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"Whenever there's trouble, just yelp for help": Crime, conservation, and corporatization in *Paw Patrol*

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Abstract

With few exceptions, cultural criminologists have yet to investigate how crime, criminalized individuals, and punishment are depicted in children's television programming. Undertaking the case study of the popular animated children's series *PAW Patrol*, I find that crime is committed predominantly by literal outsiders and that wrongdoers are temporarily warehoused or forced to engage in hard labor. In this world, politicians are presented as incompetent or unethical and the state, either incapable of delivering or unwilling to provide basic social services to citizens, relies on the PAW Patrol corporation to investigate crime, rescue non-human animals in states of distress, and recycle. I argue that the series suggests to audiences that we can and should rely on corporations and technological advancements to combat crime and conserve, with responsibilized individuals assisting in this endeavor. Ultimately, *PAW Patrol* echoes core tenets of neoliberalism and encourages complicity in a global capitalist system that (re)produces inequalities and causes environmental harms.

Keywords

Children's television, conservation, drones, green cultural criminology, neoliberalism, *PAW Patrol*, xenophobia

One afternoon last fall, I found myself watching an episode of *Bubble Guppies*—an animated children's television series chronicling the adventures of preschool-aged merpeople—with my young son. This particular episode was titled "The Police Cop-etition" and was ostensibly designed to educate young children about the law and the roles and responsibilities of police officers in society, with a particular focus on traffic violations and pedestrian safety. Within the first several minutes, the main characters break into a song about the benevolence of police officers (as animated merpeople are wont to do). With lyrics like "it's great to see you on the way, to help folks out and save the day" and "if something's wrong you'll make it turn out right," the episode

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encourages audiences to view police officers as altruistic defenders of core societal values who work to restore the balance that crime and deviance disrupt. In the episode, various characters mention that a central duty of police officers is to ensure everyone obeys the law in order to "keep everyone safe." The episode implies that not only will following the law protect us but that it is the morally right course of action, given the arrival of a police officer on the scene means "anyone doing something wrong, won't be doing it for long." These 20 minutes spent watching television with my child prompted self-reflection as both a parent and educator and underscored to me the importance of teaching young people to think critically about the law as well as to recognize that the criminal justice system has been and continues to be an instrument used to repress marginalized groups. It was also the impetus for this project, which makes the case for cultural criminologists to more seriously consider media directed at children.

Much of the scholarship on the topic of children and crime media examines how violent content might impact children or the social construction of childhood in relation to offending and victimization. With the exception of Kort-Butler's (2012a, 2012b) analysis of animated superhero shows, however, scholars have yet to investigate how crime, criminalized individuals, and the criminal justice system are depicted in children's programs. In this article, I analyze the popular animated children's television series *PAW Patrol*. I find that crime in the fictional town of Adventure Bay is committed predominantly by literal outsiders (migrants and individuals visiting from neighboring communities) and punished through social exclusion or hard labor. In this world, politicians are presented as incompetent or unethical and the state as either incapable of delivering or unwilling to provide basic social services to citizens. Indeed, government officials depend on the PAW Patrol corporation to investigate crime, rescue non-human animals in states of distress, and recycle. In suggesting to audiences that we can and should rely on private enterprise to combat crime and conserve, *PAW Patrol* encourages complicity in a global capitalist system that (re)produces inequalities and causes environmental harms.

Demons and angels

Scholars have documented various media-driven moral panics regarding depraved youth committing supposedly horrific acts. In her tome on crime media, Jewkes (2015) observes that childhood offending is generally discussed on a case-by-case basis and individual criminalized youth are pathologized. That is, media employ episodic framing, an approach that encourages audiences to conceive of the story as an individual issue rather than related to social problems (see Iyengar, 1994). In these cases, the youth's actions are de-contextualized; there is little mention of structural inequalities or barriers as correlates of offending and the voices of the youth themselves are typically absent from this media coverage (Aldridge and Cross, 2008). Once entangled in the system, the neoliberal state induces criminalized and incarcerated youth coming disproportionately from marginalized communities to accept responsibility for their behavior and "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" (Brisman, 2016a; Cox, 2017: 10). These ways of thinking and talking about criminalized youth generate limited sympathy for the youth themselves and foster punitive criminal justice responses (Aldridge and Cross, 2008; Green, 2008). The James Bulger case is emblematic. News coverage of the murder of toddler James Bulger in England in 1993 by two "essentially evil" 10-year-old boys suggested this incident was representative of a moral decline spreading throughout society (Green, 2008: 204; Jewkes, 2015). Green's (2008) comparative analysis of the

Bulger case and the 1994 murder of 5-year-old Silje Redergård in Norway by two 6-year-old boys illustrates that context matters regarding the social construction of childhood and the societal and criminal justice responses to young people who have engaged in violent acts. In contrast to the Bulger case, the youth involved in Redergård's death were not criminalized and were instead considered victims in their own right.

