

# 3 (In)equality at Work

Does recognition depend on gender?

## 1 Women in science

- A. Pairwork.** In five minutes, list all the scientists you can think of.
- B.** How many men are there on your list? How many women? What does that tell you?
- C.** Read the cartoon. How does it illustrate the struggle women still have when presenting new scientific theories?
- D.** What does it tell you about recognition?
- E. Have your say.** Is this cartoon helpful to fight sexism? Justify your answer.

HELP!

- ill-treated
- lack of recognition
- struggle = fight
- be on an equal footing

### The Oceanographic Dress Code: No Bare Mid Rifts



The illustrated Women in Science, by Dale Debacksy, 2015

## 2 Hidden in plain sight

- A.** Read the text and pick out the different jobs mentioned. Say who did them, where and when.
- B.** Were those people recognised for their work?

Find at least two reasons to justify your answer.

- C.** Take a look at the date of publication.

What does it reveal about the evolution of society?

“How many women are we talking about? Five or six?” I had known more than that number just growing up in Hampton, but even I was surprised at how the numbers kept adding up. [...] I discovered one 1945 personnel document describing a beehive<sup>1</sup> of mathematical activity in an office in a new building on Langley’s west side, staffed by 25 black women coaxing<sup>2</sup> numbers out of calculators on a 24-hour schedule, overseen by three black shift supervisors who reported to two white head computers. I can put names to almost 50 black women who worked as computers, mathematicians, engineers or scientists at the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory from 1943 through 1980, and my intuition is that 20 more names can be shaken loose from the archives with more research.

While the black women are the most hidden of the mathematicians who worked at the NACA, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, and later at NASA, they

were not sitting alone in the shadows: the white women who made up the majority of Langley’s computing workforce over the years have hardly been recognised for their contributions to the agency’s long-term success. Virginia Biggins worked the Langley beat for the *Daily Press* newspaper, covering the space programme starting in 1958. “Everyone said, ‘This is a scientist, this is an engineer’ and it was always a man,” she said in a 1990 panel on Langley’s human computers. She never got to meet any of the women. “I just assumed they were all secretaries,” she said.

1 *ruche* • 2 (ici) *obtenir*

*Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race*, Margot Lee Shetterly, 2016

