

**Our Bodies, Our Property?:
Bodily Autonomy and Questions of Consent in Children's Literature**

After an experience that made me realize that the time at and way in which we teach children about consent is both too late and too focused on sex (instead of the countless ways we navigate it in daily life), I decided to look at books that aim to teach young children about the world around them. How do the books describe the structures, systems, and institutions that we have to live in everyday? What messages will children take from these books and what do these messages tell them about themselves, their bodies, and their relationships to other people? Reading these books, I discovered a treasure trove of information. Many of these books undermine the bodily autonomy of children by the way in which they talk about disability, sex, gender, sexuality, race, and bodies in general. The way these picture books talk about our lives, our society, and other people in the world around us can shape a young person's view about themselves and each other. In this excerpt from a larger paper, I analyze the messages a selection of children's books send about race and disability, how they explicitly or implicitly deal with consent, how these messages undermine or support a child's bodily autonomy, why this matters, and how we can all do better.