SW&S | Social Work and Society
International Online Journal

The 'alien other': A culture of dehumanizing immigrants in the United States

Douglas Epps, University of Washington Tacoma

Rich Furman, University of Washington Tacoma

"...to individuals that are contemplating making this dangerous journey...from Central America to the United States - they're entitled to due process, but they will not be welcomed to this country with open arms." White House Press Secretary, Josh Earnest in response to the increased influx of immigrants crossing the US/Mexico border (Brady, 2014).

1   Introduction

Few topics currently inspire more passion than what has been frequently termed "the immigration debate." Even within this seemingly simple phrase exists a clear message that immigration is something that must be debated, that in and of itself it is problematic. While certain groups of immigrants have been the target of immigration removal policy over the years, immigration itself, and even undocumented immigration, has not always been viewed as a social problem as it is today. Nevins (2002) presents compelling data demonstrating how relatively free and unencumbered passage of undocumented immigrants in and out of what is now the United States existed for many, many decades. The development of immigration as a significant social problem began to some degree in the 1930s, yet picked up steam through the rhetoric of the Reagan administration in the 1980s. Since then, several factors such as post 9/11 politics, globalization, anti-immigrant sentiment and government policies (Furman, Ackerman, Loya, Jones & Negi, 2012) have further exacerbated the trend toward the problematization of immigrants in the US.

According to a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report issued in 2013, an estimated 11.4 million undocumented immigrants currently reside in the United States (Baker & Rytina, 2013), and an average of more than one thousand of these individuals are deported every day [Note: Figure based off of 2013 fiscal year data totalling over 368,000 deportations (ICE, nd.)] . This phenomenon, underexplored in the academic literature, is the practice of mass deportation. Not only does mass deportation devastate families, many of which include children who are US citizens, (Dreby, 2012; Brabeck & Xu, 2010) but has been shown to be an ineffective deterrent, not to mention wildly costly. The Center for American Progress estimates that the continued methods of mass deportation and apprehension will cost taxpayers $285 billion dollars over a five year period (Fitz, Wijewardena, & Martinez, 2010). At a time of budget cuts and economic insecurity, the calculated $23,480 per person (Kasperkevic, 2012) of financial commitment needed for the current immigration enforcement methods leaves one to speculate whether that funding could be directed towards more socially beneficial avenues. Furthermore, the rapid nature inherent to the practice of mass deportation is in itself a cause for concern in regards to its threat of human rights violations and potential barriers to due process.

What is it about undocumented immigrants entering and residing in the United States that requires us to devote billions of dollars, countless man hours and a myriad of other resources to enforce their removal? Perhaps the issue is not the immigrants themselves, but society's perception and ignorance surrounding this population. Countless myths still circulate about undocumented immigrants, much of which have been debunked time and time again (Chomsky, 2007), yet immigrants are persistently labelled as 'other' than human. For example, Mexican immigrants of today are commonly referred to as wetbacks or illegals and officially designated as aliens by the federal government. These brutally oppressive labels in themselves created by socially dominant powers are difficult enough to bear, yet it is the harsh tactics created by these same dominant forces that exhibit the true dangers of dehumanizing fellow human beings (Furman, Ackerman, Loya, Jones, & Negi, 2012).

The purpose of this article is to show that 'othering' immigrants has been a part of restrictive immigration policy since the origins of the United States as well as a constant component of present day mass deportation policy. To meet these aims, the authors shall explore the following aspects in relation to this phenomenon. First, a brief explanation of "othering" in application to undocumented immigrants in America will be established. Second, a history of mass deportation in America will be discussed in order to provide a context for the expression of mass deportation and the deep-seated tendency of "othering" in the United States. Third, current and recent federal U.S. policies will be introduced, examining the constant presence of "othering" unauthorized immigrants, with a primary focus on the Secure Communities program. Finally, we will conclude with a discussion of social "othering" both in the United States and internationally as well as the current state of the "alien other" in American political discourse.

2   'Othering' – A brief interpretation

In order to gain a working understanding of social othering, a general yet concise description of this concept is needed. "Othering," racism, xenophobia, nativism and discrimination are inherently related concepts that intersect and overlap and will therefore build upon or incorporate assumptions from one another. The foundation of "othering" is constructed on the imbalance of power, as with much in the realm of oppressive and discriminatory behaviors. Essentially, "othering" can be understood as a social method of identifying individuals thought to be different from one's self or culture, most specifically the majority culture, that creates or emphasizes dominance and subordination (Johnson, Bottorff, Browne, Grewal, et. al, 2004). The concept can be further defined as "a personal, social, cultural, and historical experience involving (a) cultural and racial ambiguity, (b) categorization and labeling, (c) hierarchical power dynamics, and (d) limited access to resources" (Borrero, Yeh, Cruz & Suda, 2012). Extensive research has been conducted on the "other" throughout the decades which present a multitude of diverse theories and applications, yet Ajzenstadt and Shapira (2012) summarize that the "other," or "alien" in regards to immigration policy, is believed to be composed of two mutual facets. First, the labeling of certain individuals as "others" is derived from a social need on the interpersonal and cultural level inherent to human interaction. Second, the role administered to this "othered" group sets meaningful boundaries normalized throughout each society or culture. Therefore, those who emigrate from an outside nation and culture, deviant of the mainstream norm, are classified as the "alien other" by those in the dominant culture.