Fears regarding violent and dangerous youth—"mini-monsters"—co-exist with anxieties about innocent and vulnerable children in need of protection and are (re)produced by news and entertainment media (Jewkes, 2015: 113). The threat of "stranger danger"—notably in the form of a pedophile whose targets are primarily White middle-class girls—legitimates enhanced regulation of children and compels parents to take precautions to safeguard their children (Jewkes, 2015; Kohm, 2019; Moscowitz and Duvall, 2011). This implies that violent crime is random and that potential offenders are rational. These rational offenders may be deterred if prospective victims and/or their parents limit opportunities for offending and harsher sentencing is implemented (Kohm, 2019). Not only does this responsibilize citizens, it disregards data pointing to greater danger in the family home (Jewkes, 2015). While these two stock characters—the prepubescent predator and vulnerable innocent—might seem incompatible, they both provide a "bogey man" on which to project concerns about our children and general moral decline as well as discourage questions about the social structure (see Jewkes, 2015; Kohm, 2019: 2). Fears about innocent children in need of adult protection inform another related body of scholarship.

Children's media

Motivated seemingly in part by a concern that children "are especially vulnerable" to media messages, a host of studies have examined violence and aggression in media directed at children (Coyne and Whitehead, 2008: 383). This body of research suggests that, while there are differences depending on subgenre, violence in children's programs is "sanitized" and oftentimes "trivialized" (Wilson et al., 2002: 5). In some scenarios, the use of violence appears justified. For instance, Gunter and Harrison (1997) find that violence in children's programs is typically preceded by an argument, occurs in the commission or furtherance of a crime, and is regularly motivated by a character's evil nature and/or ambition. Although less common, violence is also used to defend one's self or to protect society (Gunter and Harrison, 1997). More recently, Klein and Shiffman (2008: 192) find that revenge, anger, self-defense, and "inherent mean-spiritedness" are primary justifications for using violence in cartoons. Children's television programs also tend to minimize the negative consequences of assaults for both the assailant and victim (Gunter and Harrison, 1997; Klein and Shiffman, 2008; Wilson et al., 2002). In some instances, the perpetrator is even rewarded for their behavior (Wilson et al., 2002). Despite Doyle's (2006) cautions that media effects are difficult to establish and often simply assumed by researchers, this body of scholarship is imbued with anxiety that children will internalize messages condoning and celebrating violence and this might influence their future behavior (see Coyne and Whitehead, 2008).

Other scholars (e.g. De Leeuw and Buijzen, 2016) contend there has been too much focus on the harm caused by childhood exposure to media violence and advocate for colleagues conducting research in the area to consider and investigate the potential benefits of media consumption. On this topic, Padilla-Walker et al. (2013) find that Disney films contain many prosocial behaviors—for example, complimenting, sharing, and helping—that may encourage imitation. Along these lines,

another team of scholars (Smith et al., 2006) report that children's basic cable shows contain more altruistic acts per hour than other genres. And still others (Coyne and Whitehead, 2008) note that Disney films send a message that indirect aggression is unjustified and committed by "bad" characters. Finally, Taggart et al. (2019) conclude that current popular children's television shows contain much fantastical content, but little violent, educational, or prosocial content. However, this is also contingent upon the network airing the programming, as some networks produce shows with more educational content and prosocial behavior. In summary, findings in this area are mixed and seem to depend in large part on the television series, film, subgenre, network, and perhaps medium being considered. However, what is clear is that children's media programming incorporates violence as well as prosocial content, both of which could theoretically inspire replication.

The aforementioned expansive body of work examines depictions of violent, prosocial, and antisocial behavior in children's media programming, but few qualitative studies have considered how crime and justice are portrayed. Kort-Butler's (2012a, 2012b) work is the exception. Their analysis of children's superhero cartoons reveals that villains engaged in crime are pathologized; they are rational and in pursuit of their own self-interest, sometimes labeled "crazy" or "unbalanced," and only rarely is their offending contextualized with social explanations such as the influence of a deviant peer group. Overall, these television series suggest that individuals involved in crime are fundamentally different from law-abiding folks, yet are capable of rational thought and responsible for their wrongdoings (Kort-Butler, 2012a: 573). Moreover, the fictional justice systems in these series are presented as flawed, corrupt, or ineffective. While rehabilitation and redemption remain possibilities for those characters deemed "worthy"—determined by their age or relationship with the hero—incapacitation is the primary goal of punishment (Kort-Butler, 2012a, 2012b). In this article, I contribute to the field and advocate for cultural criminologists to expand their focus to children's media programming (as well as other formats and subgenres that have historically received less attention). Indeed, children steadily pick up knowledge about what behavior is acceptable and the consequences of rule-breaking from school, the adults in their lives, and media (Smith et al., 2000). Closer attention to media targeted at children, an oftentimes overlooked population, might help us better understand the spread of—as well as challenges to—penal culture (Sparks et al., 2000).

