

Benjamin Richardson
Erika Busse-Cárdenas
SOC1-270
Interview #2 Analytical Memo
November 30, 2023

An Interview with John

On Tuesday, November 28, 2023, I interviewed a man named John at Dunn Bros Coffee. He is a 75-year old man who was born and raised in the Saint Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul, and has lived in the Twin Cities his entire life. He told me that he spent "seven mistaken years" in Minneapolis, and that Saint Paul is truly his home. His family has a 110 year legacy in the Cities, and he clearly seemed to admire the cities for what they are quite a bit. He now lives just east of Macalester-Groveland, but learned about Dunn Bros from a friend of his way back when they lived in Macalester Groveland. He spent over three decades working as an editor for the largest legal publishing and information service in the country, but enjoyed it only to the extent that it paid the bills. What he really likes to do is read philosophy books, and he retrieved a book on Kant from his bag to prove it when I asked him what he would read when he was at Dunn Bros.

He's been coming to the Dunn Bros on Grand since the late 80s (when Dunn Bros first opened), but only started regularly coming in 1993. Since then, he has come here regularly and now goes just about every single day. He describes himself as an "acute OCD Virgo," emphasizing his sticktoitiveness towards his daily routines. He says that he'll come to Dunn Bros "as early as ten and as late as noon on any given day". Because of an issue with his heart's AC node, he is no longer allowed by his doctor to drink stimulants, including caffeinated beverages. Instead, he drinks decaf tea in his own time, and brings his own thermos to Dunn Bros so he can buy their tea and drink it from his own vessel. When he comes to Dunn Bros, I found that he comes prepared for four main activities when he's in the building: the first is read his books on philosophy; the second is to read and study flashcards for interesting English words for his own expanded knowledge; the third is listen to music (spanning from Bach to classic rock to new age beats); and fourth is to be ready to entertain new conversation. That said, he was a little gruff at first when I asked him for the interview. I offered a number of times, over the phone or in person but he told me that he could do it right now but he would give me short answers. As I began talking to him and mentioned that someone he had known had referenced him as a good candidate for an interview, he lit up and eased right into conversation. Many of his answers were quite long in fact. He became overjoyed to hear that the Mac student

that had referenced him had done so because he enjoys talking to us Mac students when we can engage in high level intellectual conversations. He has become close friends with a number of Macalester students over the years, staying in contact with them over the phone and sometimes in person if they've chosen to stay in the neighborhood. He says that one of the primary reasons he likes coming to Dunn Bros is to "expand his social network". A question that I should have asked him is what he does outside of his Dunn Bros time in retirement in order to glean what his social life is like outside of Dunn Bros. It doesn't seem as though he was that shy about talking to younger folks, but he was cognizant that he could go off on a tangent as he stopped himself a few times from going down the rabbit hole of a number of topics like specific philosophical ideas or medieval map creation, saying "Anyway, what else do you got for me?" (in reference to the next questions I had). He labeled Macalester students as weirdos, St. Thomas students as bourgeois, and Hamline kids as down-to-earth when asked about who he sees come into the store. He has seen a lot of retirees and high school students in his time, and, since the pandemic, a lot more young professionals coming into the shop to do virtual work. The social makeup that he described matches pretty identically with what I have come to notice in midday-Dunn Bros hours.