"Othering" can occur on an individual basis between persons in a certain social setting, or an entire community, population or race can be the subject; based upon differences such as culture, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation and so on. Essentially, the foundation of

othering is based on a dynamic of power imbalance, which creates an atmosphere of "us" versus "them." In terms of immigrants, whose differences are often immediately noticeable, with language, dress and cuisine often far outside the norm of mainstream America, it's not difficult to see how individuals from a foreign land can be categorized as the "other." This divide is further increased when immigrants are criminalized by the federal government, which not only places them in a social category outside the norm, it also labels them outside the law and designates a perception of potential danger, legitimizing their "otherness" to the general public. Ajzenstad and Shapira (2012) elaborate:

> "They are classified as subjects for regulation and control, aiming to protect society from the economic, demographic and social dangers they pose. Their definition as 'dangerous' locates them in an isolated place with its own social meaning for them and for society" (p. 688).

Undocumented immigrants uniquely face exclusion in three different realms of "othering." They are physically excluded by means of detention and deportation practices, socially excluded as a result of the labels and harmful myths branded by mainstream society and civically excluded due to their inability to participate in the rights given to those living in the country who have been granted citizenship. As a result of the physical exclusion of unauthorized immigrants, mass detention and deportation practices have created an especially harmful and extremely expensive dilemma in the United States, which continues to destroy families and cost taxpayers billions of dollars. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on the perceived threat or danger of the 'othered' group within the discourse of the dominant population, since the perceived danger of a group is likely the greatest catalyst to requiring their removal or containment.

3   The historical context of America's 'alien other'
The "othering" of immigrants is not a new practice but a thread woven throughout the history of the United States. While immigration removal policy has been in the spotlight of American news media throughout the last decade, its practice, in some form or another, has been a part of the United States since the country's inception. As the act of deporting individuals has been part of society for centuries, so has the inherent execution of prejudicial conceptions used to determine who and why said individuals are to be removed. The concept of prejudice is a guiding force, deep-seated in deportation and the underlying policies of both the past and the present. This goes for mass deportations as well, however, the political motivations for removal have been at times more heinous than others.

Forced transportation, or the mandated removal of a person from their home location, has been a method of imposed punishment for hundreds of years (Rubin, 2012). In eighteenth century London, involuntary removal would eventually become the choice form of punishment for English law enforcers in which offenders of various crimes were freighted by the boatload in unsanitary and disease ridden conditions (Rubin, 2012). The Transportation Act was passed in 1718 making shipment of the British "other," (ie. criminals, including first time offenders) to the Australian and American colonies common practice and thus, serving two distinct objectives: 1) The deportees provided a much needed cheap labor force for the Crown; and 2) their removal relieved the "burden" of delinquency on local British society (Vaver, 2008). Essentially, the populous of America and Australia was seeded with what the British government deemed human "refuse;" the result of early mass deportation policy using the most expeditious and technologically advanced form of bulk removal during the time. In this instance, the dominant English lawmakers (mostly wealthy landowners) labeled those

convicted of criminal acts (commonly the lower class) as dangerous to their social fabric and in doing so, set the social boundary marking those "deviants" suited for removal outside of their greater community. In contrast to contemporary American immigration policy, Britain deported the "othered" as an offshore labor source in their new colonies whereas the US deports the unwanted after the benefits of immigrant labor has been gained.

Throughout American history, immigration has been encouraged during times of economic expansion and labor shortages (Astor, 2009). For instance, during the gold rush and corresponding growth of America's labyrinthine railroad system in the nineteenth century, immigrants were a strongly desired and cost effective workforce who were detrimental to connecting the states across the North American continent. In fact, railroad companies such as Central Pacific Railroad, employed recruiters sent overseas, armed with the promise of prosperity and The American Dream, to bring back much needed Chinese laborers (Zhan & Cao, 2012). However, as railroads reached completion and the abundance of gold dwindled, an economic downturn ensued, leaving thousands of hard-working immigrants searching for work and many European Americans looking for someone to blame- that blame fell to the outsiders (Chin, 2013).