Data and methods

With a general objective of exploring representations of crime and justice in children's television programming, the choice to analyze *PAW Patrol* was an easy one. The animated series, which began in 2013, portrays a boy named Ryder leading a team of search and rescue dogs—Chase the police, and later spy, dog; Rubble the construction dog; Marshall the firefighter and paramedic dog; Rocky the recycling dog; Zuma the water rescue dog; and Skye the aviator dog—on a variety of missions to serve and protect the residents of Adventure Bay. In later seasons, the PAW Patrol adds Everest, the snow rescue dog, and Tracker, a dog specializing in jungle rescue, to their team. Parents of preschoolers will have likely found the series, or at least the merchandise accompanying it, unavoidable. *PAW Patrol* is watched in more than 160 countries and, as of the fall of 2018, has resulted in an estimated $US7 billion in retail sales (Smith, 2018). Indeed, Nielsen states it is the most watched television series among preschool-aged children (Smith, 2018). Despite its expansive reach among a demographic group believed to be particularly susceptible to media influence

as well as commentary from pop culture critics (e.g. Downing, 2018) who have documented the show's apparent misogyny (i.e. unfavorable depictions of Mayor Goodway and the female members of the PAW Patrol) and endorsement of Ryder's authoritarian regime (i.e. the unofficial leadership of Chase the police dog and the near total absence of government or social institutions), social scientists have yet to examine the series. Consequently, one of the main objectives of this manuscript is to encourage cultural criminologists (and others working in the field) to take children's media programming seriously.

I chose six episodes at random to watch so as to begin to familiarize myself with the show's formula and recurring themes. While there was no explicit discussion of lawbreaking or a criminal justice system in those first few episodes I watched, the show did repeatedly depict volatile weather, non-human animals in dangerous situations, and property crime. These initial observations informed the sample selection process and altered the lens through which I analyzed the remainder of the episodes. In brief, my focus expanded, as I became interested not only in how crime, justice, and punishment are represented on *PAW Patrol* but also how environmental issues are portrayed. Specifically, in the pages that follow, I consider what the series suggests to viewers about recycling, conservation, and human relationships with non-human animals. I reviewed the brief one- or two-sentence descriptions of each episode and chose to watch and analyze episodes that involved the PAW Patrol rescuing non-human animals in distress, extreme weather or storms, and crime or deviance. The final sample size was 44 episodes from the five seasons (and total of 130 episodes) available to watch on a popular streaming service as of summer 2019 (see Appendix 1 for a list of the episodes).

While green criminologists have historically neglected to investigate the social construction of environmental harm, in recent years, a growing body of scholarship has examined how environmental crimes and destruction are represented in news media and popular culture (Brisman, 2019; Brisman and South, 2014). This article contributes to that green cultural criminology literature. Investigating how environmental matters are represented in media is critical because media can—and do—mislead the public regarding environmental issues like climate change and downplay the seriousness of various harms (Brisman and South, 2012; Di Ronco et al., 2019). It is important to document and expose these misrepresentations of environmental issues because they shape public perceptions, lawmaking, and regulation (see Brisman and South, 2012; Di Ronco et al., 2019; Stretesky et al., 2014). Indeed, scholars working in this field recognize that definitions of crime are socially constructed. They (e.g. Brisman, 2013; Stretesky et al., 2014; White, 2008) assert that what we choose to label crimes is influenced by the interests of individuals in positions of power who seek to maintain and expand a global capitalist system that causes environmental damage in the first place. Consequently, green cultural criminologists take a harm-based approach grounded in the recognition that many environmental harms are not officially illegal and that non-human animals as well as the natural environment should be regarded as victims of such harms, a status typically reserved in "mainstream" criminology for humans (Moloney and Chambliss, 2014; Opsal and O'Connor Shelley, 2014). Critical green criminologists, then, employ a non-anthropocentric lens when considering questions of harm and (in)justice (see Lynch and Genco, 2018; Wyatt et al., 2013). I adopt that lens in this analysis of *PAW Patrol*.

Prior to outlining and discussing my findings, I recognize the limitations of this project. Most notably, I acknowledge that *PAW Patrol*—and any other media—is open to multiple interpretations informed by the viewer, listener, or reader's personal experiences and that the lens through which

I watched the show is unlikely to be representative of a diverse audience (see also Doyle, 2006). In fact, previous scholarship demonstrates that children do not passively accept and mimic what they have heard in relation to lawbreaking and punishment, but instead consider and critique it (Smith et al., 2000). Consequently, future research might add to the growing body of crime media audience reception research (e.g. Boda and Szabó, 2011; Kennedy, 2018) and investigate the ways children and parents engage with *PAW Patrol* and other children's television programming.

