom."

Brian: "Between the other detractions were the helicopters. So it was, kind of, you know, the wilderness, and every 15 minutes, you know, there is a helicopter is coming over the mountain, and, you know.. I know many people can't see the park the other way, but it does take away, you know.. And at the chalet itself they have to keep everything historical. Well, you know, and you would think, how historical are the helicopters? You know, and... why are they such furious when it comes to the chalet, but when it comes to the helicopters, that's OK? You know, maybe they should limit morning or evening hours, or do something to restore the peace and quiet to the park." (44)

Natasha from Canada was very disappointed with helicopters. Several times throughout the interview she named them as one of the things that negatively impressed her. She did not expect it:

“The helicopters flying over every 10 minutes. Helicopters are always flying over back and forth all day, and it really kind of detracts from the wilderness feeling in the park. The Canadian national parks don’t allow the public to fly helicopters over, so you don’t have sightseeing trips in helicopters, it’s not allowed. They can if they are counting caribou, or something like that, though have a ranger, a naturalist flying over with.” (12)

It was also interesting to analyze how different people evaluated the distance between the backcountry campsites, and how it affected the feeling of remoteness. For Moritz, a young fisherman, it did not provide a remote feeling because of other people around.

“Well, they had two other sites right next to yours, and then you get a one spot to cook at, so we cooked at the same spot, so. I mean you’re not really getting a remote feeling, as you are next to two other campsites.. Maybe it should be like one on the far side of the lake, another one in the middle, and one on the other side, or something like that, I don’t know.”(30)

However, Julia and Amanda, sisters in law who were backpacking at Snyder Lake, said that the fact that there are 2 more campsites close to them did not take away from their experience because *“they have them nice and spread out too. They are far enough away from each other.”*

Summary of “Human Interactions” Dimension

Human interactions in a national park and their perceptions by different visitors are very important questions when we talk about protected area management. The majority of interviewees somehow touched upon this topic, and the analysis of data revealed rather diverse aspects of it.

When traveling to Glacier NP, a lot of people look for solitude, peace and quietness, and prefer not to see and hear other groups around. Glacier provides excellent opportunities for that as 95% of the park is wilderness (Layman 199). However, for some visitors traveling to a park, like traveling to any new place, is an opportunity to meet new people and socialize. This is true especially for the backcountry areas, where visitors usually meet people with whom they have much in common, and who are in most cases are nice and friendly. Interestingly, sometimes

these experiences (escape and solitude on the one hand, and meeting new people on the other hand) are combined for one person at one time.

As far as perception of crowding is concerned, some people found Glacier too busy, sometimes unexpectedly busy, others said that it was totally fine, especially in comparison with other national parks that they have visited. A number of people spoke about the perfect balance that they experienced in Glacier. Coping behavior such as displacement was sometimes revealed, when visitors chose to hike less populated trails or do their hikes early in the mornings or later in the day in order to adapt to the situation and be satisfied with their experience. In any case all perceptions of use numbers seemed very judgmental, and while some visitors spoke about certain trails as “busy”, others found them “remote” and “not crowded at all”. In addition, the same person may perceive other visitors differently at different elements of the GTSR corridor: thus, encounters with other groups can be undesirable on the trails, but enjoyable at campsites.

It was discovered that even if people were not very happy with visitor use numbers, many of them admitted that it is a national park, and everybody should have an access, especially if it leads to positive changes in the society.

It is possible that not the presence of other people as such and not the size of the groups encountered matter, but rather the behavior of visitors plays the crucial role. If people are polite and respect each other, meeting with them can become a positive experience regardless of the number of people met. Vice versa, those visitors who are loud, demanding and rude can negatively influence the experience of other people (even if there are just few of them). In general, the majority of interviewees characterized most of the visitors met and rangers as “nice and friendly”.

Internal group issues may affect the experience as well. Several visitors mentioned “togetherness” as one of the main reasons for coming to the park, and sharing the experience with their friends or family members, spending this time together was quite important. The notion of experience as “multiphasic” is especially uncovered here, as people are making plans

regarding their travel long before their trip (sometimes months and even years before), and together they live through this “anticipation” phase of the experience when they discuss it and make plans. Then, during the “recollection” phase they remember all their impressions, feelings, and actual experience that happened at “travelling to”, “on-site” and “travelling back” phases.

Other people, on the contrary, enjoyed travelling alone, because it provided opportunities for solitude and escape, and offered flexibility and independence. However, sometimes they felt lonely and were pursuing communication with other visitors, especially at campgrounds.

Technology, such as cell-phones and helicopters, were named as a factor that detracted from the feelings of remoteness, peace and quiet; for some visitors it was an unexpected disappointment in a national park.

All that has certain implications for park managers: reasonable visitor management strategies and regulations are necessary in order to mitigate possible negative impacts on the experience, find the balance between different expectations of visitors, safety and resource protection, and provide high quality visitor experiences for everybody. The next chapter provides some recommendations regarding these strategies.

Managerial Influences

Three categories that were discussed above are mainly social dimensions of visitor experiences, although they incorporate several biophysical elements as well. However, it was revealed that the experience is also influenced by other factors, which can be attributed to managerial dimensions (Table 2, in the beginning of this Chapter). A detailed analysis of these factors is beyond the scope of this research, but it is necessary to mention them. As noted earlier, biophysical, social and managerial dimensions of the experience are often closely interconnected and influence one another. Thus, bear safety issues that are so important in Glacier NP are related to the desire of many visitors to see more people around, and influence their perception of

visitor density. Among other factors that have an impact on the experience are road conditions, trail conditions, shuttles, information, restrictions and regulations, accommodation facilities, restaurants, and cleanliness.

1. Bear Safety

a) "It's good to see other people around" / "Not familiar with bears"

Glacier National Park is a special place, one of its main attractions, and at the same time one of its dangers, are bears. It is what distinguishes Glacier from many other national parks of the country and of the whole world. Official website of the park states that "with over 700 miles of trails, Glacier is a hiker's paradise for adventurous visitors seeking wilderness and solitude" (NPS 2012). It also states that "Glacier is home to both black bears and grizzly bears. While seeing one is often the highlight of a visit to a park, proper visitor behavior in bear country is necessary" (NPS 2012).

Almost everywhere in the park there are warnings about bear activity, visitors are encouraged not to hike alone, make noise, and have a bear spray all the time. At the visitor centers, during interpretation talks and ranger-led hikes visitors constantly hear about the potential risks, there are many postings on the information desks and the trees about bear activity, how not to surprise a bear and what you are supposed to do if attacked by a bear. The majority of people that visit Glacier, therefore, are very well aware about the presence of bears there, and that they are in the "bear country".

Many interviewees were quite concerned about their safety even if they wanted to be in a remote place far from civilization, they preferred to know that there were some other people around.

Natalia: "And people here... Running into people – it feels nice, it feels like safer to have that people around." (50)

Melissa: "Of course knowing that there are bears, and it's nice knowing that there is a lot of people around." (21)

Andrew: "Well, since I was by myself, I was a little.. Down below I was a little worried about bears, I was constantly, you know, clapping my hands, and singing out, so. Anytime I hike by myself I get a little weirded out by that." (35)

Neal: "Because of the different bear warnings, it's nice to know that there are other people along the path. For example, it's nice to know people walk past us, and if something is coming on, they will encounter it, and they will be able to warn us, so it's nice to have people." (13)

This is especially true about visitors from the East Coast and other countries for whom bears are something new that they are not familiar with. Katie and Kevin from Massachusetts on the question "What detracted from your experience?" answered:

Katie: "I don't know, I think being from the East Coast and not being familiar with bears when we are in bear places".

Kevin: "Especially coming down, because we were coming down pretty quickly.. On the East coast there is absolutely nothing that can kill you in terms of wildlife. We don't have anything - no snakes that can kill you, no spiders, no anything, no large predators or mammals, so when we go... To come out here where there are things that can attack you and kill you - it's new to us."(18)

Nicole and Charles from France shared their feelings and their big concerns about bears in the following way:

Nicole: "Not too many [people], because we are afraid of bears, so it's a good thing to have people on the trail

Charles: It's difficult to cope with this thing, because we don't have the practice of bears, and we don't know what.. if it's really danger, no, I don't know.. It's not so easy to... We can see a lot of people with bear bells and bear spray... Because we hiked in a lot of countries, and I don't know.. And it seems to me very ... very... a big thing. We always... We have our daughters. And we can't do as there is no bears, because it's a constant warning – anywhere, anywhere, there is bears, bears, bears.

Nicole: So we don't know if we can do a day hike because we don't know If there is a danger or not, so...