As anti-Chinese sentiment multiplied, fomented groups began to form in the West such as the Working Man's Association, Knights of Labor and the New Era Brotherhood (Chesanow, 2004), which propagated the evils of the Chinese people and blamed them for taking available jobs at rates unlivable for most Americans (Ko, 2013; Chin 2013). In Tacoma, Washington particularly, the instigators in these exclusionist parties were comprised of all levels of the social class hierarchy, from the blue-collar workers at the port, to the town's own mayor (Chesanow, 2004). In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act (CEA), the first of its kind to directly target a specific minority group, effectively banning most Chinese immigrants from receiving American citizenship and/or entry into the United States for 10 plus years (Chin, 2013). As work visas inevitably expired, the provisions of the CEA thereby criminalized an entire ethnicity. Eventually, antipathy towards Chinese immigrants reached its boiling point in several cities, such as the aforementioned city of Tacoma, Washington. The disinclination of several townspeople of this northwestern port town erupted into a widespread riot as a mob of 500 torch brandishing citizens, including the town's own mayor, county judge and fire chief, who rounded up the remaining Chinese and forced them to the local train station (Chesanow, 2004). Once at the station, the Chinese migrant workers and their families were hastily shipped south to Oregon or sent by boat to Victoria, British Columbia; the only belongings being what they could carry (Chesanow, 2004). The tactics used in Tacoma to remove the unwanted immigrant population would later be coined "The Tacoma Method" and used as motivation by neighboring cities to take care of the Chinese "problem." What happened in Tacoma was one of many forced deportations, the result of pushing immigrants of Chinese descent to the furthest end of the social spectrum. Ironically, many Chinese were forcibly removed and transported on some of the very train tracks they likely spent several years constructing.

In this instance, Chinese immigrants were labeled and widely promoted as a "problem" to the social well-being of the community. Propaganda posters were spread throughout the towns, hateful ads were placed in the local papers and even local holidays were created for the purpose of anti-Chinese parades (Ko, 2013). The "alien other" was publicly branded by trusted officials and laymen alike. Many scholars have noted, including Ajzenstadt and Shapira (2012), the use of moral panic as a frequent form of social control over the "othered."

While this moral panic more commonly results in conservative and restrictive immigration policies; for the Chinese, the moral panic turned into widespread assault and banishment.

The Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 re-ignited the anti-Asian mind-set once again in the United States, particularly so in the northwestern states. Japanese, German and Italian Americans were all labeled as "enemy aliens," yet it was only the non-Caucasian Japanese who were the target of concentration camps (Lee, 2007). Some 100,000 Japanese, around two-thirds whom were legitimate US citizens and nearly half under 21 years of age, were collected and detained with little to no warning, forcing many to sell businesses, homes and possessions for whatever they were offered (Renteln, 1995). They were often separated from their families and freighted to isolated camps resembling prison compounds, which were surrounded in barbed wire with armed men in guard towers (Renteln, 1995). It is important to note that there were no recorded incidents of espionage that had occurred to instigate or prolong the Japanese internment (Lee, 2007). While the grounds were different than the Chinese methods of the late 19th century, the dehumanization of a people based solely on their ethnicity was eerily reminiscent of those in the not so distant past. The Japanese internment camps of the WWII era presented a problem similar to that of today's Guantanamo in a time of national hostility and widespread fear. Here, the immigrant 'other' was not only prejudicially excluded from the "acceptable" society, they were also deemed dangerous by the dominant group based on their race and ethnicity. Yet, given the political climate, they were not able to be deported as is typically done with the threatening 'other.' In order to remove the Japanese 'threat' from greater society, the American government had to create a new space where the group in power was able to maintain absolute control over the dangerous 'other' from a safe distance.

After World War II, racially focused anti-immigrant views began a shift from those designated "Yellow Peril" (peoples of Asian descent) toward those of a slightly darker skin color, arriving from the border of the southwestern United States (Astor, 2009). This time, the fear dredged up by the mainstream was not just based upon national security as declared by President Roosevelt in Executive Order 9906 during WWII (Lee, 2007), or economical as it was with the Chinese, but a combination of both. However, it can be argued that lurking behind most, if not all, mass deportations/discriminations throughout history are phobic and economic catalysts. The large influx of Mexican immigrants that began in the early 1940's was highly encouraged by the Federal government and these manual laborers, otherwise referred to as "braceros," were regarded as heroes for helping the American war effort, yet this amicable rapport was short lived as the war began to die down (Astor, 2009). The result of this change in sentiment manifested itself in perhaps the most brazen racist policies created by the US federal government. Operation Wetback was made public in the summer of 1954 and incorporated 800 Border Patrol officers who swept through the southwestern United States performing roadblocks, raids and enforced the mass deportation of over one million undocumented immigrants, most of which were Mexican nationals (Hernandez, 2006). In fact, Astor (2009) postulates that there was a complex set of issues leading to the securitization and criminalization of Mexican immigration ten years prior to its announcement in 1954. Astor explains that carefully calculated, postharvest mass deportations of migrant farm laborers had been occurring by Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), presumably to prevent their integration into American society while reaping the benefits of their inexpensive labor efforts. Between 1943 and 1954, Mexican nationals consisted of over 90 percent of the average total numbers of apprehensions, the removal of which were highly supported by the Mexican government as well (Hernandez, 2006).