Findings

"Spy Chase is on the case"—crime, surveillance, and punishment in Adventure Bay

The majority of criminal and deviant acts depicted on *PAW Patrol* are committed by persons and non-human animals who do not permanently reside in Adventure Bay. Several examples are illustrative. In one episode (S1E20), for instance, Mandy is a formerly sick monkey being transported back to the jungle on a train. When the train stops in Adventure Bay, Mandy steals the local restaurant owner's van containing a shipment of bananas and drives erratically throughout the town, sometimes laughing maniacally. After being apprehended, Mandy the monkey is immediately sent back to the jungle. Similarly, Cap'n Turbot, a marine biologist, calls the PAW Patrol for help locating the "bad guys" stealing fish off of his boat, the Flounder (S2E1). The culprits are a group of penguins who had migrated to Adventure Bay on an iceberg. The PAW Patrol and Cap'n Turbot send the penguins back home to Antarctica by anchoring the stray iceberg to a freighter ship heading south. In another episode (S3E18), a local farm has been "invaded by ants" and "overrun by pests" who are stealing fruits.

The primary antagonist to the PAW Patrol is Mayor Humdinger and his Kitten Catastrophe Crew, a team of six felines resembling the PAW Patrol. Humdinger is the mayor of Foggy Bottom, a town in close proximity to Adventure Bay. Humdinger is directly and indirectly responsible for numerous property crimes and social disorder. Notably, he dumps trash in front of Adventure Bay's City Hall (S2E14), abducts royal kittens (S5E11), and steals an ancient scroll (S2E19), gold (S3E2), as well as a statue (S5E7). I argue *PAW Patrol* reinforces stereotypical (and false) ideas linking immigration and crime. Specifically, the series implies that it is literal outsiders—migrants from near and far—who bring crime and disorder to Adventure Bay and threaten the residents' idyllic life (see also, for example, Arcimaviciene and Baglana, 2018). These narratives legitimate xenophobia and might help mobilize support for a variety of supposedly protective measures including physical barriers at borders and travel restrictions.

Lawbreakers are depicted as dishonest, unintelligent, and motivated by greed. For instance, Mayor Humdinger's generally deceitful and disingenuous nature is shown when he sabotages Mayor Goodway's boat in order to win the mayor's race (S2E20). Likewise, Mayor Humdinger is portrayed as dimwitted and foolish when he, after stealing gold from a local prospector, flees to his secret hideout but forgets to bring his loot inside and the PAW Patrol is able to easily retrieve and return it (S3E2). On multiple other occasions, Humdinger's ploys conclude with him in precarious situations and in need of rescue by a benevolent PAW Patrol, cementing his reputation as a bumbling but relatively harmless foe (e.g. S2E20; S4E1). In later seasons, the show introduces other antagonists who appear in multiple episodes including Sid Swashbuckle, a child pirate, and Sweetie, the Princess of Barkingburg's cute pet dog. Much like Kort-Butler's (2012a) analysis of

superhero cartoons, the primary motivation for these characters' wrongdoing is greed and self-interest. Sid wants to "take stuff" because he will "need it" (S4E26; S5E3), while all Sweetie has "ever wanted was the throne and people listening to [her]" (S4E10). In the *PAW Patrol* world, individuals who engage in property crime lack self-control as well as intelligence and are motivated by greed and self-interest. The series, then, ultimately upholds a conservative view of crime that locates the cause of deviance within the individual and fails to consider educational and income inequalities as correlates of offending.

The reorganization of the social structure would be difficult given the virtual absence of the state and social institutions like hospitals and schools in *PAW Patrol*. Indeed, the series implies that governments, and the individuals who lead them, are incompetent or corrupt. Adventure Bay's chief elected official, Mayor Goodway, is a woman with brown skin who is depicted as careless, impulsive, and easily flustered. Pop culture critics (Downing, 2018) have remarked on the misogyny evident here. Goodway seems in a perpetual state of panic, most notably when her pet chicken, which she carries around in her purse, gets loose or is trapped in a crevice on a camping trip (S1E7; S1E22). Goodway is portrayed as highly emotional, irrational, and incapable of problem solving. She relies on the PAW Patrol to respond to all of Adventure Bay's so-called emergencies. For his part, her chief rival, Foggy Bottom's Mayor Humdinger, is unethical, greedy, and lazy. In one episode (S3E2), Humdinger steals the PAW Patroller van in order to watch television, while in another (S5E12) he diverts the water supply in order to build himself a waterslide. Thus, elected officials appear untrustworthy (even if Mayor Goodway is likable) and the state is bereft of the wherewithal to prevent or investigate crime and disorder or provide basic services to its citizens. Adventure Bay relies on private corporations like the PAW Patrol to direct traffic (S2E8), clear snow (S2E8), and remove litter (S2E14). The municipality also depends on private donations to improve infrastructure, as is the case when Uncle Otis donates his gold to fund the construction of new railroad tracks (S5E4). Despite the absence of schools, universal medical care, and a social safety net, residents appear happy in this neoliberal utopia.

