

**RQ1: In what ways are community college students making decisions about their academic majors and/or potential careers?**

- **In what ways are students' intersecting identities relevant to their academic majors/ careers decision-making process?**
- **What is the role of family, friends, and institutional agents (primarily faculty) in this process?**

## Javier Garcia Memo

Javier is a highly motivated, formerly incarcerated, twenty-seven-year-old part-time student of Latinx descent. Javier is at PCC to gain skills that would enhance his artistry but is not in pursuing "paper" or a degree/certificate. According to Javier a degree is not a guarantee for anything, and he does not need it. In his words he says **"Because I don't think I need a paper that says that I can do this, I can do that... I don't want to work for nobody, basically. I've done that before, and I'm like, there's no purpose to that. Because, like, I can make more money on my own. I've been part of artist shows and photo shoots and I made my own money. I sold photos for like 500 dollars, and I'm like, oh damn. I made that with one photo, and this person worked all week for 500 dollars. If you're good at something, like, you could figure a way to do it."** Currently, Javier is taking a silk-screening class. He uses the skills he is learning in that class to make t-shirts which he sells to make money to pay his rent. Javier hopes to transfer to the Art Center in Pasadena to continue to enhance his artistic skills but is not sure how he will ever afford this school.

The fact that Javier is enrolled at PCC is a tremendous feat onto itself. Although Javier, always told himself that he would attend college one day, he has had a very difficult childhood, adolescence, and experiences in school that almost made this goal impossible. At the age of five, Javier and his siblings were taken from his parents (his dad used to physically abuse his mom) and put in a foster home(s). Javier says that he constantly moved all around Southern California. At the age of 10 he moved back in with his mom but only for handful of years. Javier explains **"Even though when I came back with my mom, like when I was 10, she kicked me out when I was 14, so after that I was on my own. So I was like, oh, like ... That's why we didn't go to school. I was like, I'll just stay at the park. And I'll just see people, like, I'll see all ... There was a bunch of kids that stayed in the park too though. And I would just watch all of them. They were all doing drugs, and I would just be like, screw them. And now I see them still, and they're all like ... they're just burnt. They're not who they were before. They are just in the street lots."** In terms of school, Javier says that no one ever told him that he could be something positive. He further explains **"when I was younger, I wouldn't really go to school, until when I turned 18, that's when I was like, oh, I want to go to college. Because before I was 18, I was like, there's no point in high school. They're not teaching you anything that you want to learn. The teachers don't really help you. Half the time the teachers were like, oh, you're late, you're not going to be nothing, like, you're going to work at McDonald's or stuff like that."** Instead of attending school, Javier would usually hang out by the park, library, or LA river. This is when he fell in love with art, graffiti in particular. Javier says **"And then after, I'll just leave, and then I'll walk around in the LA river, and I'll look at all the writing and stuff. I'll be like, oh, really cool..."**

Javier fell in love with art, in particular, graffiti because it was way he could express himself. In his words Javier says **"Because it was free. Just that, because it was free. It was something that I could do, and like, I didn't have to pay for it. I didn't have video games or stuff like that. Everybody was always like**

... That was, I guess, that's why I don't talk to people too, even now, because I was always by myself. Everybody's always playing their video games or hanging out with their friends. And like me, I was always like, I don't know, I couldn't get along with people because I didn't grow up like that. I couldn't be like, oh hey, you want to play? Like I'll see kids like go up to kids like that in the parking lot. But like that was weird to me. I would just be like, I'm going to just go on my own. And I would just walk around by myself. I would just be like, all right, this is cool." Even when he started getting in trouble for graffiti, Javier would use his art as a form of self-expression to foster resilience. For Javier being creative is a big part of his identity and what has helped him to get through the difficult moments in life, "I just stay, like, making things, and not just give up. I'll make shirts, or drawings, or tattoos, or like, random stuff." From going to prison, Javier has learned to be more organized and judicious as to how he "tags". Javier says "It's like you have to have a team and stuff, you got to have like four lookouts, three lookouts, two lookouts. Because this is dangerous. I don't worry about the cops, like, the cops is like ... I don't really care. Half the time if you're honest with them, they'll let you go. Like, the only thing I worry about over here is just gangs. Because like, you could get killed."

Javier first learned about PCC from his sisters after he was released from prison. Javier is the oldest and one of four siblings currently attending PCC. While in prison for charges related to vandalism/property damage, he is a graffiti artist, Javier earned his GED. After prison, Javier first attended East LA college but decided to switch to PCC. In his words, Javier says "Because I had already gone to East LA before, but they don't really offer you nothing right there. Like, right there, you'll be all hungry, they're not going to be like, oh, you want something to eat? Like, you could come check it over here, like, right here, they have stuff for people. Oh, if you're hungry, they have free food, or programs that will help you. And I'm like, all right, cool. So I came and checked it out. Oh, it's good. So then I told my little brother and my other little sister." He enrolled in school online and has never talked to a counselor or administrator. Javier thinks he doesn't need to meet with anyone either, and that being independent is good. He says "Because, I guess, I don't know. I don't like talking to people. I figured I could do myself, I don't need to ask nobody."

Javier hopes to continue to improve his craft but is worried about the silk-screening space at the college will be shut down because of lack of funding. In the meantime, he wants to continue to "make stuff" and use his artistry to sustain himself and be a source of inspiration for other people. Javier says "Oh, to go do graffiti, and also because, also to networking, like, people see your name, they're like, oh damn, this guy was here, I want to work with this guy.[AND]Well, make shirts and just create stuff. And I give stuff back to people that don't have stuff. Because I'm like, oh, I know what that's like. So I'm like, oh, I've got to do that."