The above historical cases show four distinctly different consequences of widespread dehumanization and the labeling of human beings as an unworthy social group - the "other." Besides the effective exclusion of both documented and undocumented immigrants, they share a commonality of enforcing and thereby reinforcing control of the dominant group. Yet, enforcing control is not the only outcome of othering immigrants as Sanchez, Furman and Ackerman (2014) note, strategy also serves as a pacification tactic aimed at legal citizens. By casting blame upon the "othered" group, those whose lives have been affected by various systemic and structural barriers are prevented from analyzing said factors. In other words, blaming undocumented immigrants for economic woes places blame for structural social inequalities and problems in an economic order on certain individuals rather than on the social structures themselves. Further, by blaming immigrants for unemployment, the corporate interests are able to cast blame away from their own practices with oppressed workers. The blame for society's problems placed upon the "alien other" legitimates the removal of persons who threaten the American way of life and as such, must be expelled from society. Ajzenstadt and Shapira (2012) explain that labeling and restricting the "other" is a way of protecting the worthy society from the immigrant danger. In this instance, the other is a perceived threat to labor market and economic stability. In order to maintain the majority's way of life, the threat is controlled via four different avenues: 1) restrictive policy (eg. inhibiting pathways to legal citizenship, time allowed in country and social service eligibility), 2) apprehension and containment within detention centers, 3) removal via deportation and 4) fear of apprehension.

4   Current immigration policies – The product of 'Othering'

The terrorist attacks that took place on September 11th, 2001 marked a reactionary turning point for the crackdown on undocumented immigration. This isolated incident on American soil would serve as political fuel to ignite fear and sway citizen's hearts with internationally televised evidence of the threat those hailing from foreign lands may pose. The securitization of American borders further tightened its grasp from within by means of the Patriot Act and subsequent legislation which followed in the months and years afterward. Furman, Sanchez, Ackerman and Ung (2014) elaborate that: "The United States has always had conflicting and often contested views of immigrants, there has been increased antipathy since the 9/11 tragedy, when undocumented laborers began to be included in a generalized, dangerous 'other.'" As evident in the below policies, impoverished migrants who cross the US/Mexico border in search of work to feed their families have become a threat to national security. They are no longer 'Wetbacks' but potential terrorists. Their undocumented or "illegal" method of crossing the border further separates the us versus them dichotomy and the federally proclaimed need to detain or imprison immigrant "criminals" legitimizes the perception and treatment as others - as persons who are not to be trusted (Grove & Ziwi, 2006).

4.1 Operation Endgame

One of the more recent in publically proclaimed government missions against the immigrant 'other' was announced in 2003, entitled Operation Endgame. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) mission consisted of a ten year plan as proclaimed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS): "to promote the public safety and national security by ensuring the departure from the United States of all removable aliens…" (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2003, p.ii). Within this sentence, ICE has characterized all undocumented immigrants as the "dangerous other." The implied meaning behind this declaration is not so subtle - if the people of the United States are to be safe and the country secure, every undocumented immigrant must be apprehended, detained and removed from our society.

While a record number of deportations occurred during the Obama administration (Thompson & Cohen 2014), the DHS's mission objective was not reached and millions of removable immigrants still reside within the borders of the US. Even though Operation Endgame's proclaimed goal was to deport "all" removable aliens in America, its results are reminiscent of the racially instigated removal operation of some 60 years prior, Operation Wetback. Endgame was undeniably focused on the "Wetback" of today. According to the Office of Immigration Statistics, approximately 97% of all deportees in 2010 were Latino and of these, 73% were Mexican nationals (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera & Motel, 2011; Office of Immigration Statistics, 2011). Nearly the entire population of deported immigrants in 2010 were Hispanic. It is unlikely that Hispanic migrants are planning a terrorist attack on US soil, yet they are targeted in regards to public safety and national security. As Grove and Ziwi (2006) explain, 'othering' immigrants creates a need to react from a defensive position: "erecting barriers, screening and deterring, defending borders, and effectively guarding against contact and confrontation.

4.2 Operation Streamline

Originating in the Del Rio sector of the Central Border Patrol (CBP) in 2005, Operation Streamline (OS) is a policy, which literally criminalizes undocumented immigrants. Created to deter migrants from crossing the Mexico/US border without authorization, OS results in the prosecution of migrants who enter the US via the border undocumented, resulting in a possible misdemeanor conviction of up to 180 days in prison or a felony conviction of up to 20 years (Buentello, Carswell, Hudson & Libal, 2010). Previously, criminal prosecution for unauthorized entrants were reserved for repeat violators and migrants with criminal records, yet OS requires charging all migrants who cross the border undocumented (Lydgate, 2010). This seems to show that previously convicted "criminal aliens" are not the true target of the Department of Homeland Security's agenda as ICE has relentlessly proclaimed, and instead points more callously towards an agenda of criminalization, again focusing on the Mexican and other Central American migrant populations.

Thanks to OS, criminal caseloads have more than quadrupled after its implementation, creating an immense burden on district courts along the border and averting critical resources from serious criminal proceedings (Lydgate, 2010), while simultaneously creating an immensely lucrative opportunity for private prison companies (Buentello, Carswell, Hudson & Libal, 2010). In accordance with the proliferation of mass deportation as a national policy, and as a result of the unmanageable workload imposed upon the courts, immigrants prosecuted under OS are tried conjointly in groups between 40 to 80 defendants, this includes legal counsel provided by a group lawyer and often involves the entire proceedings completed in a single day (Lydgate 2010; Slack, Martinez, Whiteford & Peifer, 2013).

