

Psychology in 1877
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Psychology is a branch in science that has been evolving greatly with time and with the intervention of many individuals and institutions. Mary Whiton Calkins played a great role in this field.

She is believed to have helped improve the psychology field in immense ways and had to go through many struggles to achieve what she believed in and to attain her goals. Not only is she respected for being able to attain the position of presidency in the American Psychological Association but the fact that she was committed to her work and was able to overcome the hardships that came with being an ambitious and brave woman. The paper will focus on what Mary Calkins is remembered for and what she was able to accomplish in psychology. Born in 1863, Connecticut, Calkins was lucky to receive education because given her era it was difficult for girls to receive quality education if they were lucky enough to receive any (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988). Her father was supportive of her to gain education and tried his best to get her into good colleges like the Smith College where she continued to study until a tragedy occurred. When she lost her sister, everything changed including her way of viewing things. Later on, she was offered a teaching position in 1877 at Smith College, which she accepted although there later proved to be problems when she was asked to teach a psychology class.

She was forced to attend lectures at the University of Harvard, which increased her knowledge in psychology in great depths. After attending lectures at Harvard University, she was employed as an instructor in Psychology in the department of philosophy at Wellesley College. She was able to establish a psychological laboratory in 1891, which was a great

achievement but needed to be more experienced in the sector so she sought help from Harvard again and was allowed to use their laboratories but as a guest and not a student. It is here that she was able to come up with the paired associate technique through conducting some experiments. This technique was later modified and although Titchener took full credit for it, it was Mary that first introduced it and helped other psychologists understand the human memory even more. When she returned to Wellesley College in 1895, she was promoted to Professor of psychology and philosophy.

During this period, she was able to utilize her writing skills and wrote four books, all of which talked about psychology and philosophy (Rossiter, 1982). These books were able to shed some light on the topics discussed and provided better understanding to those pursuing the same course. She also continued to publish other related articles and journals, her most influential was, *The Persistent Problems of Philosophy*, and with the gradual change in philosophy, it went through five editions. This created a foothold for Calkins, as she was able to expand her knowledge and share it as well. Her contribution was really appreciated as she gave lectures about psychology and created an understanding for her students as well as her colleagues. During her talks and teachings, she credited one of her lecturers Royce, at Harvard University for helping her in philosophy and influencing her greatly. Her contribution to psychology was recognized and she was appreciated by being given the position of presidency in the American Psychological Association in 1905. Later in 1918, she was made president of the American Philosophical Association (Heidbreder, 1972).

These honors helped her credibility and she was more recognized and respected for her knowledge and contribution. When top psychologists in America were being ranked in 1908 she secured herself, twelfth position, which was a great achievement with her being a woman in her society. She got many job opportunities because most institutions wanted her in their staff.

Calkins had her own beliefs and stood by them even as she ventured into the field of psychology this way she was able to recognize and come up with the psychology of selves. Although she had discovered it, she made sure that other categories of psychology could be able to work by the psychology of selves without much objection (Burrows, 1999). Other psychologists were comfortable with the psychology of selves and felt that it applied to human beings and referred to it while conducting their studies (Furumoto, 1991). The psychology of selves did not last that long because within no time psychologists stopped referring to it and it started fading slowly. Attempts to revive it by Gordon Allport, in his books proved to be futile because in the third revision of his book Calkins is not mentioned and neither is the psychology of self. Calkins is also remembered for how she defended the rights of women and prospered in a male dominated field despite the hardships.

Attaining education was the first achievement that she had because very few girls got lucky enough to receive education because female education was not supported (Bumb, n. d.). She was even brave enough to oppose her colleagues in areas where she felt gender inequality was being exercised. She was very active in fighting for the voting rights of women and made it

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public that women should not be treated any differently to men in her society. In general, Mary Calkins contributed to psychology and philosophy in great ways that helped establish a base in the department. Her contribution was recognized and she was honored in many occasions.

Although some of her work is still not recognized in our current society, she still helped evolve the psychology field with her knowledge and skills.

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