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Emmy Noether and the Reception of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity in Göttingen

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Emmy Noether was the daughter of the eminent Jewish algebraic geometer Max Noether, who spent his entire professional career in Erlangen. Although she is rightfully remembered today as the "mother of modern algebra," her earliest research in Göttingen dealt with differential invariants and the connections between invariant integrals and conservation laws in physics. She undertook this work as part of a concerted research program led by Klein and Hilbert, both of whom were inspired by Einstein's general theory of relativity. After briefly describing the atmosphere in Göttingen following Einstein's lectures during the summer of 1915, I will indicate how Noether became the central figure in this Göttingen research program, which culminated in two now famous theorems in the calculus of variations that bear her name.