Charles: And we came from Yellowstone, where there was a tragedy with a bear on 6th of July, yeah, and each campground says about that, and so I am not very confident." (20)

This feeling of danger and bear fear may have an influence on people's plans and prevent them from doing what they were hoping to do in the park. Sometimes it took away from their experience. For example, Travis from Washington, D.C. was not able to go to the backcountry and do more remote hikes as he would have liked, because "of the bear thing that was looming large". When he talked about his motivation to get away from people and how important it was for him, he said:

“I was sort of able to do that, a little bit on these hikes, but I did not want to do it too much, because I was afraid of an attack, so I hope, you know, if that’s a very real fear, than it justifies it. But that’s what I think took away a little bit, because... you’re not really getting away from it all when you are down here, because it’s so popular. And even on the hikes I am avoiding doing that because of the wildlife fear.” (23)

For Zach and Zina, as well as for Dana, “the bear thing” influenced the choice of the trails that they picked up (although without this fear they would have probably chosen other, less populated trails):

Zach and Zina: “We prefer trails with not so many people, but up here, you know, in the bear country which we’re not familiar with, the more people the better I suppose. At home we obviously pick trails that are not highly populated.” (46)

Dana: I wanted to come to the highest point of the road because I like being in the high places. And I wanted to take – what does this trail called? The Ridge trail? [Elena – Highline trail?] Yes, Highline trail.. And I don’t know, I just... Somebody told me that there were a lot of people on that trail, so I just thought there won’t be any bear problems. I think it [Hidden Lake trail] is a crowded trail. And normally I like to hike in less crowded trails, but so many people talked to me about the grizzly bears. So I thought “Well, OK, I will just go where there are other people.” (41)

b) *“They overdo bear thing”*

Talking about bear warning, it is interesting to provide a comment from Nick, a visitor from Bozeman who came to Glacier with his wife. He clearly stated that in his opinion “the bear thing” is a bit exaggerated, and it does indeed prevent people from doing what they want to do in the park and cannot enjoy their experience:

“This is just my opinion. And may be this because we’re from Montana... But I think they... they overdo the bear thing to the point where people... sometimes people cannot enjoy the hike because they get the feeling that every 50 feet they may run into bear... And we were talking... we spend a lot of time in the Caribbean and other places diving and snorkeling, and they would mention that may be there is a shark around, seen a couple of weeks ago or something like that, be careful, but they focus more on the enjoyment, and less the constant intensity. And here it just... it feels like... people seem so concerned that they will have a hard time having fun on the hikes. So that’s one thing. I think – yeah, there are bears, but they may just say “here is the way to, you know, take care of it, have fun”, and not hammer so much. And there is only like 400 bears in the entire park, not like they are every 200 feet.” (28)

So bear safety is definitely one of the factors that influence visitor experiences and visitor behavior in Glacier National Park.

2. Road conditions

Road conditions were mentioned by some people as detracting from their experience. They talked about the traffic congestion, waiting time because of the construction, unclear road signs in some areas, unclear information about the road closures, and other detracting aspects. This is not surprisingly as the road is being re-constructed now, and traffic delays up to 40 minutes do occur. However, most of the sampled interviewees admitted that they understand why this is happening, it is expected, and said that they were O.K. with that.

Tom: "Construction is a bit annoying, but that's to be expected." (43)

Dana: "I wasn't quite happy about the road construction, but it didn't bother me that much. It's just kind of a long drive, you have to wait a lot. But not that bad." (41)

John: "I think the biggest drawback for me was maybe the road traffic. But I mean that wasn't really bad because you could stop and check out the views, and there is lots of traffic where I live too, and this is just part of being in the mountains in summer time." (48)

3. Shuttles

Shuttles were mentioned both as a positive and negative experience. Many visitors were happy to use a shuttle in order to alleviate the traffic and not to drive themselves along the narrow and sometimes dangerous Going-to-the-Sun road; they also appreciated the possibility to facilitate one way hike because of the shuttles (the examples were Highline trail, Piegan Pass and Siyeh Pass trails, Sun Point trail).

Katie: "And we were actually remarking about how awesome it was that it made a hike that would have been out of reach for us totally doable. Because, you know, without the shuttle it would have been pretty impossible." (18)

Peter: "When I can [I use it]. Sometimes – when I am over in Avalanche campground and I want to come over here, the shuttle does not work for me, because I want to camp over here. But when I can take the shuttle, I will take the shuttle. I don't... I am not really in... If I can avoid it, I am not really into parking – it is really hard to find a place to park. And anyway, you know it's just simpler." (17)

Alla: "Shuttles are awesome, usually I use it, it's a great thing. Usually if you're going from a hike, like at this point – if we went up and did Siyeh Pass, you'd had to park down here, so you take the shuttle system from there down to your car, or you know, different spots." (27)

However, several visitors mentioned the waiting time, inability to get on the shuttle because of too many people, and unclear shuttle schedules, as something they were disappointed with:

Alla: "Yeah, they were great. There is almost not enough. You sit there and wait, and they are almost always full. So they could actually use more. Like 5 or 6 buses go by, and they are full, you have to wait a long time to get to the bus. We've actually hitched instead of waiting for the shuttle, because they were all full as they were going by." (27)

Victoria: "So the shuttles, you know... it can be frustrating if you come off a hike, and you want to get on a shuttle to get back to your car, and it's been a long day, and shuttle after shuttle comes by and they are full." (34)

Rick: "Yeah, we would have liked to have... spent a day on GTSR, just getting off and on, but it wouldn't been possible, because they have half-an-hour to an hour waiting." (31)

4. Trail conditions

Trail conditions were also among the factors that mattered for the experience. Almost everybody admitted that they were "excellent" and "perfect", and made them enjoy the hiking.

Tina: I think the trail conditions are really good. And we went to the trail of Cedars, and that was really nice. Because a lot of parks, I know it's a challenge to have something that is really accessible, like that. And that seemed like really, just very accessible to anyone who want to go. And that is a really nice thing to have. You know, people like strollers, with wheelchairs, you know, there is a wide variety of people who can use it.

Brenda: They [trails] are great, fantastic! Well-marked. Somebody has done a hard work to get them ready for all this.

Travis: I think the scenery, the hike, the trails are well maintained, and well-marked, I appreciate that, I think that's important. So yeah, they were good. They were the highlights.

But some of the visitors found the signage and trail markers rather confusing (for example, at Victoria Falls and Gunsight Pass trails, and at Red Eagle campsite), which resulted in some negative emotions. Some people mentioned that they would have preferred to have more interpretive signs on the trails because they were curious to know more about the natural processes and "what had happened there" (e.g. at Avalanche Lake trail).

Bella: "Just the difference between Red Eagle Foot and Red Eagle Head. I mean we've made the reservation for Red Eagle Head, but we got to red Eagle Foot, and I was really tired, and we didn't realize they were different. So we hung our bear bags, and we found a site, and then we realized we were at the wrong place, so we had to pack everything up and walk another half a mile down the lake, I was not happy about that at all". (45)

Nora: "Well, I've just mentioned the markings of the trails which is a little hard.. After parking lot if they would have mentioned that the trail is this way, that would have been nice.

Neal: And I think the other trails are marked really well.

Nora: Yeah, that was kind of surprise that this one [Victoria Falls trail] wasn't marked as all others." (13)

5. Restrictions and regulations

A number of visitors spoke about the regulations, mainly regarding backcountry permits and campfires. The fact that Glacier NP is such a popular place brings about a fear of not getting a permit; some visitors mentioned that they were really concerned about their itinerary because of the uncertainty related to permits:

Natallie: "We had reserved a site at Fish Creek – it is the only one which you can reserve, or there are two of them I guess... And we were hoping - we reserved it for two nights – we were hoping to get a backcountry permit starting Sunday morning. But we've got in a bit later that we wanted to, and we didn't know if we get the area we wanted... We did not know if we'd be able to get a backcountry permit.

Maria: I know they did backcountry permits... like 9 months in advance you can reserve it, but there is a lot of people who don't plan trips 9 months in advance." (50)

Amanda: "I was wondering how the heaven to get a permit at the backcountry place, but that was actually fine, it went out smooth, and they were very nice and informative, and it didn't take us as long as I thought it would take. So it wasn't bad at all. The movie actually that you need to watch was fine." (8)

Restrictive regulations on making fires at the backcountry campgrounds were not always understood by visitors, some of them expressed their little disappointment with that. One of the visitors mentioned that despite of the regulations, he *"made a little discrete fire, and had a really nice and beautiful time"* (Ryan - 49).

Andrew: "You know, the only thing that's a little.. in any way detracting, just a little bit, is not being able to have a campfire at the backcountry campsites, but at the same time it is not gonna stop me or my two friends from going to any particular national park." (35)

Amanda: "Regulations. There are a lot of regulations here, and we know that that's important. In terms of like no fires here, we can't quite understand it... I don't understand why. In this particular campsite. it would be nice, it would scare away all the bugs I think." (8)

6. Information

Information was important for many visitors. Such factors as timely, detailed and comprehensive advice from rangers; high quality interpretation talks that are compliant with their interests and curiosity; interpretive signs; variety of topics that are covered at the visitor centers; and user-friendly website where they can find all the details to plan their trip, were named by the sampled interview participants.

Nick: "The other thing that is very important to me is the interpretation. It's nice to have all these... The interpretive talks at night are really well informed and interesting, so we go to those every night – the ranger talks.... There are also more interpretive signs that used to be 10 years ago. I remember I used to come here when I was 10 years old, and there were hardly any signs at all. So now there are lot of interpretive signs that tell you about the glaciers, and tell you about why things are where they are, so the more of those the better! So it's being able to understand what's going on, it makes it a much richer experience." (28)

Neal: "One of the other highlights... Sunday night when we came up, we noticed they were having... A ranger was running, or a volunteer was running a night program to see the stars. On Sunday night we saw it was very clear, so we thought we would take advantage of it, because we didn't know what the weather would be like later in this week. That was spectacular to see the night sky, and he had two big telescopes out and you could see different galaxies, and he was very knowledgeable so he was able to point things." (13)

Lack of the information, confusing information and not very professional information sometimes took away from their experience.

