

RQ1: In what ways are Emerging Adult students making decisions about their academic majors and or/potential careers?

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

Dewayne Freeman

Natacha: How did you choose PCC?

Dewayne: I heard that it's a good opportunity to go to if you don't know what you want to do right after high school. It's way more cheaper for me to go here then straight to university and stuff. Yeah, the first two years is free for me and it gives me more time to think about what I want to do. I also want to experiment new things. I want to see what ... because if acting don't go good. I want to have a plan B...

Natacha : What's your plan B right now?

Dewayne : I don't know yet. That's why I'm here, trying to figure out something. Yeah, I need to figure out a plan B, a career

Dewayne Freeman is a gregarious 18-year-old African American student in his first semester at PCC. Dewayne came to PCC undecided but soon realized that given his personality, he should study theater arts and one day become an actor like his favorite comedian Kevin Hart. A self-described "funny" person, Dewayne is just happy to have made it to PCC after almost not graduating from high school. Dewayne says, **"like in high school, I probably was close to not graduating. I was doing bad so I just kept going because I had a smile on my face. Then start going to tutoring after school, libraries started doing my work. Just keep motivating myself. Sometimes it's hard to motivate myself, but I still did it. Then we came and I graduated"**.

Dewayne sees his time at PCC as a time of exploration, an opportunity to really think about the next steps in his life. He explains, **"after I'm done with my GE classes this semester, probably going to go try to pick a new major or something, or crash. I guess you could crash courses. I guess, you can see what you want to do, or I can just look up online and see what I missed yesterday still. Because I really like music and acting. Those are my two biggest things I love to do, but also I want to do ... because I want a car, because I don't have one of them. I also want to learn how to work on the car just in case my car breaks down or something. I can fix it by myself instead of wasting it."** However, Dewayne seems to be making his college journey mainly on his own. He seems reluctant to seek guidance from his family and has not connected with any institutional agent(s) on campus. His lack of understanding of fundamental aspects of college means that this academic and career exploration may not be as thorough as he needs it to be to land on an occupation that suits his needs and interests.

Dewayne sees his past complicated experiences in high school as self-inflicted. He explains, **"I think if I took it serious, ninth grade on my grades and stuff, and looking into colleges at least junior year, I think I would have been at a university right now, and I'll also let distractions take over... Because ninth grade, I was a class clown. Listen to the teachers, thinking ... My mindset at ninth grader was, "Oh, you only a ninth grader. I still got, I got 10th, 11th, senior, to do everything right," but every year count. I didn't know that as much."** Although he understood how vital college was from his sisters who attended Cal Poly, he was not able to do the same. Perhaps his issues with school engagement are connected to what he imagined doing when he was growing up or what his family/teachers suggested he should do. Dewayne says, **"when I was growing up, I wanted it to be I want to be in a movie, and I wanted to be in NBA, playing basketball... I hear from teachers. My dad even told me, my uncles, like, "Try out the army," stuff like that. Even my sisters and then also the recruiters, I guess that's their job, the recruiters. Yeah. Teachers. Yeah. They just tell me to try out the army, but I don't think the army is going to be for me."**

In spite of the advice that Dewayne received to pursue joining the military, he decided to attend PCC. Dewayne started at PCC as an undecided major but was told that to receive financial aid, he needed to declare a major. He decided to meet with a counselor to declare a major and complete an educational plan. Dewayne describes the meeting with the counselor as the following: **"I think it's the IT building and she [counselor] was giving me lists and stuff. She was asking my personality. Like how I say I'm funny. She said what I'm interested in. I said music and an actor. I want to be an actor. She said, "Oh yeah, we got music classes and theater arts." I was like, theater arts? Then she told me information about it. I forgot, but she was saying improv class and stuff. I can do an improv class. Then I was like, all right, I'm just going to pick theater arts as a major and see how that goes."** Dewayne has not discussed his major or classes with a counselor or anyone else at the college since this first initial meeting. Besides speaking with a counselor, Dewayne has not done any more research on theater arts as a major.

Nonetheless, Dewayne feels content with his choice to pursue theater arts. Dewayne thinks it is the right choice because it aligns with his personality and is one of his interests/hobbies. He also largely enjoys his experience at PCC thus far but often feels uncomfortable being the only black student in his class. When describing how his race is a big part of his identity Dewayne explained, **"I guess, being black is hard. I struggle... I'm the only black student, only black male actually. No student in the classroom. So yeah. I feel like I don't got nobody. I don't got no other black people, because they just all, they don't feel right. Sometimes they don't. They don't feel right."**

When I asked Dewayne if he talked with his parents or sisters about his classes and major at PCC, Dewayne emphatically answered: **"I never explained to my parents about my major."** He further elaborated: **"I don't think they know my schedule. I haven't told them about nothing. I just want to feel like, I just want to be independent I guess. I don't want them to feel like they still need me and I'm in college already. I just want to feel that."** Dewayne sees college as a time to start establishing a level of independence from his parents. He wants this experience to be different from high school, where his parents often nagged him about

completing his homework. Dewayne says, **"they're not worried about where I'm at or like, they're not asking to contact the professor, because that's just weird. In college, I think it's weird if your parents still ... if you still need your parents to handle situations"**. He also added that right now, they are satisfied with him attending PCC and to have this "good opportunity."

It is clear that Dewayne feels ambivalent about his collegial path, yet it is unclear how he will explore his interests and make a decision about his career. Given that he has struggled with being unmotivated in the past, he agrees that there might be moments that he will want to stop pursuing theater arts but does not make it clear how he will pull himself out of it. Dewayne says, **"How I push myself? I would probably just be like...I just say, "Let's just get over with," or something. Or like if it's towards the end of the semester and I don't feel like ... and I know acting's not for me, I'll just say, let's just finish through the finish line and hopefully it's truly something that you more than I like I said. Yeah, just tell me just let's get it over with and then find something new. Start on something new"**. In terms of what he could start, Dewayne says, **"Like if you don't like major, you can switch. Or I heard that you could have a double major. I guess you can have a double major I don't know."**