Parents' differential trait, mental state, and coping talk about white and black storybook characters.

THE GIST: Researchers in this study had parents read children's books to their children, showing scenes of a character being socially excluded. They studied a number of factors relating to the language used and different contexts such as racial background, economic background, racial makeup of the parent's neighborhood, etc. What we found was that despite some variation in the kind of language used, all parents seemed to consciously identify and explain racialized situations. Specifically, parents spoke differently about a White character that was excluded in the story than a Black character. The racial element was important; parents were more likely to use victimizing or emotional language, specifically explaining the situation as the child being intentionally excluded and that the character possesses a negative when the character was Black. When the character was White, parents seemed to use more personality state variables to explain the situation, such as she's shy, or she's sad. The specific likelihoods of language used possessed correlations with economic background and racial background of the parent, though some form of racial conscientiousness appeared universally.

THE TAKEAWAY: The ways in which we discuss race with our kids varies, but it is important to educate them -and ourselves! Experiencing different cultures and communities can help make this a natural conversation. Children are sponges, so it is truly imperative that we are cautious of our attitudes toward topics like race and genuinely take steps to further our understandings. What we say now matters -these kids are our future and hope for racial equity lies with them!