In order to continue functioning, Adventure Bay contracts out basic social services like recycling, law enforcement, search and rescue, and the like to the PAW Patrol, which Downing (2018) likens to a "Blackwater-style private enterprise." Much of the investigative responsibility falls on Chase, the police and, subsequently, spy dog. Chase uses his night-vision glasses (S4E4) to aid his investigation into the theft of the royal crown as well as a drone to track lost animals (e.g. S2E15), stolen property (S3E2), and suspected thieves (e.g. S2E20). This represents what Bracken-Roche (2016) refers to as the "pervasive restructuring of everyday life by surveillance technologies" (p. 168). Indeed, the PAW Patrol's monopoly over and regular deployment of drone technology subjects all public spaces in Adventure Bay to corporate surveillance.

Punishment in the *PAW Patrol* world is characterized by contradictory impulses. Rather than shame or humiliate repeat "offenders," Mayor Humdinger and others are oftentimes met with compassion, acceptance, and a helping hand by the PAW Patrol. In one episode (S2E14), Humdinger is rescued from the top of town's water tower as he was attempting to sabotage Adventure Bay's probable victory in the "spotless town" contest. Humdinger apologizes and Ryder tells him that if he is "really sorry," he "won't mind helping out a little"; the next scene depicts Humdinger on his hands and knees scrubbing the sidewalk adjacent to the city hall with a sponge and his "Kitten Catastrophe Crew" cleaning up litter nearby. In another episode (S4E1), Humdinger steals Cap'n Turbot's blimp and gets stuck on a bridge. The PAW Patrol reassures him,

with Chase calmly stating "don't worry! We'll catch you!" The team then returns the blimp "to its rightful owner." And finally, Ryder tells Humdinger "we're here to help" when he gets stuck on his waterslide after diverting water from the duck pond (S5E12).

In later episodes, however, Humdinger is forced to engage in physical labor if he is to be welcomed back into the community. Humdinger must engage in work that is either literally or symbolically related to his offending, illustrating the belief that labor can be redemptive. For instance, in one episode (S5E7), Humdinger steals the statue of Mayor Goodway's pet chicken, Chickaletta. Goodway calls the PAW Patrol to help deal with this "emergency" and Humdinger is forced to clean the statue once it is returned to its spot outside of city hall. In another episode (S5E11), Humdinger hijacks a train carrying a group of royal kittens. A long chase ensues for runaway railcars and, once order is restored, Mr. Hudson, the train conductor, forces Humdinger and his kitten catastrophe crew to operate a handcar-propelled temporary locomotive all the way back to Foggy Bottom. Finally, Humdinger and his crew strand Rocky the recycling dog on an island filled with trash they have dumped as part of a plan to lure a group of turtles to Foggy Bottom to lay their eggs (S5E15). After the PAW Patrol clears a path for the turtles to swim to Adventure Bay's beach, Humdinger is forced to clean up litter from the island and recycle appropriately. Scholars (e.g. Goodman, 2012) have suggested that incarcerated people's perceptions of penal labor are complex: some view it as exploitative, some as an opportunity to break up the monotony of prison routines and develop skills, and some view it as both. This is instructive and reminds punishment and society scholars, and others, to resist thinking about the issue in terms of rigid dichotomies. This is similarly the case with Mayor Humdinger, whose forced labor is not a feature of his punishment, but rather comprises his punishment. He loses the right to choose where and when to work because of his wrongdoing (see also Hatton, 2018). At times his labor is constructed as punitive (Hatton, 2018). Part of the degradation of forced labor, incarcerated and workfare workers report, is compelling folks to engage in "unnecessarily arduous" labor (Hatton, 2018: 185) such as when Mayor Humdinger is required to work the handcart for 2 days despite the availability of modern tools and technology. At other times, however, Humdinger's labor is designed to serve some greater good, conceptualized as a key to community inclusion and perhaps rehabilitative (Haney, 2010).

Elsewhere, Sweetie the dog's plots to become Queen of Barkingburg are foiled by the PAW Patrol and she ends up in a doghouse surrounded by gold bars (S4E4; S4E10). Sweetie is temporarily warehoused or incapacitated and, though the Princess notes she is not angry with Sweetie (S4E7), she asserts that Sweetie will not receive belly rubs or hamburger treats (S4E10), presumably as a means to deter future offending. Arbiters of punishment in the *PAW Patrol* universe, then, are influenced by contradictory impulses, a feature that mirrors real-world contemporary crime control policy (e.g. Matthews, 2005). These arbiters are seemingly informed by compassion, a desire to help, and an ultimate goal of (re)integration. However, they also temporarily warehouse wrongdoers, remove privileges as a way to deter and punish, and compel others to engage in "meaningful" physical labor as a way to discipline and control (see also Haney, 2010).

