

Women in psychology mary calkins

[Science](#)



What does it take to be number one? As we know everyone loves a winner. Most people if they were asked who the fastest man in the world was? They would correctly answer with the name Usain Bolt. Nobody remembers number two right? However, let us imagine Mr. Bolt being told that he could compete in track and field but he could not officially win any medal because he was Jamaican. Sounds far-fetched today and against our values and everything we stand for in the 21st century? Well in the 1800s, things were very different especially for women and Mary Calkins was no exception.

Mary Calkins not only made countless contributions to the field of psychology, her perseverance changed many perceptions resulting in her indirectly becoming a champion for women's rights and equality. In this assignment, we will examine Mrs. Calkin's background, theoretical perspectives and the integral role she played in the field of psychology. Mary Calkins, the oldest of five children was born to Wolcott and Charlotte Calkins on March 30, 1863, in Hartford, Connecticut. Her parents placed a great emphasis on education so in addition to elementary school, she took private lessons so she could learn German.

After graduating high school Mary enrolled in Smith College in 1882, but took a hiatus her junior year in 1884, due to the untimely death of her sister and her mother being gravely ill. Mary did not make waste of this time. While at home she decided to learn Greek which was pivotal to her journey in the field of psychology. After Mary finally earned her degrees in Classics and Philosophy, she took a trip to Europe with family and had already decided when she returned that she would be a teacher and as well as tutor students in the Greek Language.

However, her plans changed when she was offered the opportunity to teach Greek, at Wellesley, College, one of the few higher learning educational institutions for women in the country. At Wellesley, she taught not only Greek, but philosophy and psychology as well. This ultimately resulting in the university creating a new position for her in the experimental psychology department, although she had no credentialed training in psychology.

This was crucial because many schools back then did not even admit women as students much less allow them to hold such a prestigious position. For Mary to be successful, she knew she would have to further her education and learn more about psychology. Her ambition led her to enroll in two psychology seminars, one being at Clark University and the other taught by Edmund C. Sanford and was taught by William James at Harvard University. Initially she was denied entry into Harvard because she was a woman. However, she had the president of Wellesley and her father both write letters on her behalf and was accepted.

In 1891, her determination began paying dividends as she was able to set up a psychological laboratory at Wellesley and added scientific psychology to the program of study. From 1892 to 1895, she attended Harvard University. This is where she received some of the greatest resistance to everything she was trying to accomplish. Men and society during this time did not believe that women were fit for any job unless it was something that assisted a man i. e. doctor-nurse, boss-secretary, and homemaker. While Mary was allowed to attend Harvard, it was not without conditions.

She could take classes and test, but in the University's eyes she would be considered as guest. Undeterred and ready for the challenge, Mary enrolled in William James seminar on psychology; all the other students who happened to be men dropped the course in protest. What they believed is that if they did this the professor would boot her from the program because he would not want to lose his other students. Instead Professor James taught her individually and became her mentor. She also studied in the psychological laboratory at Harvard. She did all this while remaining a professor at Wellesley College herself.

Mary completed all the required work and passed all her exams to earn a Ph. D. However, she was not awarded one due to the fact she was a woman and women were not allowed to officially register at Harvard back then. She was later offered a Ph. D. , by Radcliffe College which was the female equivalent of Harvard, but she turned it down, believing that she done all of her work at Harvard, so it should be Harvard that awards her Ph. D. In 1898 is when Mary became a full time professor at Wellesley College focusing on philosophy and psychology publishing a slew of articles.

When ten leading psychologists in the field of psychology were asked to rate their contemporaries by the measure of their work, Mary Calkins was listed 12 out of 50. Mary Calkins has given much to the field of psychology. For example there were only twelve colleges that had psychological laboratories in the entire United States and she created one. In her laboratory she had fifty four students dissect sheep brains and carry out studies on sensation, space perception, memory and reaction time. All of which are things that are used today by other scientists and different medical communities.

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For example, we are always hearing that drunk driving skews your space perception, sensation, memory and reaction time. One has to think this is not a coincidence that her work contributed to their findings. It was the first at a woman's college and she did this with a mere \$200. From 1891-1892 at the behest of G. Stanley Hall who was the editor of the American Journal of Psychology, her articles were normally studies and experiment by her and her studies that included everything from children's emotions, moral consciousness, drawings, psychological anesthetics, and dreams.

From her research in dreams she discovered there was a close relationship between her patient's dreams and what happens in real life. Her work would not be appreciated during its early stages by most scholars as they were on board with Freudian thought process on dreams. Later this same community would dismiss Freud's method and make Calkins research integral to dream researching. Through all of her research while pursuing her doctorate one of her most significant things she has to psychology was the Paired Technique.

This technique is explained as putting to paired numbers in different colors on cards and flashing them to see what the subject could remember. What she found was bright colors were retained better as well as a new memorization method. It later became a standard means for human learning and remnants of it are still used today by psychologists. Of all of Mary Calkins contributions to psychology, she was most interested in self-psychology and ignited the brainstorm over this that caused many to take up research on the subject. She even published an autobiography in 1930, where her goal was to get psychologists to become self-psychologists.

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In 1900, she even wrote and published a paper expressing her belief that psychology is a science of the self. This was immediately followed by criticism from other academics. Mary Calkins was never afraid of a challenge and answered those criticisms in work that followed and in her presidential address at the American Psychological Association meeting in 1905. For all that she tried to do in self psychology, unfortunately Dr. Kohut, Dr. Honess, and Dr. Yardley failed to credit to give her any credit in this arena. During her career Mary was really busy evidenced by her writing 67 articles on psychology and 37 in philosophy.

She also wrote and had 4 books on psychology published. Mary Calkins exemplary work preceded her and resulted in her being the first woman named president of the American Psychological Association and the American Philosophical Association. What Mary Calkins was able to accomplish in her day and age was simply amazing. She had to overcome numerous obstacles that would have made any other person give up and pursue a different profession. She worked and went to school, dealt with sexism and static thinking, in terms of a women's place in society. I say to Mary Calkins you are a winner and we remember you.

Not only for your contributions that you have to the respective field of psychology, but the barriers that you broke down so that other women were allowed to be more easily accepted and respected. From my research on Mary Calkins I learned that a group of Harvard alumni petitioned for her to be awarded her doctorate in 1930, but they were denied. I think that it would be fitting if this cause was taken up once again today. For everything Mary

Calkins has meant to the field of psychology it is the least we could do to honor all of the blood, sweat, and tears that she put into her work.