Peter: "Also to have... have rangers who... who have answers. Also to have... If they are going to do a program, I would like to have a program that has quality. I think that in the last few years I really felt that the ranger programs were fifty-fifty in terms of good quality. And I was thinking about the one last night. A very nice young girl. But!! Everything was "like". Like the wildlife, like they do this, like that, like-like, like-like, and... Call me super official, but it drove me crazy." (17)

Vice versa, interesting interpretation talks, good advice and help from rangers, comprehensiveness of information at the visitor centers seemed to enhance the experience.

Sasha: "Yeah, the rangers who work in the national parks I think they really make a big difference because it happened here, it happened... pretty much in every place we've been we've run into somebody who said "you know, this is a really cool campsite, and if you just camp here, or you do this, or there is a nice little trail if you see it." So they listen to what we are planning, but then also they add with their experience things that can enhance what we are doing, and really make our time in the park special. And I think that really makes a difference." (47)

7. Accommodation facilities and restaurants

Accommodation facilities and restaurants were also among the factors that had an impact on the experience. Interestingly, several visitors talked about hotels that they were staying at, or where they ate, even if they were located outside the park, or happened to be prior to their visit. But they definitely affected their experience, for some people it was very important. It brings up the notion that visitor experience cannot be limited to a particular setting and a period of time (for example, number of days in Glacier), it should be considered in a broader context – both spatially and timely, which confirms the complex and multifaceted nature of the experience.

Some visitors expressed dissatisfaction with the overall conditions of the hotels, or with the difficulty to reserve a room, or get a campsite, during the peak season:

Luck: “The lodging. East Glacier Lodge... We’re paying a fair amount of money to stay there, it’s an old-old lodge, but it’s not been kept up very well. The curtains are falling down, and the space is very small, it’s very-very crowded, and it’s no place to keep your clothes, so that’s been a detraction.” (6)

Irvin: “We don’t appreciate that for example, from looking on the Internet we didn’t appreciate that we could have stayed perhaps in McDonnald Lake Lodge or in some of those cabins or perhaps that have a motel, so we’re staying at Whitefish – yeah, Whitefish is a nice place, but I would have preferred to be right here in the park.” (5)

Mike: “I have not been to many national parks. I would say just availability of campsites. I mean if we came here, and you have to go campsite, after campsite, after campsite, trying to find a spot, all that is pretty disappointing.” (36)

In relation to restaurants, some people were talking about the importance of serving natural, healthy food, because it occurs in a national park.

Bob: “The only thing that I would like to see improved – and I know it’s not necessarily the Park Service – but the food and menus in our lodges, it would be great if it was more some vegetables, and the food quality is a bit fresher and better.

Brenda: Because it’s the natural place, and the food is processed, it’s cafeteria food. Otherwise everything has been fabulous.” (25)

8. Cleanliness

Overall cleanliness of Glacier NP, and in particular cleanliness of bathrooms and campgrounds, were mentioned by a number of visitors as a factor that positively affected their

experience. Sometimes they compared it with other national parks which were not as clean as Glacier.

Linda: "Yeah, and the park is accessible and very clean, everything has been very clean and just been nice – all the, you know, public restrooms, and things at the trailheads, and all the trails are really clean so far, and that is.... just adds something." (4)

Irina: "Like if you compare to California, it's crowded, and not that clean. Everything is clean and nice here." (7)

Noa: "I don't want to see any trash on the trail... It's very beautiful, very convenient, and it's not dirty at all. Even in campgrounds it's very clean." (37)

Dina: "It's hard to improve the perfection. It's so clean, there is no garbage." (9)

Phil: "The cleanest park I have ever experienced in my life. Seriously. Some parks have, you know interesting matters. Facilities can be sometimes...not usable, and that's a problem." (16)

Summary of "Managerial Influences" Dimension.

Visitor experiences are impacted by a number of managerial factors.

Bear safety is a big deal in Glacier National Park. A lot of warnings about bears make people feel concerned about them, and sometimes it leads to the limited experience, when visitors are afraid to hike more remote trails and choose areas that may not necessarily be their first priority if there were no bears, or not so much attention was paid to the safety issues. There is also an opinion that park managers overdo "the bear thing" a little bit which constraints the enjoyment of the park. The willingness and desire to see other people in the park could also be partly explained by the fact that Glacier National Park is a rather "risky" area. Presence of other visitors in many cases brings about the feeling of safety.

Among other managerial factors are road conditions, trail conditions, shuttles, information, restrictions and regulations, accommodation facilities, restaurants, and cleanliness.

Chapter V: Summary, Management Implications and Future Research

What can we learn from this?

In the first part of the thesis, four main questions were listed that focused and guided the research:

- 1) What are the primary dimensions of visitor experiences in the GTSR corridor of Glacier NP as described by visitors themselves? How the experience is perceived by visitors?
- 2) Are there any common patterns and trends? What are the impacts on the experience?
- 3) How do the desired experiences in the GTSR corridor match up with the actual experiences?
- 4) Which management actions will best enable those desired conditions and experiences?

These questions were motivated by the desire to get a better understanding of visitor experiences along the key corridor of Glacier NP under current conditions.

The first question was addressed in the 4th chapter, where various dimensions of the experiences were identified and described. Through conducting a number of in-depth interviews with various visitors of the GTSR corridor, and their subsequent analysis and interpretation, several themes and subthemes of visitor experiences have emerged.

The second question is related to impacts on the experience, common patterns and trends. It was revealed that there is no single story and combination of the identified dimensions; every person had his/her own unique experience. However, some common patterns do exist. Similar aspects of the experience were combined into three major dimensions: “Glacier as a Unique Setting”, “Motivations and Benefits”, and “Human Interactions”. All of them have a discussion about various impacts on the experience. Aspects that are associated with managerial influences on the experience were combined into the fourth dimension.

The third question asked about the desired experiences and how they match up with actual experiences. In general, it is possible to say that they match quite well; often interview

participants stated that their experience in Glacier NP exceeded their expectations, and they totally got what they were looking for. Sometimes respondents did not know what to expect. Sixteen main motivations and benefits were revealed that visitors were seeking and gaining in Glacier; some of them (such as escape, peace and quiet, solitude) were gained only to some extent due to a number of perceived detractors (too many people, bad behavior; cell-phones and helicopters, bear safety issues, etc); others were gained unexpectedly (for example, humility, re-thinking of life).

The fourth question touches upon proposed management actions. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, and in particular incorporating the revealed experience typologies into the zoning scheme of Glacier NP, is suggested for better planning and management. The experience typologies are described in the next section of this chapter.

Some general thoughts about the findings of this study are as follows.

The research has made an empirical contribution to the notion that visitor experiences are multidimensional, multisensory, multiphase and dynamic. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which is shaped by many factors and interconnected with other aspects of the trip and the whole life of an individual.

For many visitors Glacier is a unique place. They have certain emotional attachment to it through their memories about the events that happened here in the past, or just through the incredible beauty that generated these special emotions. It is “the favorite place on Earth”, “the love”, “the secret place” and “the church”. There are many things that are special about this place – a variety of its landscapes, its “fabulous beauty”, “magnificent views”, “grandness” and “vastness”; numerous natural features such as unique smells, sounds, colors of mountains and water, closeness to wildlife, wildflowers, etc. Several interview participants found in Glacier “the perfect balance” between the “pristine” and “wild” conditions and accessibility – something that is special about this national park and different from others that they have visited. For many

of the visitors there is no replacement of this setting, they keep coming back here throughout the years, sometimes on their very special occasions (anniversaries, memorable dates).

It was revealed that interview participants had different reasons and motivations to visit this place, and benefits that they were seeking varied a lot. For many visitors it was escape and remoteness, learning and challenge; some were looking for solitude, peace and quiet, exercise and energy, adventure, fun and entertainment, inspiration and humility; others wanted to rethink their life, renew, recharge, become more involved and intimate with nature. The Recreation Demand Hierarchy (Driver and Brown 1978) suggests that while engaging in a variety of activities in particular settings people can get opportunities for various experiences that then bring about certain outcomes for themselves and for the society in general. Participation in concrete activities in Glacier NP setting fulfilled their motivations and provided opportunities for multiple potential benefits that people were seeking and gaining. Those benefits can be evaluated on an individual scale, and on a much broader scale when people were talking about health, happiness and education of the whole society. The overall level of satisfaction from the trip partly depended on how the desired experiences matched up with the initial expectations, and in general was quite high for the visitors sampled for this study.

Analysis of the dimensions that fell into the “Human Interactions” category revealed a number of impacts on the experience. Crowding was one of them, it took away from the experience of some people (they found the park unexpectedly busy and not as remote as they thought). However, it was not always like that. The carrying capacity framework discussed above suggests that there is a straightforward relationship between the number of people encountered during the trip and the quality of the experience. The findings of this research showed that although sometimes this relationship exists (some people were saying that the more people they see, the worse experience they get), other times the number of encounters did not take away from the experience quality; some encounters actually enhanced the experience. For

many interview participants travelling to Glacier NP was an opportunity to meet new people all around the world, and especially people with whom they had much in common.