Operation Streamline is a clear manifestation of othering in political form. Undocumented immigrants are seen as threatening, illegal 'others' and therefore, must be prosecuted for their criminality. Their crime is entering the United States without proper credentials. Unauthorized entry, which has long been a civil violation, is now a serious crime, but only for the select immigrants crossing the Mexico/US border in specifically designated areas (Buentello, Carswell, Hudson & Libal, 2010). It should also be noted that Operation Streamline continues the trend of targeting Central American immigrants, a trend that has been evident since operation Wetback some 60 years in the past.

4.3 Secure Communities

Secure Communities. The name itself suggests a threat that must be eliminated or contained in order to live comfortably and safely. Ironically, the evidence surrounding the Secure Communities program suggests it has not only missed its mark, but likely lead to an opposite effect on community safety. The Secure Communities Act, which requires jails to run fingerprints of all arrestees through ICE databases, regardless of whether the individual is charged with a crime, was first introduced in 2008 by ex-president George W. Bush and expanded further by the early Obama administration (Kohli, Markowitz & Chavez, 2011). The Secure Communities program remains in place, despite increased resistance from several city, counties and states nationwide who refuse to take part in the federally mandated program (Chishti, Bergeron & Hoyt, 2011) as its raised legitimate questions of racial profiling/pretextual arrests, interfering with community trust of local law enforcement and an incongruence with stated goals (Waslin, 2011). These issues jeopardize community safety, as a diminished trust in law enforcement can inhibit communication and reliance on various emergency services. An attempt was made late in President Obama's final term, to rename and revamp the program (including the expansion and creation of several other immigrant friendly policies) via Executive Order. However, before the new programs could take effect, Texas, along with half of the US states, sued and eventually blocked Obama's attempt at immigration reform from becoming active (Masters, 2016).

A statement from the ice.gov website outlining the provisions of the Secure Communities program describes the mission and focus of whom they will be directing their enforcement operations towards: "ICE prioritizes the removal of criminal aliens, those who pose a threat to public safety, and repeat immigration violators" (Immigration & Customs Enforcement, nd, Paragraph 2). While this is of course a generalization of their prospective targets, we can see there are three qualities of undocumented immigrants which ICE declares the Secure Communities program will focus on: 1) Immigrants who are criminals, 2) immigrants who are a threat to the safety of others and 3) immigrants who are repeat violators of immigration regulations.

Distinguishing what is criminal, can be troublesome without a clear definition. Fortunately, ICE has provided a definition for the "criminal" criterion specifically for the purpose of Secure Communities, located in their frequently asked questions: "Criminal aliens are immigrants who have been convicted of a crime by a court of law. This conviction may occur in the United States or overseas, provided that the overseas conviction is one that is recognized in the United States" (Immigration & Customs Enforcement, nd, Paragraph 7). Of the three mentioned identifiers of apprehension priorities, "threat to public safety" seems to be the most ambiguous. Without some sort of quantitative, distinguishable criteria for what a "threat to public safety" entails, potential for abuse or misuse of resources can't help but be foreseen. A gray area is undeniably a cause for concern when the magnitude of ambiguity involves the possibility of an individual's liberty being revoked or their family and home disseminated. Yet, if ICE is using the same reasoning as in Operation Endgame, all undocumented immigrants would be deemed a threat to public safety and the other two criteria in ICE's stated priorities are purposeless.

Even though ICE has explicitly broadcasted their number one priority for removal is to pursue criminal immigrants, the enforcement statistics appear to tell a different story. As shown in a study conducted by the University of California-Berkeley Law School in which researchers found that immigrants apprehended under secure communities are not necessarily criminals

nor even non-citizens; in 2010 3,600 people apprehended under Secure Communities were actually US citizens (Kohli et al., 2011). Additionally, evidence developed from ICE's own data showed that 79% of immigrants deported under the guise of Secure Communities were deemed non-criminal or were without charge or conviction of a crime (Ray, 2011; ACLU, 2010; ACLU, 2010). This data could suggest that the program is more likely a pretense implemented to gain public approval and further expedite the removal processes. By providing local law enforcement with the agency, ability and duty to gather deportees for ICE, their net of apprehension can engulf millions of more possible deportees, filling detention centers and clearing the states of the 'alien other.' Since Secure Communities merely needs an arrest to run fingerprints through ICE's database, it also opens up the door for possible abuse by means of racial profiling. "Suspicious" individuals may potentially be picked up and booked into the system without ever being charged with a crime, yet end up being detained by ICE and subsequently deported.

A promotional video created by the Federal Executive Board entitled Your Federal Government: ICE-Episode 7, was released to inform the public of what ICE does as a government agency and perhaps illuminates an underlying objective for the Secure Communities program as well. The narrator highlights ICE's authority under the program and describes a process, which contradicts what is previously described as a high priority criminal alien and the definition of such:

> [Narrator] "What is Secure Communities? It is an initiative to help DHS identify removable aliens arrested for crimes...At all times, ICE retains authority to make appropriate decisions against removable aliens-consistent with its priorities and resources, based on individual facts and circumstances regardless of whether a criminal conviction is obtained [Underline added]" (Federal Executive Board, 2012, 8:30 & 10:20).

