On September 5, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the decision to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, also known as DACA. In the days surrounding this announcement, headlines and broadcast news echoed sensationalized concern for Dreamers across media platforms. In the hour following the announcement, (12 noon to 1pm EDT), more than 487,000 social media posts mentioned DACA. Over the period between midnight and 1:30 p.m, more than 1.3 million posts mentioned DACA (Talkwalker 2017). In *DACA: Life After the Headlines*, we document the oscillation of media attention and the lives of those most impacted.

Across current media platforms, DACA is no longer headline news. DACA is a feature story, yet those affected have not been featured in the mainstream media. We decided to investigate these areas of “media silence” further by asking the qualitative questions: “How did media coverage impact the nation’s perception of the DREAM Act and DACA recipients?” and more importantly, “How did this media spectacle and subsequent public response impact the Dreamers quality of life?”. The research process for *DACA: Life After the Headlines* was in part inspired by the work of auteur documentary filmmakers Ken Burns and Ava Duvernay. Both filmmakers used their media platforms to address social issues and expose certain injustices faced by minority communities. Their investigative works question society through creating an open discourse on controversial issues. We modeled the technical delivery of our discourse on their utilization of text in conjunction with formal documents which in turn support the stories of our participants. Therefore, the ultimate goal of *DACA: Life After the Headlines*, was to emulate the work of Burns and Duvernay by asking people of various backgrounds to share their stories, in combination with experts weighing in and illustrating these issues through a wider context.

Through descriptive documentary research, we interviewed 3 individuals who were impacted by the DREAM Act and DACA decision. In deciding our 3 participants, we focused primarily on individuals from the New York State area. As undergraduate students from a New York State Institution, we felt it necessary to focus our research first and foremost on the areas we directly inhabit. The open responses from our Ithaca College and broader New York City communities and how they were impacted by the DACA decision was pertinent to our exploration. That being said, the DACA decision and the DREAM Act are ongoing issues. As researchers we are actively witnessing the direct impacts of these events, which makes it difficult to measure the long-term impact of the decision on these individuals. However our current research represents the dire need for social justice through community activism and engagement, a prevalent theme throughout several of the interviews.

The American Dream is built on the ideology that “everyone” regardless of socioeconomic status can essentially “pull themselves up by the bootstraps” and achieve their
greatest social and economic ambitions. In our film, *DACA: Life After the Headlines*, we explore the stories of the people who are struggling against a system of inequity that refuses to acknowledge them or its own fallacy. Our participants vocalized that this meritocratic ideal is essentially “dismantled” by the DACA decision. The exclusion of information elicits massive ramifications emotionally and economically on not only the student but their family. Often times, the media portrays Dreamers as neighbors, model students, and good Americans while ignoring or portraying criminalized migrants as aimless and lawless. In other words, Dreamers are uplifted and potentially swept into educational pipelines while non-Dreamers are forced into the deportation pipeline (Bloemraad et al. 2014; Yukich, 2013).

Even when the media is attempting to portray Dreamers accurately, they create a dichotomous understanding of what it means to be either a “good” or “bad immigrant.” *DACA: Life After the Headlines* attempts to show that the people impacted by DACA are more than “good immigrants” fighting for the American Dream. Instead, they are people subjected to meritocratic ideals and the whims of the media system, all while trying to live their own complex lives.

Performance Requirements: Desktop Computer, Projector