It was discovered that in many cases the behavior of visitors was much more important than the presence of other people or the size of the groups encountered. Meeting with “nice and friendly” people became a positive experience, while seeing and hearing visitors who are “rude”, “loud” and “demanding” turned out to detract from the experience. It was also true about the rangers. In general, the majority of interviewees characterized most of the visitors and rangers in Glacier NP as “nice and friendly”.

Internal group issues affected the experience as well. “Togetherness” was one of the main reasons for coming to the park for some visitors, and sharing the experience with their friends or family members, spending this time together was quite important. For many of them the Glacier experience started much earlier than the actual trip, when they made plans and evaluated various alternatives for their travel in Glacier.

Travelling alone, on the contrary, was important for other visitors. It provided more opportunities for flexibility and independence that they valued, as well as for solitude and escape. But sometimes, especially at campgrounds in the end of the day, they felt lonely which detracted from their experience.

Technology, such as cell-phones and helicopters, also had a negative impact on the experience, especially when visitors did not expect it in the wilderness (which is 95% of the park – Layman 1999).

A number of impacts on the experience are associated with managerial dimensions.

Bear safety was one of the important factors, and something that is special for Glacier NP. Glacier is known as “bear country”. The number of warnings about bears made people feel concerned about them, and often it led to a limited experience. Because of the bears some visitors were afraid to hike along remote trails and go to the backcountry; it made them choose

more popular routes and sometimes alter their itineraries. It was also one of the factors why they were willing to see other people, and camp among other people – because they “felt safer”.

A number of other managerial issues that affected the experience were also revealed. They included road conditions (traffic and reconstruction); trail conditions (maintenance and signage); shuttles (waiting time; clear schedule); restrictions and regulations (backcountry permits and campfire regulations); information (advice and help from rangers, interpretation talks and ranger-led hikes, professionalism in information, visitor centers, website user friendliness); accommodation facilities and restaurants; cleanliness.

Weather was the final factor that influenced the experience. Most of the time when this research was conducted, it was sunny and warm in the park, however, several days were rainy and occasionally had hail. Interestingly, some visitors mentioned that seeing a rapidly changing weather was something new for them that actually added to the experience.

It should be noted that as the goal of this research from the very beginning was to see the experiences from the eyes of visitors, all these perceptions are rather individual. It is evident in many examples, in particular when people were talking about crowding, or wildness, or challenge, or visitors’ behavior. Thus, some interview participants found certain trails as “remote” and “not busy”, others were talking about the same trails as “crowded” and “easy”. For some it was a real challenge to go to Hidden Lake overlook where thousands of people hike through every week (Bedoya and Freimund 2012) , other visitors called “a challenge” an extreme ascend of Heavens Peak without any trails where only mountain goats can walk, and where “*nobody was so foolish to attempt this route before*” (Ryan - 49). The notion of “wild” and “pristine” place as many visitors called Glacier, was quite individual too. Some people firstly mentioned that they liked it to be so pristine, and then started to talk about the overall accessibility, which was great in their opinion. It brings us to the fact that value judgment about different dimensions of the experience exist not only across different people, but within one person too. There could be a struggle within a person about the desire to be in a pristine place,

but have accessible trails and accommodation facilities where they can be safe and in comfort. They may also struggle to get a feeling of accomplishment and reward, but not to strain too much; and to feel solitude, peace and quiet, while knowing that there are people around, and actually wanting to meet people and talk to them. Such different, sometimes opposite dimensions of the experience, are often combined for one person at one time.

Management Implications

As noted earlier, national park managers have a challenging task to manage the area in such a way so that visitors get high quality experiences while park resources are protected.

To provide high quality and satisfactory visitor experiences in the GTSR corridor of Glacier NP and constantly improve them, park managers need to understand what the current experiences are, which factors affect them, which problems exist, and how desired and actual experiences are matched up. This is especially true under the modern conditions when the road is being re-constructed and the number of park visitors tend to increase (NPS 2012)

This study helps to lay the foundation of the different dimensions that may exist in visitor experiences, suggests possible impacts on them and interconnections that may take place. Based on the revealed nature of the experiences, a series of recommendations can be made:

- 1) It is important to remember that visitor experiences are multidimensional, multisensory and multiphasic. It is a complex phenomenon influenced by the variety of factors. Although the majority of sampled visitors are quite satisfied with their experiences now, there are numerous factors that should be taken into consideration that might affect the experience. Constant monitoring of these factors and their influence on the experiences of different people is very important. Dimensions are also interconnected: for example, human interactions are perceived differently depending on a setting, initial motivations of visitors, and management regulations. A person might perceive a setting with relatively few people as crowded if he/she was looking for solitude in a campsite, but because of the bear safety issues has to share a camp

with other visitors. Or, vice versa, if the motivation was to meet new people and socialize, the same number of people at a campsite will probably not be perceived as “too many”. Sometimes the connections are not straightforward: the same visitors may want both the feeling of escape, and meeting new people; or wilderness and accessibility during their trip. The conceptual connections between the dimensions are shown in the Figure 1. This figure will be used to illustrate typologies later in the chapter.

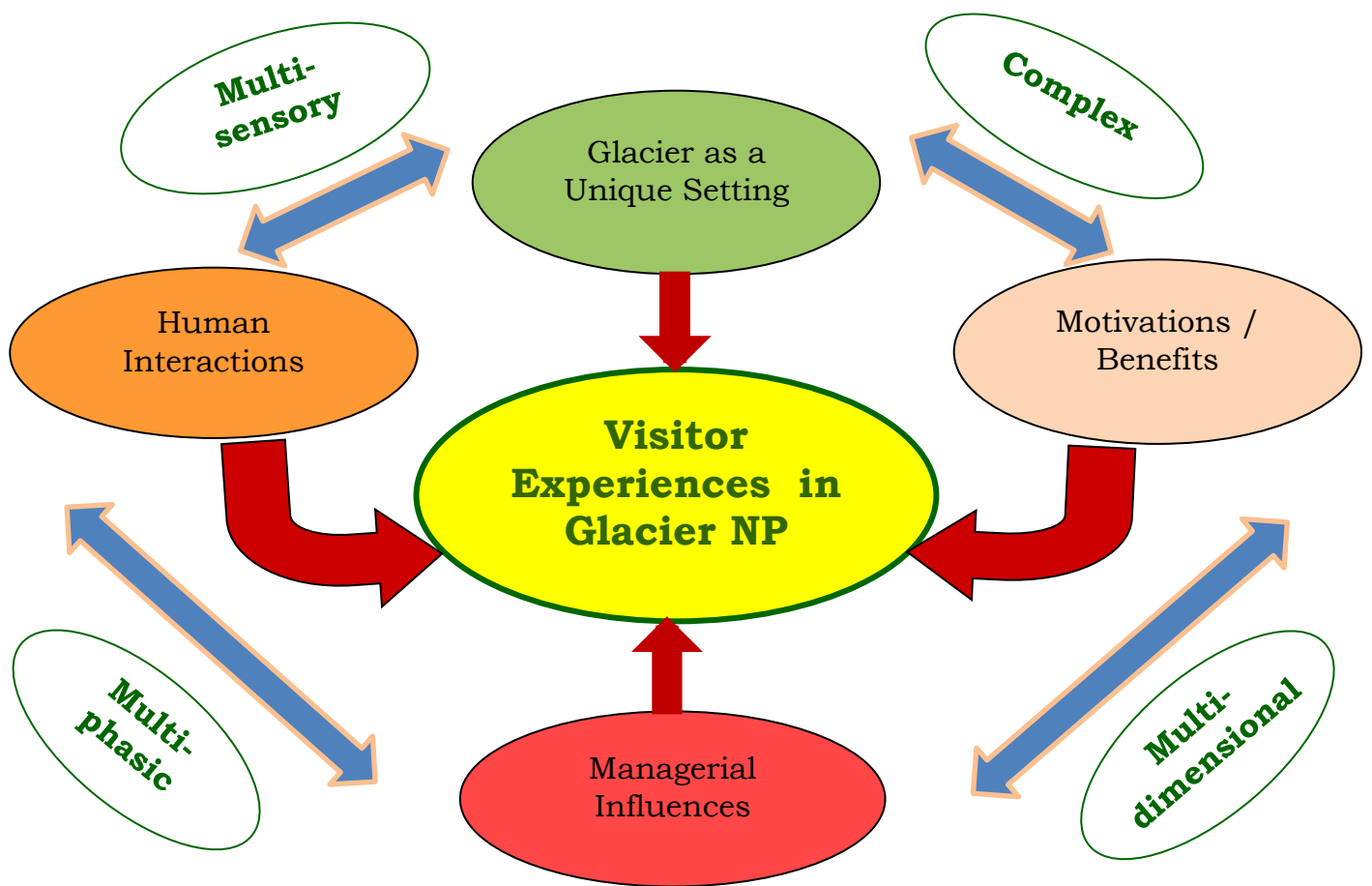


Figure 1. Schematic interrelations of visitor experience’ dimensions

2) There is no average traveler, and there is no single story and one average combination of the dimensions that constitute the experience. Every person is different, and his/her experience is unique. Everybody has different reasons for coming to Glacier, different expectations and motivations. There are also multiple psychological benefits that people are seeking and gaining in the park. They do not come there just for fun, for some of the visitors

Glacier is a very emotional place with special meanings which is connected with some important events that happened in their life; it is a part of a much longer, sometimes life-long experience. For many people Glacier is a unique and irreplaceable setting where they keep coming throughout the years, and where these unique experiences occur.

