

Creating Equality at Home

Creating Equality at Home tells the fascinating stories of 25 couples around the world whose everyday decisions about sharing the housework and childcare – from who cooks the food, washes the dishes, and helps with homework, to who cuts back on paid work – all add up to a gender revolution. From North and South America to Europe, Asia, and Australia, these couples tell a story of similarity despite vast cultural differences. By rejecting the prescription that men’s identities are determined by paid work and women’s by motherhood, the couples show that men can put family first and are as capable of nurturing as women, and that women can pursue careers as seriously as their husbands do – bringing profound rewards for men, women, marriage, and children. Working couples with children will discover that equality is possible and exists right now.

Francine M. Deutsch, author of *Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works* (1999), is Emerita Professor of Psychology at Mount Holyoke College, USA. She has published extensively on issues of gender justice. She and her husband equally shared the care of their son.

Ruth A. Gaunt, Associate Professor at the University of Lincoln, UK, previously held a tenured senior lectureship at Bar Ilan University, Israel, and prestigious fellowships at both Harvard University, USA, and the University of Cambridge, UK. Her published research focuses on the social psychology of gender and families. She and her husband have three children and share childcare equally.

Advance Praise for *Creating Equality at Home*

“This is an impressive work, both for its scope of research and for its optimism that equality at a household level is possible. The stories provide much-needed nuance to the lives of couples who ‘undo gender,’ and how women, men, and children benefit from equal sharing.”

*Gary Barker, President and CEO, Promundo, USA, and co-author of
State of the World’s Fathers*

“It is the most compelling and inspirational book about involved fathering to appear in decades. Not only are the couples’ stories illuminated with sensitivity to cultural and political differences, but personal struggles and intergenerational tensions are expertly discussed. This is the best book on family labor-sharing.”

*Scott Coltrane, sociologist, Senior Vice President, University of Oregon,
USA, and author of Gender and Families*

“The authors successfully solve the puzzle of how couples can resist the dominant gender norms surrounding them. This fascinating book demonstrates that, beyond cultural and institutional differences, fathers benefit from equality as much as mothers when they contribute in tandem with their partner to shape a new and fairer world.”

*Jeanne Fagnani, Emeritus Senior Research Fellow in Sociology, University
of Paris-Sorbonne, France, and co-author of Fathers and Mothers*

“We have been given an exceptionally comprehensive account of how heterosexual couples throughout the globe endeavor to create domestic equality. The stories demonstrate how, under the right social conditions,

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partners can overcome barriers to forge equal relationships. It is an indispensable guide for dismantling the outdated norms and structures that support gender inequality.”

Kathleen Gerson, Professor of Sociology and Collegiate Professor of Arts and Science, New York University, USA

“This is a fascinating book, providing riveting stories that show how couples around the world become resisters and ‘undo gender.’ Other books explain inequality, while this important book explains equality and how it can be accomplished. Couples attempting to reconcile work and family, seasoned activists and scholars, graduates and undergraduates should read it.”

Naomi Gerstel, Distinguished University Professor, University of Massachusetts, USA, and co-author of Unequal Time

“This book is a perfect blend of scholarly analysis and compelling personal stories of couples who have bucked gender norms to create equality in their homes. From twenty-two countries across the globe, these men and women provide road maps for undoing gender, and make a powerful case for the tremendous rewards that follow from embracing equality.”

Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, Professor Emerita of Psychological and Brain Sciences, University of Massachusetts, USA, and author of Shattered Assumptions

“This is the collection I have been waiting for. The editors bring together a brilliant group of scholars from around the world to share stories of equal-sharing couples in twenty-two countries. They provide a wonderful journey through 60/60 parenting in Israel, dismantling housewifization in Indonesia, flying toward equality in Honduras, and more.”

Gayle Kaufman, Nancy and Erwin Maddrey Professor of Sociology, Davidson College, USA, and author of Superdads

“This creative book analyzes the sharing process established by couples from different cultures. Based on international comparisons, it highlights the benefits of egalitarian couples who fairly split domestic tasks. It is a truly amazing book for mapping out a household’s journey toward gender equality!”