As mentioned earlier, under the frequently asked questions on the official ICE website about Secure Communities, a question entitled "How does ICE define 'criminal aliens?'" provides a clear and concise answer which ensures that if an immigrant is to be considered criminal, he or she must "have been convicted of a crime by a court of law." If criminal aliens are the stated priority of ICE's removal operations, and in order to be considered criminal, the immigrant must have a criminal conviction; then it seems there may be some confusion of priorities. The majority of deportees are non-criminal aliens and ICE's own informational video explains that there is no need for a criminal conviction in order to detain and deport under Secure Communities. It appears to promote a notion that ICE has the ultimate authority to do as they please, despite their publicly stated priorities. ICE's dominant stance on their removal processes under Secure Communities speaks to the lack of resources available to the 'othered' group which is a basis for "marginalization, disempowerment and social exclusion" (Grove & Zwi, 2006).

To further support possible ethical violations, such as racial profiling, it has been shown in the report mentioned earlier detailing ICE's own data, in which a measurable disparity lies in the racial demographics of those targeted. In fact, Secure Communities has unfavorably targeted Latino/a immigrants with 93% of apprehensions comprised of Hispanic individuals, yet Latinos/as only consist of 77% of the population considered "deportable" (Kohli et al., 2011). Many would argue that this is clear evidence of an exploitation of power obtained through the ambiguity of the discretionary judgment granted to ICE and local law enforcement through the Secure Communities program. Furthermore, the report indicated disturbing evidence that

immigrants who are captured by means of Secure Communities may actually face a greater obstruction of civil liberties (Kohli et al., 2011). The large number of non-criminals and the disproportionate number of Hispanic immigrants detained and deported under Secure Communities is compelling evidence pointing towards inequitable, illusory practices by ICE.

Indeed, the public is left to wonder what the real objectives of this program are. If the majority of those captured and deported under the Secure Communities banner are not in fact criminals by ICE's definition, then it leaves several unanswered questions as to why such a large amount of non-criminals were apprehended. Were they detained because they were found to be "a threat to public safety[?]" Or were they the victims of racially targeted public policy designed to exclude and eradicate the 'alien other' as has been shown in past mass deportation policies such as Operation Wetback and the Chinese Exclusion Act? In 2015, the Secure Communities program changed its name to the Priority Enforcement Program (ICE, nd.), but it is unclear whether a closer adherence to stated priorities has occurred. Perhaps this name change was due to the obvious disparity between ICE's removal and apprehension statistics with the program's stated priorities, along with the results of several, well-respected empirical studies showing quite distinctly that ICE views all undocumented immigrants as criminals and/or threats to public safety. Yet, if immigrants are 'othered' to the point of becoming a threat to national security, their removal can be justified. As Ajzenstadt and Shapira (2012) explain: "They [immigrants] are classified as subjects for regulation and control, aiming to protect society from the economic, demographic and social dangers they pose."

5   Discussion: A culture of dehumanization

As can be seen throughout America's history, "othering" has been a common and accepted practice when dealing with immigrant populations, despite the fact that the nation's entire heritage, besides those of Native American decent, derives from immigrants themselves. There is a tendency to view refugees and immigrants, not as human beings, but in terms of their perceived worth as we welcome immigrants when there is a clear need for labor and mark them "return to sender" after they have served their purpose.

The increased trend of criminalizing immigrants, especially those considered "undocumented," is not limited to the United States. Rather, it seems more so a product of social influences on the entire Global North, such as, " post– 9/11 xenophobia and racism, the securitization of borders, a general climate of fear and moral panic, as well as the economic turmoil of the last decade and a half" (Furman, Epps & Lamphear, 2016). While most developed countries have some sort of detainment and deportation system in place to deal with their own "alien other," their methods can vary in tactics and stringency. In fact, the American immigration standards are just one of many in a global fabric of immigrant criminalization and exclusion. For example, Australia's perceived threat of unauthorized immigrants is so great that asylum seekers are held indefinitely in extraterritorial processing centers located on multiple isolated Pacific islands such as Nauru and Papua New Guinea (Penovic and Dastyari, 2016). Australia's methods, deemed "The Pacific Solution" is distinctly unique to other methods of solving the problem of the 'alien other' by completely segregating refugees and asylum seekers from any contact with the mainland, until the government has deemed them satisfactory for assimilation. While Australia's offshoring tactics may not be feasible for the majority of other countries, it shows that the 'othering' of immigrants is not an isolated issue but a global phenomenon.

As discussed, the "other" is the product of power imbalances imposed upon a minority by a dominant group. Without a highly restrictive deportation policy in place and an efficacious method to remove large amounts of individuals perceived as such a threat, then that way of life will inevitably change as numbers of the outside culture increase, bringing their influences to the social and cultural environment. There is a clear commonality within the 'othering' discourse surrounding each case presented. Whether it is the British criminals first sent here under the Transportation Act of 1718, the Chinese forcibly removed under the Chinese Exclusion Act, Executive Order 9906 for the internment of Japanese-Americans, Operation Wetback of the '50's or Secure Communities of today; that common thread is a perception of threat by the group in power, ie. government. The cases analyzed show that the target population of each policy started off amicable, some were even aggressively recruited by US corporations and the federal government. Yet, as political, societal and economic climates changed, perception of each group inevitably morphed into that of the threatening 'alien other' and the source of that era's plight.