3) Non-existence of an average traveler indicates the importance to deal with the diversity. The managers can use various planning frameworks that potentially can help them manage for the diversity of opportunities in the park, and provide high-quality experiences for the majority of people. Recreation Demand Hierarchy (Driver and Brown 1978) suggests that visitors select and participate in recreation activities in particular settings to satisfy certain needs and get certain psychological benefits. Later studies suggest that people do not always know what their needs are and which benefits they are seeking, it all evolves and changes throughout the experience, and the meanings associated with the experience are constructed before, during and after the experience. In any case, while operating with the activities and settings (two lower levels of the hierarchy), park managers can provide a number of opportunities for people to get their desired experiences and gain psychological outcomes. Motivations and benefits associated with Glacier NP were explored in this study. As this research has shown, perceptions of the experience are very different across visitors, and sometimes even for the same visitors. Both experiences and benefits are constructed by visitors themselves, thus facilitating the benefits and providing diverse opportunities in the park so that people create and get the desirable experience, can help reach positive outcomes for many people. Recreation Opportunity spectrum (Clark and Stankey 1979; McCool et al 2007) can help secure the conditions needed to protect the diversity of the experience.

4) Although there is no single story related to the experience in Glacier NP, certain experience typologies can be identified. This research has shown that people have some things in common about their experience in the park (for example, their love of Glacier), and in general some common patterns and trends do exist. Main dimensions of the experience that were

revealed in the study – “Glacier as a Unique Setting”, “Motivations and Benefits”, “Human Interactions”, and “Managerial Influences” - vary along the continuum, making it possible to distinguish certain types of people who visit Glacier NP (Table 11). Four main types of visitors were identified according to the revealed dimensions of the experience: “wilderness lovers”, “balance seekers”, “national parks appreciators”, and “access driven” (Table 11).

- *Wilderness lovers* usually have personal relationship with the place; they come to Glacier NP in pursuit of escape, value peace and quiet; prefer not to see other people; and avoid development. Many backpackers, especially those who choose long itineraries to the remote areas fall into this category, as well as some people who keep coming to Glacier NP throughout the years because of their strong emotional attachment to the place.
- *Balance seekers* may have some sort of personal relationship with the place; look mostly for escape, solitude, peace and quiet, but do not mind seeing other people around; want to feel the wildness, but at the same time value accessibility. A number of day hikers, some road drivers and backpackers travelling to the shorter distances fall into this category.
- *National parks appreciators* often perceive Glacier as one of the national parks in the National Parks System of the country; they value mostly scenic beauty of the place; look for the broad range of benefits and may have a strong desire to learn about nature and culture; feel fine about having other people around; and appreciate the services and facilities that national parks usually provide. For many visitors that fall into this category Glacier NP is not the only park that they visit on their trip, it is just one of their destinations. The time spent in Glacier for such visitors can vary from one to several days, but normally they choose popular and well-known trails which may have a lot of people. However, they usually seem to accept the fact that parks

are visited by many people, and sometimes even find it good because of the potential benefits for the society in general.

- *Access driven* visitors usually do not have personal relationship with Glacier NP; look mostly for fun and entertainment; feel fine about other people around; and value tourist facilities and access. Those visitors tend to come to Glacier NP for a short period of time, sometimes they may just drive through the park along the GTSR with several stops at the viewpoints on the way. A number of motorcyclists traveling in the group of friends through the park represent one of the examples of this category; or those visitors who do not really care if they go hiking in Glacier NP, or other natural areas. In the framework of this study almost nobody fell into this category due to some difficulty of conducting interviews with them (these visitors often either do not have time to talk because of their short visit, or in case of motorcycles travel in groups of several people), but the researcher’s observations during the two months in Glacier suggest that this type of visitors is rather significant.



Table 10. Variance of the revealed dimensions along the continuum.

“Wilderness lovers”	GUS - Personal relationship with the place MB - Look for solitude, escape, peace and quiet HI - Do not want people around MI - Low regulations, no development
“Balance seekers”	GUS - Have some emotional attachment to the place MB - Look mostly for solitude, escape, peace and quiet HI - Do not mind seeing other people around MI - Want accessibility, but appreciate wildness
“National parks appreciators”	GUS - “Glacier is one of the national parks”, scenery MB - Look for the broad range of benefits, want to learn HI - Feel fine about many people around MI - Want accessibility, services, but like nature
“Access driven”	GUS - Almost no personal relationship with the place MB - Look mostly for fun and entertainment HI - Feel fine seeing many other people around MI - High development and regulations

*GUS = Glacier as a Unique setting; MB = Motivations/Benefits; HI=Human Interactions; MI = Managerial Influences

Table 11. Identified experience typologies.

The importance of these experience typologies for the park managers is as follows. As noted earlier, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is a tool that deals with the variety of opportunities. It encourages visitors to construct their desired experiences and benefits by offering them a choice within the diversity of settings with varying attributes over the area. The notion of diversity of opportunities is often reflected in zoning of settings, which is a commonly used element of many planning processes in natural areas. It is very difficult to please everyone in the park, because all people are different and each experience is unique, but providing the diversity of opportunities for certain types of people, and allocating zones for these types, can protect and enhance the experiences. The current zoning scheme in the GTSR corridor is presented in the Chapter 3. However, this research suggests that a further reevaluation of the existing zoning scheme, and incorporating visitor experiences typologies into this scheme, is very important. It should take into account the revealed dimensions of visitor experiences and

impacts on them that occur under current conditions. For example, the multisensory nature of the experience suggests that in some cases we should protect the soundscape. Park managers might want to reconsider allowing helicopters in some backcountry areas, or limit the number of people on some trails to protect the important experience of “wilderness lovers”. In other cases, the managers should focus on managing visitor behavior rather than thinking about access limits. It could be done by enhancing environmental awareness programs, or providing more information about the appropriate behavior in the park in general, and in certain “wilderness” areas in particular. It should also be communicated to visitors properly, using multiple sources, such as the park’s website, guidebooks, brochures, information in visitor centers, and local signage.

The dimensions of the experience can be further classified spatially (which was beyond the analysis of this research, but can be the base for future studies), which will help managers to address existing challenges and implement various management programs aimed at preserving and improving visitor experiences.

5) Learning requires special consideration. The desire to learn throughout the park system, and Glacier in particular, was mentioned by many of the interview participants. There were visitors that incorporated both educational and ecological values into their experience. Managing for this type of opportunity is important especially to facilitate appreciation and support of the national parks, as it comes with understanding of the natural environment and all of its components. It brings about certain benefits to the society at large. Learning both about the environment through interpretation, and learning about the diversity of opportunities that exist in the park, may enhance the overall experience. Information may also mitigate some impacts on the experience.

Hopefully this research complemented the efforts of park managers working with visitor management, and provided some basis for future decision making and issue identification in preserving and improving the GTSR corridor visitor experiences.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has resulted in several additional questions, in particular because of the limitations that it had.

One of the limitations relates to visitor sample. The researcher was interested to identify and describe in rich detail the range of experiences of different representative types of visitors along the GTSR corridor. To ensure diversity in the sample, she used three different criteria: activity type, type of group, and the area within the GTSR corridor.

As for the activity type, visitors involved in the following activities were interviewed: hiking, backpacking, camping, driving along the GTSR, boating and kayaking, bushwalking, climbing, fishing, motorcycle travel, picnic with dogs, star gazing, professional photography. However, no horseback riders, bicycle riders, and river rafters were interviewed. These activities are quite popular in Glacier NP, and it would be useful and interesting to explore the experiences of those visitors who are involved in them. It will help to gain a more comprehensive picture of visitor experiences in the park. It would also be useful to interview more visitors involved in the activities other than hiking and backpacking (those two activities are most fully represented in the existing sample).

Regarding types of group, all possible types were represented (solo travelers, couples, groups of friends, families, families and friends); however, it will be good to interview more families with little kids. Judging by the observations made by the researcher, there were quite many of them in the park, but as mentioned earlier, it was the most difficult target audience to interview. It is recommended to make an arrangement with families in advance, so that one of the parents could take care of a kid, while the other one could be interviewed. Probably the most convenient locations for such interviews will be campgrounds, and parking lots at the trailheads.

The range of locations along the GTSR for current research was quite broad, but it is always better to expand it and interview visitors at other places as well, in particular at other backcountry campsites (for this research visitors that stayed at Granite Park, Snyder Lake, Sperry

Chalet, and Red Eagle campgrounds only were interviewed, but there are many more in different zones of the GTSR corridor). The researcher also feels that visitors, who were just stopping at the popular viewpoints and parking lots along the GTSR while driving in the park, and did not go hiking or backpacking, were underrepresented in the sample (mainly because of time constraints that they had).