Hélène Périvier, economist, Director of the Programme de Recherche et d’Enseignement de Savoirs sur le Genre (PRESAGE), and co-author of Le Deuxième Âge de l’émancipation

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“This innovative book demonstrates, using interviews from twenty-two countries, how couples undo gender, by describing a typical day in their lives. I would recommend the book for every family (and to academics researching families) to become happy in their own way.”

Andrea Pető, Professor, Central European University, Hungary, and co-editor of Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories

“While gender inequality at home seems intractable, this study shows that equal sharing is possible and a common methodology across cases reveals the conditions under which it happens. With vivid qualitative data and an engaging writing, this book is a superb teaching resource as well as a must-have for researchers.”

Juliet Schor, Professor of Sociology, Boston College, USA, and author of After the Gig

“Here is a book with a mission. Its goal is to inject some optimism into debates that focus on the persistence of ‘traditional’ gender roles in housework and childcare. It’s an uplifting account and an informative read.”

Jacqueline Scott, Emerita Professor of Empirical Sociology, University of Cambridge, UK

“For anyone interested in relationships or gender, this unique compilation of case studies on gender resisters is a must-read. The authors show what gender resisters share, regardless of nationality, and convincingly demonstrate how equality is achieved, as well as the benefits it affords for both women and men.”

Janice M. Steil, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Adelphi University, USA, and author of Marital Equality

EDITED BY
FRANCINE M. DEUTSCH
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CREATING EQUALITY AT HOME

How 25 Couples
Around the World
Share Housework
and Childcare



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*To Jerry and Doram
Our Equally Sharing Husbands*

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Acknowledgments

This project was conceived more than a decade ago. With no funding, and just the hope/belief that, if illuminated, stories of couples around the world would provide clues to how gender equality at home could be achieved, I (Fran) was fortunate to recruit scholars to participate. I knew none of them personally before the project began. Ruth and I are extremely grateful to these social scientists who represent multiple disciplines and 22 countries. We are honored by the involvement of this impressive group of scholars: for the trust they showed by signing on to this vision, for their hard work, their analytic insights, their tolerance for our endless requests, their patience, and their commitment to gender justice.

This book couldn't exist without our international collection of 25 equally sharing couples who generously opened their homes and their hearts to tell their stories. We offer them our heartfelt thanks.

In the course of this long project, lives began and ended. We welcomed a number of babies who were born to our authors. Tragically, Leslie Stanley-Stevens was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and died less than a year later at age 55. We mourn her loss. Leslie had stepped in to rescue our Sweden chapter when the original Swedish partner backed out. Not satisfied to conduct an interview by phone from the USA, she volunteered to go to Sweden to do it on-site. When she got sick and couldn't continue, Linda Haas agreed to join the project and finish the chapter, so Sweden was rescued again.

Friends and colleagues who live very busy lives nonetheless took time to comment on the chapters I co-authored with Ruth. The insightful comments of Naomi Gerstel, Vanessa Cunha, Oriel Sullivan, and

Maureen Perry-Jenkins led to many interesting conversations between Ruth and me, forcing us to qualify and clarify our ideas, and to pay attention to ideas we might have ignored. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman gave us critical advice about how to re-organize the concluding chapters. Virginia Brabender reminded these two social psychologists that personality matters too. Elizabeth Hay and Hedda Orkin weighed in on which cases might persuade a publisher to endorse the book, and Gail Robinson provided editing advice on those chapters.

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Cambridge University Press has been the perfect home for this book. Janka Romero possesses a rare combination of reassuring calmness and conscientious attention to myriad publishing issues and details, which make it a joy to work with her. Her quick, comprehensive, and intelligent responses to all of my emails from the very first one rightly signaled that she would be the ideal editor for us. Emily Watton, her editorial assistant, juggled all of the pieces that brought this publication together with great aplomb, perhaps answering more questions than any previous author had asked. Many thanks to Adam Hooper for his efficient handling of the production side, and to Deborah Hey, copyeditor extraordinaire, whose work simply amazed us.

