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SOC1-270
Analytical Memo for Interview #1
November 21, 2023

Analytical Memo

I interviewed Noah, a Macalester Senior, on Sunday November 19, 2023. Myself and other members of my group have observed him regularly at Dunn Bros doing work solo, with others, and just slipping in to grab a coffee before walking right back out the door.

He came to Macalester-Groveland in 2020 to be a student, and currently lives with three friends a bit south-west of campus. His house is a 20 minute walk away from Dunn Bros, but claims that it's his favorite place to go. He's been to a number of other coffee shops in Macalester-Groveland, but finds that they're a bit too "sterile". He loves the atmosphere of Dunn and the cheapness of the coffee. He's not a huge coffee snob; he says he can tell the difference between good coffee and bad coffee, and finds the Dunn Bros coffee to fall into the good category. He will go to Dunn Bros regularly after his Tuesday and Thursday morning classes with a friend to get some work done, but will also stop in sometimes over the weekend when he wants to get some work done. He finds that the average customer in Dunn Bros is either the regular Mac Student or an elderly white man. However, contrary to what we've observed, he feels that the older folks are very talkative and that he often finds himself in conversation with at least one older regular named John. He feels like he can identify regulars based on his own observation of frequent patronage, but he also uses familiar conversation between patrons and employees as markers for regularity. When he sees an employee and patron bantering, he gets the feeling that if the patron is familiar to the employee, they're a regular at Dunn Bros on Grand. He says that his proudest achievement was when he had come in often enough in Sophomore year that the baristas knew his order before he had even opened his mouth. That familiarity has since faded, but he says that he's always felt welcomed in the space. He says that he feels like Dunn Bros has a community, but that it's kind of invisible. It's difficult to see the connections that people have because the expectation of the space is that patrons go in to do your thing solo. One can always interact with those around you, but people go in with the purpose of working, reading, etc. by themselves or with someone else they came into the shop with.

It seems like the primary draw of the space for Noah is a combination of the cheapness of the space and the atmosphere that he experiences there. He's comfortable talking to older folks and other people most of the time, but will even go in when he's feeling awkward. The space is

one that invites Noah's young white man identity. That is to say, Noah's identity is different from the Black older man that I've seen John more or less brush off in brief conversation. His own comfortability with entering the space uses itself to grow by making him familiar to the staff working there and vice versa. He felt very welcome when the barista's knew his order by heart, making him feel like it was a space that he had made his simply by going there. It's a regular location that he can go with one of his friends that he's made a part of his routine. He also observed that several of the older white folks have probably made the place a part of their routine because it's an easy place for them to make a part of their lives; you get to go in their solo, do your own thing, and still have the opportunity to interact with others that you might not have the opportunity to interact with on a normal day. It is a community center that creates invisible bonds that get to be acted on based on how you're feeling. Of course, you can be approached by someone else in Dunn Bros, but it's important to recognize that many people accept the social cues of someone working independently and concentrating on their task at hand as someone who doesn't want to be interacted with.