The policies set in place over the years have changed externally since the Chinese Exclusionary Act, yet fundamentally still serve the same purpose of removing the "othered;" those deemed unworthy or unfit to be considered American. It is no longer politically correct to blatantly call for the removal of a certain nationality or have an operation designed to remove "wetbacks." Now, there are policies given innocuous titles such as Secure Communities, which use the guise of community safety in order to identify, apprehend and remove the "othered" populations. A policy which is clearly not aimed at felonious immigrants as it states, but as the data shows, is focused on Central American migrants instead - the current 'alien other' targeted in contemporary America.

'Othering' immigrants in the United States has had a newfound surge of activity in the public discourse as Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump basks in the limelight of the Presidential race. A key component of Trump's campaign is his hard lined approach to immigration, with a specific target on Central American immigrants. Part of Trump's plan to "make America great again," as shown on his campaign website donaldjtrump.com (2016), highlights his sentiment towards immigration policy and immigrants themselves, especially those of Mexican and Central American nationality. Some of his immediate plans entail "building an impenetrable physical wall" along the US/Mexico border, "terminating Obama's two amnesties" which he refers to as "illegal" (assumed to be the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the DREAM Act which grants conditional residency to attend college and a pathway towards permanent residency) and tripling the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to increase apprehension. But, unlike current policy makers, Trump does not effectively hide his discriminatory and racist beliefs as he has publicly referred to Mexicans as criminals, drug smugglers and rapists on several occasions (Ye Hee Lee, 2015). One clear piece of evidence comes from his Presidential announcement speech: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists." (Washington Post Staff, 2015, np.).

While political correctness has partially obscured ethnically charged policies in recent years, Trump's ongoing political success in the polls, serves as a crude assessment of the anti-immigrant sentiment still ingrained among American citizens today. It seems fair to postulate that the real danger is not among various immigrant populations touted as the threat to the American way of life, but in this surge of discriminatory discourse in America. Perhaps the

true threat already resides within American society and individuals like Donald Trump who normalize the labeling of groups of people not as human beings, but as the 'other.'

This paper has shown the deep roots of 'othering' in American immigration policies, both in its historic origins and in present policy today. Within the cases presented also resides a worldwide call to action. Centuries old ways of thinking cannot be changed without the hard work of individuals from all walks of life, from advocates, politicians and social service professionals to laypersons alike. The United States is but one example of a much larger global issue, an issue that can be conquered with educated approaches to legislation and a progressively humanizing rhetoric.

References

Ackerman, A. and Furman, R. (2013). The criminalization of immigration and the privatization of the immigration detention: Implications for justice. Contemporary Justice Review, 19(2), pp. 251-263.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (2010), *ACLU statement on Secure Communities November 2010*. Retrieved from: https://www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights/aclu-statement-secure-communities

Astor, A. (2009). Unauthorized immigration, securitization and the making of Operation Wetback. *Latino Studies 7*(1), pp. 5-29.

Ajzenstadt, M. & Shapira, A. (2012). The socio-legal construction of otherness under a neo-liberal regime: The case of foreign workers in the Israeli criminal courts. *British Journal of Criminology (52)* pp. 685-704. doi:10.1093/bjc/azs020

Baker, B., & Rytina, N. (2013). *Estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population residing in the United States: January 2012.* Department of Homeland Security-Office of Immigration Statistics. Retrieved from: http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_ill_pe_2012_2.pdf

Borrero, N., Yeh, C., Cruz, C., & Suda, J. (2012). *School as a context for "othering" youth and promoting cultural assets*. Teachers College Record (114), pp. 1-37. Retrieved from: http://www.tcrecord.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/library/Content.asp?ContentId=16246

Brabeck, K., & Xu, Q. (2010). The impact of detention and deportation on Latino immigrant children and families: A quantitative exploration. *Hispanic Journal Of Behavioral Sciences, 32(3)*, pp. 341-361. doi:10.1177/0739986310374053

Brady, J. (2014). *Press briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, 7/15/2014*. The White House. Retrieved from: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/15/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-7152014

Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2003). *ENDGAME: Office of Detention and Removal strategic plan 2003-2012- Detention and removal strategy for a secure homeland*. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved from: http://www.yuricareport.com/Civil Rights/Endgame.pdf

Chesanow, D. (2004). From Repression to Reconciliation. *Chinese American Forum*, 19(3), pp. 22-25.

Chin, P. (2013). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. *Chinese American Forum*, 28(3), pp. 8-13.

Dreby, J. (2012). The burden of deportation on children in Mexican immigrant families. *Journal Of Marriage And Family*, 74(4), pp. 829-845. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00989.x

Federal Executive Board. (2012, Aug 23). *Your federal government: ICE-episode 7. [Video File]* Waltham's Municipal Access Channel. Retrieved from: http://wn.com/us_immigration_and_customs_enforcement -- alternate source, youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ql5YgIW1RYs

Fitz, M., Wijewardena, M., & Martinez, G. (2010). *The costs of mass deportation: Impractical, inexpensive and ineffective*. Center for American Progress, March 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/03/pdf/cost_of_deportation.pdf

Furman, R., Ackerman, A., Loya, M., Jones, S., and Negi, N. (2012) 'The Criminalization of immigration: Value conflicts for the social work profession. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare,* 39(1), pp. 169-185.