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A Personal Note from Fran

When I did the research for *Halving it All*, I was struck by how couples who ostensibly believed in gender equality were derailed from practicing it because they clung to essentialist ideas that women were fundamentally different from men. They believed that a father could not provide the nurturance that we usually associate with mothers. Equal sharers,

however, held no such belief and showed every day that fathers can care as well as mothers. At the time, I thought, “I wish someone would do some quantitative research on this topic.” Lo and behold, in 2007, I discovered Ruth Gaunt’s article in *Sex Roles* doing exactly that. I got in touch with her and to my delight she agreed to participate in my fledgling project. She helped me refine the methodology, identified her own couple in Israel, skillfully interviewed them, and wrote a case chapter. When I read her terrific chapter on Netta and Gadi, I asked her to co-edit the book. She demurred at first, modestly citing her status as a non-native speaker, but then she agreed. Her incisive intellect and succinct, engaging writing style meant both astute editing and perceptive analyses. Our collaboration could not have been more rewarding; every chapter in the book is better because of her contributions. Ruth is an extraordinary scholar and just as extraordinary a human being. Although I had the intuition that she would be a great partner, I had no idea how great. Our years of work together were filled with thought-provoking discussions about the nature and bases of equality at home. We didn’t always agree. When we disagreed, I was usually convinced that she was right, but if I didn’t relent and she deferred, she was gracious and undefensive, even when she wasn’t convinced. Ruth is one of the most honest and caring people I have ever known. Little did I know when sending out that email that the collaboration that began by serendipity would develop into a cherished friendship.

Work and family have become a mantra that reflects their inextricable link. I’ve often thought that friendship and work are linked in my life as well. Both a friend and colleague, Naomi Gerstel’s work continues to inspire and teach me. My closest friends have supported me in so many ways that make it possible to face the ups and downs of professional and personal life. They have encouraged me, teased me for being a workaholic (making me laugh at my workaholic self), and celebrated my successes. Virginia Brabender, Beth Hay, Hedda Orkin, Cindy Cohen, Andrea Ayvazian, Naomi Gerstel, Barbara Burns, Judy Kroll, Robert Zussman, Stephen Slatin, and Lynn Posner Rice have my gratitude for always being there. I am especially grateful to Lynn for our many spontaneous coffee dates during which she spent endless hours listening to tales of the travails and triumphs of this multi-year project.

It was a thrill to work with my friend of many decades, renowned illustrator, Nancy Stahl, who generously donated an abundance of her time to create maps to my specifications as illustrations for the case chapters.

Mount Holyoke College, my professional home for over 30 years, is filled with brilliant students, staff, and colleagues who contributed to *Creating Equality at Home*. My amazing colleagues in Psychology and Education create the kind of environment where scholarship can thrive: inspiring with examples, honoring each person's intellectual pursuits, and taking time out to recharge with the laughter of lobby lunches. The incomparable Janet Crosby, administrative assistant for the department, is the glue who holds it all together. She is a wizard at accomplishing any task laid before her, from finding obscure information and negotiating with administrators, to providing a calming word when the frustrations of academic life become too much. Audrey Hildebrandt, Phuong Ta, and Elizabeth Nelson served as invaluable research assistants: finding information, conducting screening interviews, and coding. Madison Richards's superb contributions as my undergraduate research assistant at Mount Holyoke College rose to the level of joint authorship of our concluding chapter. The LITS help desk, led by the outstanding Aimee DeGrenier, was a lifesaver in the many computer crises encountered by this reluctant Luddite. Jim Burke managed our project website. Displaying a tolerance that might have strained the patience of a saint, he never complained about my repetitive questions about our group email.

My impressive feminist colleagues Marie-Thérèse Letablier, Hélène Périer, and Jeanne Fagnani created a second intellectual home for me in Paris. And finally, I discovered a peaceful retreat in Luang Prabang where Souksaikhom Sengsavang's welcoming guest house, Ssen Mekong, was the perfect place to complete the final editing of the book and escape the New England winter.

In the midst of this project, I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer that made me doubt that I would make it to the end. The expert and compassionate care I received from the medical team at Massachusetts General Hospital saved my life. I am indebted to Jerry Younger, my oncologist, Barbara Smith, my surgeon, Alphonse Taghian, my radiation oncologist, and to my primary care nurse, Elisabeth Costigan, for reaching this day. I am also grateful to Mark Breitbart and Sheryl White for their loving hospitality while I underwent treatment.

