

# How "The Big Bang Theory" portrays scientists

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Love it or hate it, you've probably at least heard of CBS's hit TV show *The Big Bang Theory*, now in its 10th year of production. But how accurately does it portray scientific culture, and does it break or reinforce stereotypes? A free article in this month's edition of *Physics Today* and a companion Inside Science video interview with its author explore these questions.

Science has seen a recent renaissance in pop culture in positive and affectionate ways. The widely popular CBS comedy, whose two lead characters are fictional Caltech physicists, has played no small role in this shift during its decade of production and tens of millions of annual viewers.

The show serves as a rich, recognizable backdrop for Margaret Weitekamp, a curator at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, to investigate the stereotypes and portrayals of scientists. Her article, "The Image of Scientists in *The Big Bang Theory*," is featured in this month's *Physics Today* and is now available for free download.

Weitekamp's article offers a thorough, objective examination of how these characters portray (or notably don't portray) many cultural quirks and gender idiosyncrasies commonly associated with science and academia. Introducing her perspective in the article she said, "The characters and comedy of 'The Big Bang Theory' both build on and play against enduring stereotypes of scientists as depicted in popular culture."

**More information:** Margaret A. Weitekamp. The image of scientists in, *Physics Today* (2017). [DOI: 10.1063/PT.3.3427](https://doi.org/10.1063/PT.3.3427)

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