Another limitation is related to phases of visitor experiences. As noted earlier, an experience is multiphasic, and consists of five main phases: anticipation, travel to destination, on-site experience, travel back, and recollection (Clawson and Knetsch 1996). This research captured the experience mainly at “on-site” phase, and also touched upon the aspects of “anticipation” and “travelling to” phases as people were talking about the process of making plans for the trip and their expectations. But nothing is known about two latter phases of the experience, and it would be useful to explore the dimensions of the experience at that time as well. It might be possible that after some time, during the recollection phase, the impressions of the park and feelings about the benefits will change. In order to better understand visitor experiences along the whole continuum it is suggested to interview Glacier Park visitors in some time after the end of their trip. However, it is not very easy to arrange. One of the ways to do that is to interview visitors by phone after making preliminary arrangements with them while in the park. It should also be noted that Glacier NP experience can be a part of a much longer, sometimes life-long experience, and can be interconnected with the memories from the past, certain events that happened long before a visit to Glacier, as well as with future plans that are influenced by the present trip. Uncovering this chain of events seems to be rather useful to explore in order to understand the place of Glacier experience in a much broader life context.

The next limitation and suggestion is about revealed motivations and benefits. As one of the results of this study, sixteen motivations and benefits were identified as most prevalent throughout the data, judging by the total number of quotes, insightfulness of quotes, the diversity of sub-themes that emerged, and by the researcher’s perception of their importance for park

management. But it was mostly driven by personal judgments, and no statistical analysis has been made in order to identify the rank of them (the level of importance for visitors). It will be very useful to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to get the most rigorous picture of visitor experiences, and conduct a factor analysis to identify the scores of each motivation/benefit, thus understand the rank of their importance for the majority of park visitors. It might be possible that motivations and benefits other than escape, learning and challenge will dominate.

As it was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the difference between the current research and earlier studies about recreational use and visitor behavior conducted in the GTSR corridor, is that the latter were focused mostly on the road itself and actual shuttle experience. The research reported here has made an attempt to reveal the experiences not only on the road, but on the adjacent trails, campgrounds, backcountry campsites, and other elements of the whole GTSR corridor system. There are many elements in this corridor that are highly interconnected, and impacts that occur in one of them will most likely bring about changes in the other. For example, the shuttle provides an opportunity for people to stop in those areas that in the past were limited by the available parking space, so potentially there could be more people using the area, which in turn may increase the impact on the trails – both on the natural resources and the experience. Understanding this whole system of interactions is important to ensure both resource protection and high quality visitor experience in Glacier NP. This research has made just one of the first attempts to gain a more integrated understanding of the whole GTRS system and interactions that occur within it. More studies are needed in order to look at the GTSR corridor (and at the whole Glacier National Park) from a systematic perspective and better understand the connections between its various elements.

The follow up of this study could be to classify the dimensions of visitor experiences and impacts on them spatially, and divide them by special zones within the GTSR corridor, as well as in other areas of Glacier NP. This research can serve as a base for it, but more detailed

investigation of the experiences that is attached to the map is necessary. It is closely connected with applying Recreation Opportunity Spectrum framework in the park, and making the zoning system more detailed, which will allow managers to think systematically about emerging issues and challenges, and address them differently in different zones.

Among other suggestions – to repeat similar interviews and analysis performed for this study on a regular basis (perhaps once in two-three years) to provide benchmarks, gain feedback from visitors in constantly changing conditions in the modern world, and better understand the goals for further improvement of visitor experiences along the GTSR corridor.

Finally, this type of study could be replicated in other national parks of the United States and the world. As many quotes suggest, Glacier NP is often compared with Yellowstone which many out-of-state and foreign travelers visit during the same trip, as well as with other parks that were visited earlier. Conducting a similar study and exploring visitor experiences in Yellowstone NP, preferably during the same year as in Glacier, will help to better understand the difference in perception of the experience, make comparisons throughout the Rocky Mountain region, and learn from each other. It can contribute to providing high quality visitor experiences throughout the whole system of the national parks and facilitate mutual learning on the national and even international scale.

Appendix A: Interview Participants

#	Given Name	Date	Time	Day of Week	Age Category	Interview Location	Brief Description	Number of times in Glacier; trip duration
1	Sara, Sage	06/28	1:14 pm	Tuesday	70-75	Barring Falls trail, close to Sunrift Gorge parking lot	A retired couple from California; Sage worked as a fireman for many years	2 nd time; 1 st time was 20 years ago, 3 days in Glacier
2	Alan	07/05	4:40 pm	Tuesday	50-55	Avalanche parking lot (he hiked Avalanche Lake)	A motorcyclist from New York; drove alone all the way from home; he is on 2-week vacation	1 st time, 2 days in Glacier
3	Stasia, Steve	07/12	12:20 pm	Tuesday	50-55	Cedars' trail, close to the trailhead	A couple from Pennsylvania; they are on a 6-week vacation; Stasia is a teacher	1 st time, 2 days in Glacier
4	Linda, Lenard	07/15	1:15 pm	Friday	30-35	Sperry trail, 1 mile from the trailhead	A couple from California; Linda works for the wine industry	1 st time, 11 days in Glacier
5	Irena, Irvin	07/15	2:50 pm	Friday	60-65	Fish Lake trail, at the junction with Sperry trail	A couple from California; originally from New Zealand	1 st time, 6 days in Glacier
6	Luda, Luck	07/16	4:15 pm	Saturday	55-60	Hidden Lake overlook	A couple from Kentucky; Luck is a retired biology teacher, Luda is in political research	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
7	Irina	07/16	4:40 pm	Saturday	35-40	Hidden Lake overlook	She is from Billings, MT; originally from Latvia; travelled with her boyfriend from Azerbaijan	Several times, 1 day in Glacier
8	Julia, Amanda	07/20	7:50 pm	Wednesday	35-40	Snyder Lake campground	Sisters in law from MT; both mothers of three kids	Several times; 1 st time backpacking; 3 days in Glacier
9	Dina, Dick	07/25	7:10 pm	Monday	40-45, 20-25	Cedars' trail, close to the trailhead (they hiked Mt Brown)	Mother and son; Dina is from Missoula, Dick - from Idaho	1 st time for Dick; Dina was there several times 1 day in Glacier

10	Antony	07/26	4:05 pm	Tuesday	55-60	Loop trail, ½ mile from the trailhead	Solo traveler from Florida; jewelry store owner	5 th time, 4 days in Glacier
11	Gail, Greg	07/27	1:40 pm	Wednesday	40-45	Granite Chalet	A couple from Montana; Greg is originally from Seattle; both teachers	Several times, 2 days in Glacier
12	Natasha, Nikolai	07/28	5:30 pm	Thursday	60-65	Apgar Lookout trail, ½ mile from the lookout	A couple from Canada; retired	1 st time for Natasha; 2 nd tome for Nikolai (1 st was 35 years ago) 11 days in Glacier
13	Nora, Neal	07/29	1:25 pm	Friday	40-45	Sun Point trail, at the junction with St Mary's trail	A couple from Virginia	1 st time, 2 weeks in Glacier
14	Mora, Morgan	07/29	2:08 pm	Friday	50-55	Sun Point trail, at the junction with St Mary's trail	A couple from Indiana; professional computer people; professional photographers	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
15	Tina, Tim	07/29	4:10 pm	Friday	25-30	St Mary's trail, about 1 mile from the trailhead	A couple, Tina is from Kentucky; Tim is from Australia visiting US, he came for the photography workshop	1 st time, 10 days in Glacier and Waterton
16	Phil, Matt	07/29	6:50 pm	Friday	45-50 25-30	Sun Point trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Father and son; Phil is originally from Poland but lives in Canada, he is maintenance manager; Matt grew up in Canada, now lives in California	1 st time, 3 days in Glacier
17	Peter	08/01	5:20 pm	Monday	60-65	St Mary's trail, 1 mile from the trailhead	Solo traveler from Iowa; retired teacher	5 th time, 4 days in Glacier
18	Katie, Kevin	08/01	7:10 pm	Monday	30-35	Sunrift Gorge parking lot (they hiked Siyeh Bend)	A couple from Massachusetts; they are on a 5-week road trip from home; Katie is a teacher	1 st time, several days in Glacier (decide on the spot)
19	Lera, Leo	08/02	7:10 pm	Tuesday	50-55	Rising Sun boat deck (after the boat tour)	A couple from Wisconsin; "national park lovers"	1 st time, 5 days in Glacier, 2 days in Waterton