Jerry Epstein, my economist husband of 34 years, has equally shared family work with me from the outset (except that his exclusive responsibility for dishes and laundry might now tip the scales toward him). I often think of research that shows that men's success is due to women who stand behind them, freeing them from the chores of everyday life so they can concentrate on their careers. Instead, Jerry and I stand alongside each

other. I cannot imagine my life without his love, support, and inspiration. I certainly would not have been able to complete this project without his help. Shared parenting with him has been and continues to be one of life's greatest adventures.

Eli Epstein-Deutsch, our precious child, has now grown up into an impressive young adult. A talented writer himself, I often called him for advice about wording and to get his feedback on chapters while working on the book. His intelligence, empathy, humor, and perceptiveness still seem miraculous to me. I am thankful for his existence every single day.

A Personal Note from Ruth

Over the 12 years of working on this project I was fortunate to receive help and support from numerous people. I am grateful to the many colleagues, students, and research assistants who helped me along the way, and would like to extend special thanks to Or Anabi for conducting dozens of screening interviews; to my dedicated language editor Esther Singer for going over everything I wrote for so many years; to my dear friends and colleagues Orly Benjamin and Orna Sasson-Levy for enduring my constant complaining and helping me develop my thinking on gender; and to Jacqueline Scott for stimulating discussions of the gendered division of work and care. I also warmly thank my colleagues at the University of Lincoln and especially Fenja Ziegler and Susan Chipchase who opened their home to me when I needed a home away from home.

I am ever grateful for the love and support of my parents, Rachel and Nathan Pessach, whose 64 years of marriage (and counting) taught me what I see as one of the solid bases of equal sharing: putting the family first. Their devotion, loving relationship, and teamwork have always been something to aspire to.

I owe the most to my life partner and best friend since teenage years, Doram Gaunt, who constantly challenges my thoughts, questions every convention, and engages me in endless discussions about absolutely everything. For him, staying home for the first two years with each of our three children while juggling work from home and night shifts seemed like the obvious thing to do. Without his continued support and encouragement none of this would have happened.

My children, Amitai, Lily, and Boaz, have given me the privilege of raising them and being part of their lives, and motivated me to set an example and show them that it is, in fact, possible to have it all. Seven-year-old Boaz once asked me, "Did you know, Mum, that in some

families it is the mother who does the cooking?” His obliviousness to gender norms made me proud and filled me with hope that one day, when our children and their peers read this book, they will think, “Seriously? That’s so outdated!”

And finally, my sincere thanks go to Francine Deutsch. Accidentally running into her “Husbands at Home” paper 20 years ago, while I was a young postdoc working in a completely different field, was a turning point in my research career. Fran’s work opened up a whole new world for me and has been a source of inspiration since then. I was over the moon when one summer evening 12 years ago, completely out of the blue, I received an email from her inviting me to collaborate on this global project. I am forever grateful for her friendship and for the opportunity to join her in this wonderful journey with equally sharing couples around the world.

Development and Gender Equality in Participating Countries

Participating Countries	HDI ranks ^{1 2}	GDII ranks ^{1 3}	CEDEW year of ratification ⁴
Australia	3	23	1983
Austria	20	13	1982
Bhutan	134	117	1981
Brazil	79	94	1984
China	86	36	1980
Croatia	46	29	1992
Czech Republic	27	29	1993
Germany	5	14	1985
Honduras	133	109	1983
Hungary	45	54	1980
Iceland	6	9	1985
Indonesia	116	104	1984
Israel	22	21	1991
Montenegro	50	32	2006
Portugal	41	19	1980
Singapore	9	12	1995
Slovenia	25	7	1992
Sweden	7	3	1980
Switzerland	2	1	1997
Turkey	64	69	1985
United Kingdom	14	25	1986
United States	13	41	Not ratified

¹ Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from: www.hdr.undp.org. License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/igo/legalcode>.

² The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite based on life expectancy, education, and income per capita. A rank of “1” indicates the highest human development.

³ Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite based on reproductive health (e.g., maternal mortality), political empowerment (i.e., percentage of parliamentary seats), education, labor market participation. A “1” indicates the most gender-equal country.

⁴ The CEDEW is the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and ratified by 189 states. From Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by UN Women, ©2018, United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.