"Green means go"—conservation, climate change, and wildlife protection

The *PAW Patrol* universe is full of extreme and volatile weather, but these unpredictable weather patterns are not attributed to climate change. For instance, snow falls unexpectedly on a tropical

island (S5E23) and a rapidly approaching snowstorm threatens the local farmer's apple crop before the fall fair (S1E1). In other missions, the PAW Patrol helps a baby whale trapped in ice (S3E20) and polar bear cubs stranded on ice floes after Cap'n Turbot's boat uses its icebreaker (S3E11). In these examples, the series suggests *too* much cold, snow, and ice poses threats to the well-being of non-human animals and agriculture. However, polar bears are just one non-human animal endangered by the loss of sea-ice (McKie, 2017).

On other occasions (S1E17, S4E15, S4E22), characters complain about extreme temperatures but all one seemingly requires is a pool and some "cool treats to beat the heat." Similar to the findings of other green cultural criminologists (e.g. Brisman and South, 2012; Di Ronco et al., 2019), *PAW Patrol* misrepresents the threat that extreme heat, and climate change more generally, poses, particularly to marginalized individuals and communities (see, for instance, Dennis and Mooney, 2018; Singer et al., 2016). Moreover, various regions in the Global South remain particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, droughts, and floods. It is anticipated that rising temperatures will "devastate crops and make life in many cities unbearably hot" (Uddin, 2017: 112). In other words, structural inequalities at the local, regional, national, and global levels shape how people experience climate change. *PAW Patrol* depicts how those with privilege can cope with the changes wrought by rising temperatures and ignores the unique issues impacting racialized communities in the Global North and those in the Global South.

The PAW Patrol is also actively and regularly involved in wildlife rescue missions and other conservation efforts. In one episode (S2E4), for instance, the team works to re-build a beaver dam that has been washed away by a storm. Here, habitat loss is due to natural weather patterns rather than the treadmill of production (see Stretesky et al., 2014). In another episode (S1E2), the PAW Patrol helps rescue a beached whale but does not consider how or why the whale ended up on shore, including the possibility that whale strandings may be linked to rising ocean temperatures (see Telegraph, 2018). In each of these examples, *PAW Patrol* does not consider how the actions of governments, corporations, and individuals might harm non-human animals, degrade the environment, and contribute to climate change. Not only this, the series obscures the potential harms done to non-human animals by humans, particularly those used for entertainment in circuses and zoos. On separate occasions, elephants (S1E7) and hippos (S3E7) escape from a traveling circus troupe and are found and returned to Raimundo, the ringmaster, by the PAW Patrol. Much of the green criminological scholarship on this topic has focused on wildlife poaching and trafficking (Taylor and Fitzgerald, 2018; see, for example, Runhovde, 2017; Sollund, 2019), despite growing concern among activists and legislators about animal cruelty and abuse in circuses (see Hobson, 2015; Takiff, 2016). Indeed, while animal harm takes various other forms, it is entrenched and normalized in some zoos and circuses (Nurse, 2016). Animal abuse and how the value of wildlife is socially constructed are areas warranting further investigation by "mainstream" criminologists (see also Jarrell et al., 2017; Van Uhm, 2018).

Elsewhere, the series implicitly reflects on how human action damages particular ecosystems but minimizes the harms. For example, a season 1 episode (S1E14) depicts an oil spill and includes acknowledgements from Ryder that this development is "really bad for the animals in the bay" and from Cap'n Turbot that it "could make them really sick." The PAW Patrol uses a boat bumper to immediately stop the oil from leaking into the Bay and gathers a "ton of towels" to contain the spill and quickly soak up the oil in the water. A baby whale ends up covered in oil, something that

Ryder notes "could irritate the whale's skin and make it difficult to eat and breathe." To treat it, the PAW Patrol uses a "special soap" to remove the oil without hurting its skin and the baby whale quickly and happily re-joins its mother. There are no long-lasting effects of the oil spill for the whale or any other marine life in Adventure Bay. Indeed, the problem is solved within minutes. Ultimately, *PAW Patrol* suggests that we can and should rely on corporations to preserve the environment and protect non-human animals. On this issue, Lynch et al. (2015) argue that the very logic of capitalism fosters development and expansion "in ways that promote the destruction of species health, vitality and existence" (p. 119).