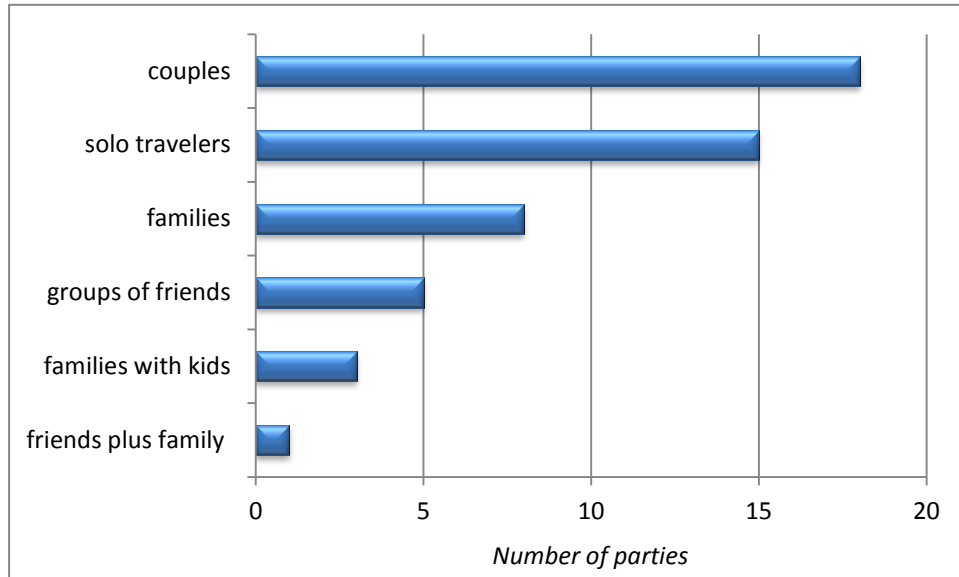
20	Nicole, Charles, 2 teenagers	08/02	9:00 pm	Tuesday	40-45	Rising Sun campground	A family from Paris, FR; Charles is originally from Corsica; several week road trip from Chicago	1 st time, about 5 days in Glacier
21	Melissa, Mila	08/05	6:30 pm	Friday	35-40	Cedar's trail, close to the trailhead	Cousins from New Jersey; Melissa is a professional photographer; Mila is a teacher	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
22	Alicia	08/07	6:27 pm	Sunday	50-55	St Mary's trail, 1 mile from the trailhead	Solo traveler from Kalispell, MT; her daughter passed away last year and she raises 3 grand kids	Numerous times, 1 day in Glacier
23	Travis	08/08	10:23 am	Monday	40-45	Rising Sun picnic area	Solo traveler from Washington, D.C.; environmental advocate	1 st time, 5 days in Glacier
24	Dan	08/10	11:54 am	Wednesday	60-65	Rising Sun boat deck (they took a boat tour)	A traveler from Settle, WA; travels in RV with his wife and 2 dogs	1 st time, 3 days in Glacier
25	Brenda, Bob	08/10	1:22 pm	Wednesday	40-45	Piegan Pass trail, 1 mile from the trailhead	A couple from San Francisco Bay Area, CA; Bob is an accountant; "naturalists at heart"	2 nd time, 1 st – last year, about 10 days in Glacier
26	Alex	08/10	2:15 pm	Wednesday	30-35	Piegan Pass trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Solo traveler; but it's a family vacation in the park; others arrive later	1 st time, Several days in Glacier
27	Anna, Alla, 2 daughter (teens)	08/10	2:31 pm	Wednesday	45-50	Piegan Pass trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Family of four; Alina is from Kalispell, MT; Anna is from California	Many times, 1 day in Glacier
28	Nina, Nick	08/10	3:07 pm	Wednesday	40-45	Piegan Pass trail, 2 miles from the trailhead	A couple from Bozeman, MT; Nick is a consultant working in conservation	Several times, the last one was "long ago" 5 days in Glacier,
29	Karen, Kara	08/11	6:37 pm	Thursday	45-50 20-25	Jackson Glacier overlook	Mother and daughter from Maryland; "friends of the national parks"	1 st time, 1 day in Glacier
30	Max, Moritz	08/11	9:16 pm	Thursday	25-30	St Mary's bridge, near the visitor center	Friends-fishermen, Max is originally from Minnesota, but now lives in Bozeman, MT	Several times for Moritz; 1 st time for Max; 3 days in Glacier

31	Rita, Rick	08/12	11:01 am	Friday	20-25	Red Eagle trail, at the trailhead	A couple; Rick is from Montana, Rita is from Arizona; went backpacking for several days	Several times for Rick, 1 st time for Rita, 10 days in Glacier
32	Sonya, Seva	08/12	12:06 pm	Friday	65-70	St Mary's Ranger station, at the trailhead of the loop trail behind	A retired couple, their nephew works in Glacier	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier, 1 day in Waterton
33	Edward, Eric, Eva, Edie	08/12	3:26 pm	Friday	55-60	Piegan Pass trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Friends with their wives from Minnesota	2 nd time for all, 1 st – 10 and 30 years ago 1 week in Glacier
34	Victoria, Vera	08/12	3:44 pm	Friday	50-55	Piegan Pass trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Friends from Atlanta, Georgia. One has a house there	Numerous times, Several days in Glacier
35	Andrew	08/12	5:36 pm	Friday	35-40	Piegan Pass trail, at the pass	Solo traveler from Alabama (originally from PA), spent one week with college friends, 2nd week with extended family	2 nd time, 1 st – 14 years ago, 2 weeks in Glacier
36	Marta, Mike	08/16	6:37 pm	Tuesday	30-35	Avalanche Lake	A couple from Baltimore; Mike is a fisherman; they are visiting his parents who live in Helena	1 st time, 2 days in Glacier
37	Noa, Nori	08/16	7:42 pm	Tuesday	25-30	Avalanche Lake	Friends from Japan; Noa is studying in Montana, Nori is visiting	1 st time for Nori, 2 nd for Noa, 5 days in Glacier
38	Garry	08/16	8:05 pm	Tuesday	40-45	Avalanche Lake	Solo traveler from Colorado, but he is in the park with 2 other friends	2 nd time, 1 st was 5 years ago, 1 week in Glacier
39	Gleb	08/16	8:37 pm	Tuesday	40-45	Avalanche Lake trail, 1 mile from the trailhead	Solo traveler from Wyoming, but he is in the park with 2 other friends (Garry is one of them)	2 nd time, 1 st was 5 years ago, 1 week in Glacier
40	Bridget, Ben	08/16	9:14 pm	Tuesday	25-30	Avalanche Campground	A couple with their niece from Montana (Bridget is originally from New Jersey), they are in Glacier with big family from NJ	Numerous times, 3 days in Glacier

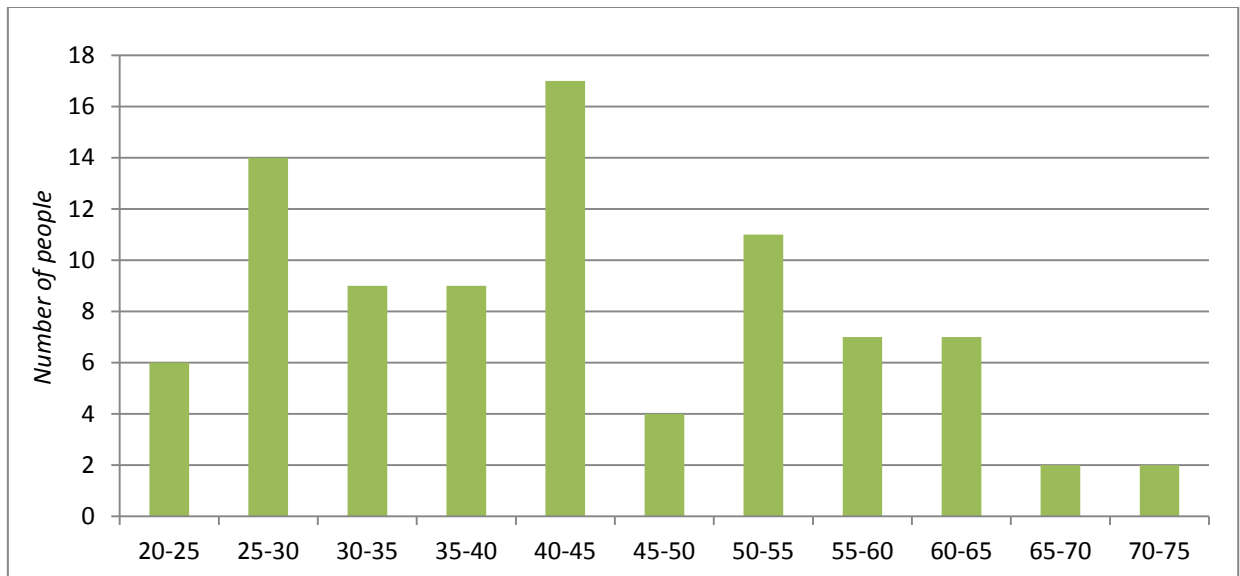
41	Dana	08/18	6:20 pm	Thursday	40-45	Logan Pass	Solo traveler from North Carolina, half-Swiss	1 st time, 2 weeks in Glacier
42	Yan	08/18	7:26 pm	Thursday	40-45	Hidden Lake	Solo traveler from China, came to Kalispell for business, project manager	1 st time, 1 day in Glacier
43	Toma, Tom	08/18	8:20 pm	Thursday	30-35	Hidden Lake overlook	A family with 8-month old baby from BC, Canada	2 nd time, 1 st was 5 years ago 3 days in Glacier
44	Brian	08/19	2:56 pm	Friday	40-45	Sperry trail, 1.5 miles from the trailhead	Solo traveler from Portland, OR; civil servant	1 st time, 3 days in Glacier
45	Bella, Bibi, Brad	08/19	4:36 pm	Friday	25-30	Sperry Chalet campground	3 friends from New York city, Michigan state and Cambridge; on a 5-day backpacking trip	1 st time, 5 days in Glacier
46	Zina, Zack	08/21	4:00 pm	Sunday	25-30	Logan Pass	A couple from Colorado; came to Glacier for their first anniversary	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
47	Sam, Sasha	08/21	10:14 pm	Sunday	60-65 35-40	Granite Park campground	Uncle and nephew from Cincinnati, OH; Sam is a professional photographer; on a backpacking trip	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
48	Jim, John	08/22	09:03 am	Monday	35-40	Granite Park campground	Brothers. Jim is from Texas, John is from California	1 st time for John, 2 nd time for Jim (1 st 3 years ago), 1 week in Glacier
49	Ryan	08/22	11:14 am	Monday	50-55	Granite Park Chalet	Solo traveler – technical climber originally from Seattle, now lives in Wisconsin	1 st time, 1 week in Glacier
50	Natalie, Maria	08/22	11:37 am	Monday	20-25	Granite Park Chalet	College friends, studies together in Michigan; one lives in Oregon now, the other one in New Jersey	1 st time, 5 days in Glacier