Furman, R., Sanchez, M., Ackerman, A. & Ung, T. (2014). *The immigration detention center as a transnational problem: Implications for international social work.* International Social Work, 1-6. Retrieved from: http://isw.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/01/27/0020872813500803

Hernandez, K. (2006). The crimes and consequences of illegal immigration: A cross-border examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 to 1954. *Western Historical Quarterly 37(Winter 2006)*, pp. 421-444.

Immigration & Customs Enforcement. (nd.), *FY 2013 ICE immigration removals*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security Retrieved from: http://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/2013-ice-immigration-removals.pdf

Immigration & Customs Enforcement. (nd.), *Priority Enforcement Program.* U.S. Department of Homeland Security Retrieved from: https://www.ice.gov/pep

Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (nd). *Secure communities*. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved from: http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/

Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (nd). *Secure communities-Frequently asked questions* (FAQs). Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved from: http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/faq.htm

Johnson, J., Bottorff, J., Browne, A., Grewal, S., Hilton, B. & Clarke, H. (2004). Othering and being othered in the context of health care services. *Health Communication 16*(2), pp. 253-271.

Kasperkevic, J. (2012). *Deporting all of America's illegal immigrants would cost a whopping $285 billion January 30, 2012*. BusinessInsider.com. Retrieved from: http://www.businessinsider.com/deporting-all-of-americas-illegal-immigrants-would-cost-a-whopping-285-billion-2012-1

Ko, W. (2013). The blood, sweat and tears history of Chinese in 19th Century America. *Chinese American Forum,* 28(3), pp. 14-18.

Kohli, A., Markowitz, P., & Chavez, L. (2011). *Secure communities by the numbers*. The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy, University of California, Berkely. Retrieved from: http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Secure_Communities_by_the_Numbers.pdf

Lee, F. (2007). *The Japanese internment and the racial state of exception*. Theory & Event. *1*(10),1. Retrieved from: http://lion.chadwyck.com/display/printView.do?area=abell&displayFormatType=critref_ft

Lopez, M., Gonzalez-Barrera, A. & Motel, S. (2011). *As deportations rise to record levels, most Latinos oppose Obama's policy*. Pew Research Center, Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from: http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2011/12/Deportations-and-Latinos.pdf

Lydgate, J. (2010). *Assembly-line justice: A review of Operation Streamline.* Berkeley Law Center, January 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Operation_Streamline_Policy_Brief.pdf

Nevins, J. (2002). *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*. New York: Routledge

Office of Immigration Statistics. (2011). *2010 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. Homeland Security*. Retrieved from: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2010/ois_yb_2010.pdf

Ray, R. (2011). *Insecure communities: Examining local government participation in US immigration and customs enforcement's "Secure Communities" program*. University of California, Davis Selected Works. Retrieved from: http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=rachel_ray

Renteln, A. (1995). *A psychohistorical analysis of the Japanese American internment.* Human Rights Quarterly 17(4), pp. 618-648. Retrieved from: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v017/17.4renteln.html

Rubin, A. T. (2012). *The unintended consequences of penal reform: A case study of penal transportation in eighteenth-century London*. Law & Society Review, 46(4), pp. 815-851. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5893.2012.00518.x

Sanchez, M., Furman, R. & Ackerman, A. (2014) The problematization of immigration as a pacification strategy. In A. Ackerman & R. Furman (Eds.) *The Criminalization of Immigration: Contexts and Consequences*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Slack, J., Martinez, D., Whiteford, S. & Peiffer, E. (2013). *In the shadow of the wall: Family separation, immigration enforcement and security*. Center for Latin American Studies. Retrieved from: http://las.arizona.edu/sites/las.arizona.edu/files/UA_Immigration_Report2013web.pdf

Thompson, G. & Cohen, S. (6 April 2014). *More deportations follow minor crimes, records show*. The New York Times. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/us/more-deportations-follow-minor-crimes-data-shows.html?_r=0

Vaver, A. (2013). *The need for a new punishment: The Transportation Act of 1718*. Early American crime. Retrieved from: http://www.earlyamericancrime.com/convict-transportation/new-punishment/transportation-act

Zhan, L., & Cao, X. (2012). Chinese-Americans in the U.S., 1848-1979. *Canadian Social Science, 8*(4), pp. 80-84. doi:10.3968/j.css.1923669720120804.1759

Author's Address:
Douglas Epps, MSW (Corresponding Author)
1001 N Yakima Ave, #207
Tacoma, WA, 98403 USA
253.692.4855 Office
depps80@uw.edu

Rich Furman, PhD
University of Washington, Tacoma
Department of Social Work
1900 Commerce St. Campus Box: 358425
Tacoma, WA 98402 USA
253.692.4848 Office
253.692.5825 Fax
rcfurman@uw.edu