Discussion and conclusion

PAW Patrol (re)produces common problematic narratives about crime and punishment as well as upholds major tenets of neoliberalism, primarily a faith in private enterprise, distrust in government, and emphasis on individual responsibility. In so doing, the television series encourages audiences to support the current global capitalist system that subjects an ever-increasing segment of the populace to invasive surveillance, causes environmental degradation, and harms non-human animals. Notably, the series suggests to audiences that much crime and disorder is caused by literal outsiders who are then sent back to where they came from (e.g. Mandy the monkey, penguins), incapacitated (e.g. Sweetie), or forced to work (e.g. Mayor Humdinger). This is particularly worrisome in the wake of the recent push for stricter immigration controls, border enforcement, and the warehousing of migrants in the United States and elsewhere. In the case of Mayor Humdinger, meaningful work is designed to be punitive but also sometimes framed as rehabilitative and a prerequisite for (re)inclusion into society (see also Haney, 2010). This is concerning given the important role prison labor has and continues to play in driving corporate profits as well as reproducing class, race, and gender inequalities (see LeBaron, 2012).

Technology becomes increasingly pervasive in the later seasons of *PAW Patrol*. This manifests in numerous ways, most notably facilitating the detection and apprehension of wrongdoers. However, the series imbues drone technology with positive meaning as Spy Chase's drone is used to assist in the rescue of team members (S2E24) and to reunite a lost animal with its family (S2E15). This depiction of surveillance technology, and drone usage in particular, ignores its pivotal role in warfare abroad and governance at home, as the increased use of drones have resulted in what some observers (Shaw, 2016: 21; Wall and Monahan, 2011) have called a "permanent urban manhunt" directed at those marginalized and excluded by the global capitalist system. The technology is already used to monitor borderlands and impede the movements of people as well as narcotics (Wall and Monahan, 2011). Moreover, technological advancements in this area—and in particular, the development of nano or micro-drones—transform the exercise of state power, making it more "intimate and invasive" as family homes and workplaces might be increasingly subject to surveillance (Shaw, 2016: 21). Moreover, in 2016, police officers in Dallas, Texas, used a drone to kill Micah Johnson—a black former Army reservist who previously served in Afghanistan and had experienced PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms—who had shot and killed five police officers at a Black Lives Matter rally to protest the police killings of black men (see Davis, 2019). I argue that *PAW Patrol* normalizes surveillance and conceals this state violence (see also Wall, 2016) by excluding the voices of those individuals whose lives and subjectivities are shaped by an omnipresent drone threat.

Stories, writes Brisman (2016b), can illuminate the causes of environmental harm as well as "inspire better relationships with nature" (p. 67). I argue that *PAW Patrol* advocates faith in corporations to lead conservation efforts and environmental clean-up, thereby obscuring the fact that global capitalism leads to environmental degradation and necessitates abuse of non-human animals. Indeed, the depictions of Mayors Goodway (i.e. incompetent, careless) and Humdinger (i.e. unethical and lazy) inspire little confidence in state officials' abilities to accomplish these tasks. Significantly, the state's complicity or participation in a range of environmental crimes is ignored. Much scholarship has exposed "how the vested interests of powerful governments and corporations—and, arguably, the global capitalist economic system itself—leads to inadequate and unequal protection of the environment" (Hall et al., 2016: 5). Notably, the state criminalizes and demonizes environmental activism (Hasler et al., 2019) as well as practices designed to reduce human impact on the environment such as "greywater" systems intended to recycle house water (McClanahan, 2014). Moreover, the state misrepresents the harm caused by oil and gas exploration (Opsal and O'Connor Shelley, 2014) and allows or facilitates species destruction (Moloney and Chambliss, 2014). And finally, the state chooses not to implement or enforce environmental regulations (Mao, 2018) or to prosecute environmental crimes and punish polluters at a level proportionate to the harm caused by their actions (Lynch, 2019). Some scholars (Opsal and O'Connor Shelley, 2014: 574; Stretesky et al., 2014) suggest that the presence of these environmental regulations offers the appearance of legitimacy and indicates to observers that the state is genuinely concerned with minimizing environmental harm despite the fact that they "support elite interests." Their reluctance to enforce these regulations or protect citizens from environmental harms, some (e.g. Lynch, 2016) argue, should be conceptualized as a "state crime." On this topic, numerous scholars (e.g. Hall, 2015: 126; Lynch et al., 2010) highlight the "mutually dependent" relationship between corporations and states wherein the central objective is to foster economic growth at the expense of the environment. Consequently, despite *PAW Patrol*'s faith in private business, there is little reason to depend on the market to address environmental issues because capitalism requires the extraction of more and more raw materials and is not "ecologically sustainable" (Stretesky et al., 2014: 22).

While much of the responsibility for conservation in Adventure Bay and surrounding areas falls on the PAW Patrol corporation, the series echoes the neoliberal message of empowerment found in some children's books (see Brisman, 2013). While some of these children's stories find characters engaging government officials on environmental matters, Brisman (2013) contends that they all too often absolve the state and corporations of responsibility for environmental degradation and suggest that individual actions like driving less, recycling more, and relying on renewable energy sources will make a considerable difference to help to slow the effects of climate change and reduce environmental harm. *PAW Patrol* similarly transfers responsibility from the state to individuals, who are encouraged to do their part to care for the environment. Rocky, the PAW Patrol's recycling pup, spouts catchphrases like "don't lose it, reuse it" (e.g. S1E2) and asks, rhetorically, "why trash them when you can stash them" (S1E7). Environmentalism in Adventure Bay is about cleaning up trash, recycling or repurposing items, and trying to help non-human animals in distress. While this represents some progress and certainly preschool-aged children should believe their choices and actions matter, Rocky and his fellow pups neglect to pose more important questions about the failure of governments to preserve the environment or encourage more explicit reflection about how production (and consumption) practices contribute to ecological destruction.

