

The scientific revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



During the 17th and 18th centuries, women were often seen as the inferior of the two sexes. They were expected to be educated only in how to take care of the house, how to cook, how to raise a child, and other common jobs that were thought to be suitable for a woman. However, as the Scientific Revolution occurred, more and more women began to take interest in studying other things such as chemistry, astronomy, and medicine. The attitudes and reactions towards the participation of women in these fields of study during the 17th and 18th centuries were both positive and negative; some people were completely against it, some men supported it, and some women supported their sex by proving themselves in their respective fields of study; but, the road to acceptance for women was not one without struggles, sacrificing countless days and their health for the all the sake of science. Men were primarily the opposition against women actively participating in scientific research but were not exclusively against it, some women also shared these feelings. Up until the Scientific Revolution, men were almost always seen as the dominant force in society opposed to women. when women began to apply to universities and contribute to science in the 17th and 18th century, it came as a shock to many. For example, Johann Junker, head of the University of Halle, questioned the legality of a woman attending a university or earning a doctorate probably because of his sexist views that were common in his time. Women who did participate in scientific discussions were often met with discrimination and inequality. Samuel Pepys, an English diarist, said that when the Duchess of Newcastle was invited to a meeting of the Royal Society of Scientists, she dressed so antiquely and her behavior was so ordinary that he did not like

her at all, and she did not say anything worth hearing. Also, Johann Theodor Jablonski, secretary to the Berlin Academy of Sciences, said in a letter to the Academy that he didn't believe that Maria Winkelmann should continue to work on their calendar of observations because the Academy was ridiculed for having a woman prepare its calendar. Men were not the only ones who did not believe that women should study science. Marie Thiroux d'Arconville, a French anatomical illustrator, did not think that women should study medicine and astronomy because those subjects were too complicated for women. Despite the fact that many men could not accept that women were beginning to study science, there were many men who supported women who participated in scientific activities. Many times, male scientists would allow and even encourage their wives to partake in scientific research. For example, Johannes Hevelius would often collaborate with his wife, Elisabetha Hevelius, in astronomical research. In addition, Gottfried Kirch, a German astronomer and husband of Maria Winkelmann, talked about how his wife would stay up to observe the sky and even found a comet that he did not notice the night before. However, men who were directly associated with these types of women were not the only ones who praised them. The author of a Göttingen newspaper article describing Dorothea Schlozer, the first woman to receive a Ph. D. from a German University, described Schlozer as a hard working scholar who takes care of her household needs as well as her studies. Some men, such as Gottfried Leibniz, even believed that women advance knowledge better than men do because women are more detached. Not only would some men admire and support women who pursued scientific careers, but they would also have lengthy discussions and debates with

women, proving that they saw women as equals intellectually. Though not many women would enjoy the luxury of being seen as intellectual equals to men, those who did had to work for their respect and status. They did so by proving their capabilities and potential. Well known women who worked in the sciences had very tight schedules, just as well known men who worked in the same fields of study did. Johann Eberti described Marie Cunitz as a very dedicated astronomer who neglected her own household because she was so concentrated on her astronomical activities. Similarly, Marquise Emilie du Châtelet, a French aristocrat and scientist, described her long work day that started at eight in the morning and continued until five in the morning of the next day. This shows that although women were seen as inferior in the intellectual world, there were women like Marie Cunitz who worked long and hard to contribute to the scientific world. Although there were setbacks, such as men who discriminated against female scientists, most dedicated women persisted. Marie Meurdrac wrote that she told herself that a woman should remain silent and should not display her own knowledge, but she realized that the minds of women were equal to men and had the same potential. Some women even dedicated their whole lives to their field of study, such as Maria Sibylla Merian who described her journey studying insects that started when she was very young. These women who devoted their whole lives to improve the understanding of science in the 17th and 18th centuries prove that they ignored the fact that women were discriminated in the scientific world at the time and just focused on what they wanted to accomplish. The impact that women had on science during the 17th and 18th centuries may not have been apparent due to the disapproval from many; but in reality,

many women changed scientific research in many ways because of their persistence and determination. Although some men and women had negative attitudes towards women who participated in scientific research because of sexist views that were common at that time, there were many men and women who supported women who took part in the study of science, and many women did contribute many things to science in the 17th and 18th centuries. Because of women who took a risk by starting to study science, more and more women began to study science by the end of the Scientific Revolution.