Appendix B: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

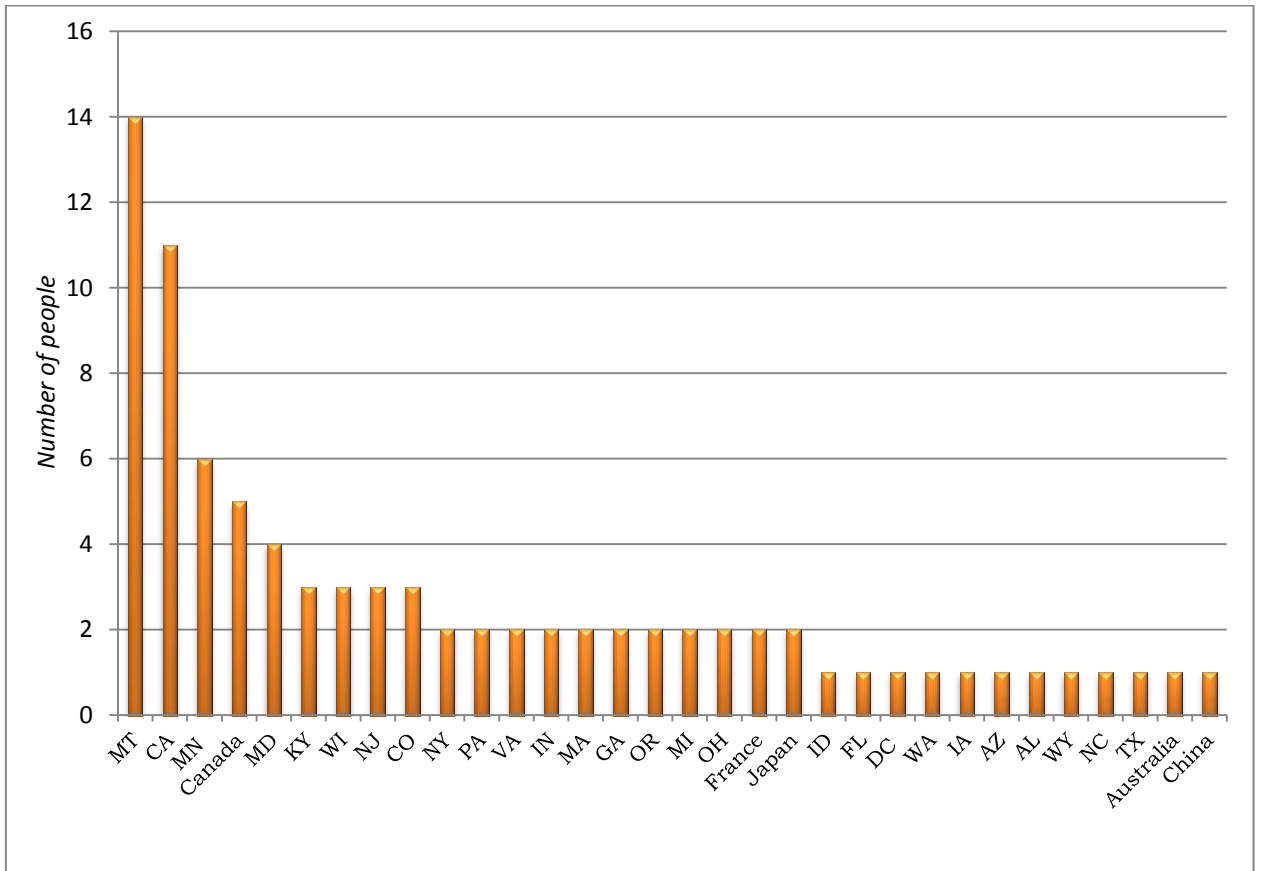
1. Parties interviewed:



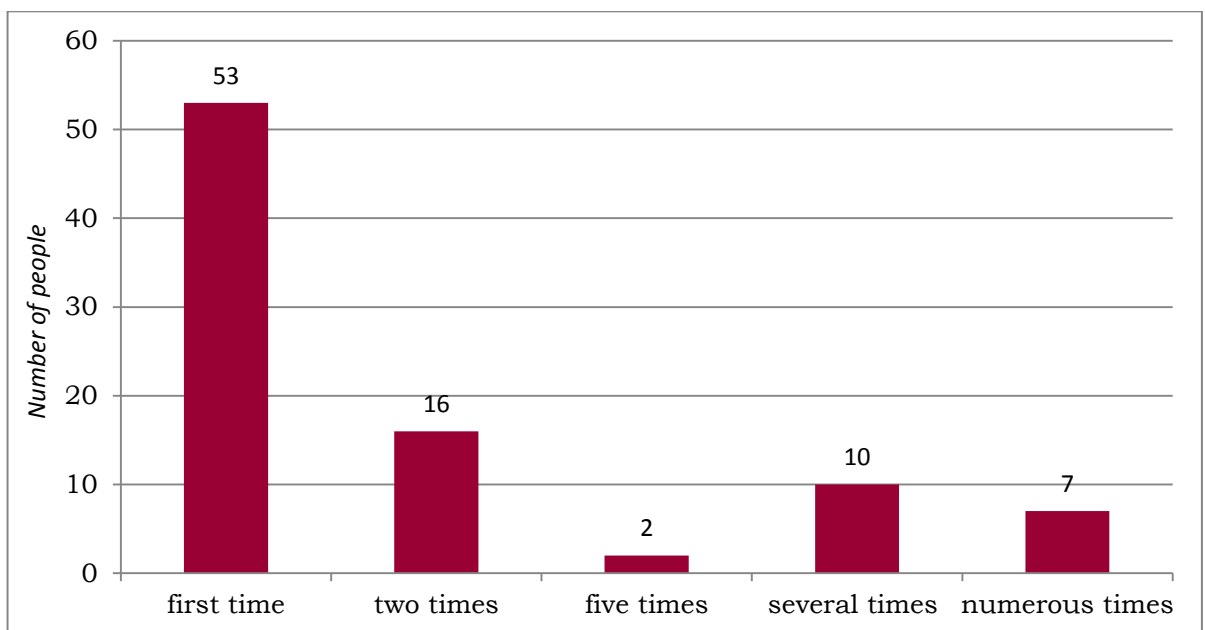
2. Approximate age:



3. Residency:



4. Number of times in Glacier NP:



Appendix C: Interview Guide

General about the trip:

- 1) Could you please tell me about the trip that you completed today?
 - Which activities did you undertake?
 - Whom are you travelling with?
 - How long was your trip?
 - What was the main reason why you came here?

Temporal and multiphasic nature of visitor experiences:

- 1) When did you plan this trip?
 - For shuttle riders: when did you decide to use the shuttle?
 - For hikers: When did you decide to go hiking on this particular trail?
 - If you didn't plan this before, why did you change your mind?
- 2) Is this your first trip to Glacier?
 - Has anything changed since your last visit here? Did you notice anything new? How do you feel about this?

Desired and actual experience:

- 1) How do you define your experience here?
- 2) What defines the quality of the experience for you in general?
- 3) Did your experience in the park meet your expectations this time?
 - What needs to be changed so that you completely enjoy your experience?

Positive and negative experience; multidimensional nature of experience:

- 1) What was the best part of your day? What comes into your mind first of all when you remember everything what happened today?
 - Are there any special things that added to your experience today?
 - Did you expect to see this?
 - Why those things are important for you?
 - What about human oriented things/natural things? (*depending on how the conversation goes*)
 - Trails – Did you see many other people on the trail? How did you feel about that?
 - Roads - How do you feel about the road? Did you see many other cars? Was it easy to park? Was there much traffic?
- 2) Did anything detract from your experience today? Were you disappointed with something?

Park management:

- 1) What do you think about the way people are managed in the park?
- 2) Do you have any recommendations for park managers? Is there anything you think the park management should do to improve the experience you had today?

- 3) Regarding trail quality (*question to hikers*). What is important for you on a trail? Were trails in good shape? Did you notice any human impact on natural resources? How would it affect your experience if you see more people on the trail and more impact on resources?
- 4) Regarding shuttles (*question to those who used the shuttle*) – how do you feel about them? What was your itinerary? When did you learn about shuttles?
- 5) Would you be willing to sacrifice some components of your experience so that the desired conditions in the park are reached in the long run?

Demographics: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where do you come from? Where do you work?

Closing question: The purpose of this study is to better understand visitor experiences in Going-to-the-Sun road corridor. Is there anything else about your experience that you would like to add? Something that I have not asked you, but you would like to share? Thank you.

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