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Author biography

Liam Kennedy is an assistant professor of Criminology/Sociology at King's University College at Western University Canada. His research investigates how the ways we think, talk about, and practice crime, deviance, and punishment (re)produce social inequalities.

Appendix 1
List of episodes

Season 1 (2013–2014)
Episode 1 "Pups Make a Splash"/"Pups Fall Festival"
Episode 2 "Pups Save the Sea Turtles"/"Pups and the Very Big Baby"
Episode 7 "Pups Save the Circus"/"Pup a Doodle Do"
Episode 9 "Pups Save the Treats"/"Pups Get a Lift"
Episode 12 "Pups Get a Rubble"/"Pups Save a Walrus"
Episode 14 "Pups Save the Bay"/"Pups Save a Goodway"
Episode 17 "Pups Save a Pool Day"/"Circus Pup Formers"
Episode 20 "Pups Go All Monkey"/"Pups Save a Hoot"
Episode 22 "Pups Save the Camping Trip"/"Pups and the Trouble with Turtles"

Season 2 (2014–2015)
Episode 1 "Pups Save the Penguins"/"Pups Save a Dolphin Pup"
Episode 4 "Pups Save the Diving Bell"/"Pups Save the Beavers"
Episode 8 "Pups and the Big Freeze"/"Pups Save a Basketball Game"
Episode 11 "Pups Leave Marshall Home Alone"/"Pups Save the Deer"
Episode 14 "Pups Save an Elephant Family"/"Pups and the Mischievous Kittens"
Episode 15 "Pups Save a Friend"/"Pups Save a Stowaway"
Episode 19 "Pup-Fu!"
Episode 20 "Pups Save the Mayor's Race"/"Pups Save an Outlaw's Loot"
Episode 24 "Pups Save a Pizza"/"Pups Save Skye"
Episode 25 "Pups Save the Woof and Roll Show"/"Pups Save an Eagle"

Season 3 (2015–2017)
Episode 2 "Pups Save a Goldrush"/"Pups Save the PAW Patroller"
Episode 7 "Pups Save Apollo"/"Pups Save the Hippos"
Episode 11 "Pups Save the Polar Bears"/"A Pup in Sheep's Clothing"
Episode 13 "Pups Save Old Trusty"/"Pups Save a Pony"
Episode 18 "Pups in a Jam"/"Pups Save a Windsurfing Pig"

Episode 19 “Pups Get Growing”/“Pups Save a Space Toy”
Episode 20 “Pups Get Skunked”/“Pups and a Whale of a Tale”
Episode 22 “The Pups’ Winter Wonder Show”
Episode 25 “Pups Raise the PAW Patroller”/“Pups Save the Crows”

Season 4 (2017–2018)
Episode 1 “Pups Save a Blimp”/“Pups Save a Chili Cook-Off”
Episode 4 “Mission PAW: Quest for the Crown”
Episode 7 “Mission Paw: Royally Spooked!”/“Pups Save Monkey-Dinger”
Episode 8 “Pups Save the Flying Food”/“Pups Save a Ferris Wheel”
Episode 10 “Mission PAW: Pups Save the Royal Throne”
Episode 15 “Pups Chill Out”/“Pups Save Farmer Alex”
Episode 22 “Sea Patrol: Pups Save a Frozen Flounder”/“Sea Patrol: Pups Save a Narwhal”
Episode 26 “Sea Patrol: Pups Save Puplantis”

Season 5 (2018–2019)
Episode 3 “Sea Patrol: Pups Save the Sunken Sloop”/“Sea Patrol: Pups Save a Wiggly Whale”
Episode 4 “Pups Save a High Flying Skye”/“Pups Go for the Gold”
Episode 6 “Sea Patrol: Pups Save the Flying Diving Bell”/“Sea Patrol: Pups Save a Soggy Farm”
Episode 7 “Pups Save the Butterflies”/“Pups Save an Underground Chicken”
Episode 11 “Ultimate Rescue: Pups Save the Royal Kitties”
Episode 12 “Pups Save the Snowshoeing Goodways”/“Pups Save a Duck Pond”
Episode 15 “Rocky Saves Himself”/“Pups and the Mystery of the Driverless Snow Cat”
Episode 23 “Pups Save a Frozen Camp-Out”/“Pups Save the Fizzy Pickles”