How Scientists are Portrayed in NSTA Recommends Books

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.14434/thst.v41i123186
Keywords: Draw-A-Scientist, perceptions of scientists

Abstract
If you use trade books or picture books in your science teaching, how do you choose which books to use with your students? How important is that decision? Do you rely on someone else to evaluate the books so you are assured of their appropriateness and quality? We used the Draw-A-Scientist Test Checklist to examine the illustrations, images, or photographs of scientists portrayed in picture books promoted for use in elementary and middle school classrooms by the National Science Teachers Association in their NSTA Recommends book lists for the last three years. Results revealed that there was much consistency in how scientists were portrayed in the books across the three years, but there were also issues with appropriate numbers of representations of minorities, women, and age of scientists.

Author Biography
Kevin D. Finson, Bradley University
Dr. Finson teaches science education courses, including elementary and secondary science methods, science inquiry, and measuring in K-8 science classrooms. Dr. Finson also teaches a course in educational foundations on strategies and techniques, as well as a graduate level course in instructional theory and program evaluation. Dr. Finson has two primary areas of research interest. The first focuses on making science more accessible to students who have special learning needs. The second research area focuses on students’ perceptions of scientists. He has co-edited a book on the use of visual data that was published in 2009 by Sense Publications in The Netherlands. Dr. Finson has received funding awards for extramural grants in excess of $1 million, serving as the project PI or co-PI on most of those projects. Dr. Finson serves at multiple levels in the science education community. He has edited the international Journal of Elementary Science Education since the late 1990s and has served on the editorial boards of several significant science education journals.
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