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## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: DRAW A SCIENTIST

This activity encourages dialogue about who scientists are and what they do. It also connects strongly with BioSITE's goal of building a sense of the "self as scientist."

### Materials

*For each student:*

- Paper
- Pencil

*For teacher or group leader:*

- Chart paper, pens and tape (or use the blackboard)

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### Getting Started

Introduce the activity by asking students to picture a scientist at work. Ask them to do this silently. Ask them to picture details in the scene. What is the scientist wearing? What is the scientist doing? With what tools does the scientist work? After giving students a few minutes to think and visualize, ask them to draw a picture of the scientist they imagined. Let them know they will not be judged on their artistic talent! Stick figures are fine – what is important is to capture all the little details they imagined. They can label them with words if they like.

### Tip for facilitators...

You can do this activity in the field without the drawing component. Have students close their eyes and imagine, and then discuss their images of scientists. Move quickly to describing the variety of work that scientists do and comparing the work of BioSITE students to scientists.

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### Reflection

When students are finished with their drawings, ask students to share some of the details of their pictures. Use the following questions to get the discussion going:

- How many people pictured a male scientist?
- How many were wearing lab coats? Were they holding bubbling test tubes?
- Do any of the scientists have crazy hair? Glasses?
- Did they picture a certain ethnicity?

Quickly brainstorm a list of the key characteristics of this stereotypical scientist (some may even call it the "mad scientist"). Where do they think this stereotype comes from? Do they think it is accurate?

After having this discussion, think about scientists that don't fit the stereotype.

- Did anyone draw a female scientist?
- Did any drawings picture a scientist outdoors?

If anyone drew a scientist that was radically different from the stereotype, ask them to share who they were picturing and why they think they imagined a different type of scientist (often this is because of a personal experience).

Challenge the group to come up with a list of the different kinds of work that scientists do (Think about biologists, astronomers, oceanographers, botanists, etc.). This list could be posted and added to throughout the year. Connect the list with the work that the group will be doing in BioSITE. Ask the group whether or not they think students can be called scientists. Compare what they will be doing in BioSITE with the work of scientists (collecting data, observing a field site, conducting research, etc.). Encourage them to think of themselves as scientists and revisit this conversation as the year progresses.