

# OFF THE VANIER BOOKSHELF

SARA MACNAULL

M-O-M-S. Moms as breadwinners, moms as caregivers, moms as cooks, chauffeurs and playdate organizers. As we all know very well, moms take on many roles – at home, at work and in the community. *Mogul, Mom, & Maid: The Balancing Act of the Modern Woman* focuses on moms and all the roles, titles and to-do lists that come along with being a mother in today's world, economy and society. Delving into the work-life conversation, author Liz O'Donnell, founder of the award-winning blog *Hello Ladies*, looks beyond the statistics and tells the stories of women who are managing their various roles in the workforce, in the household and with their children.

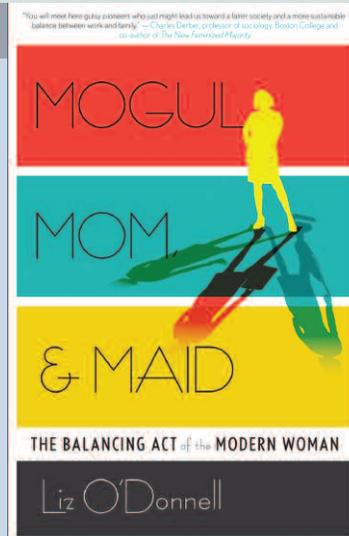
O'Donnell shares her journey speaking with 100 women from across the United States from diverse professions and from all stages of life, trying to gain insight into the realities facing modern moms. She explores women's experiences in the paid labour force, the importance of their contributions to family finances and the expectations (whether their own or those of others) that often accompany these roles. O'Donnell also considers the positive responses to these realities and how mothers adapt to meet changing needs, whether it's through part-time work, flexible work arrangements, job-sharing, self-employment or entrepreneurship. She also contemplates the negative responses, such as stress, the struggle to do it all in little time and late-night emails, phone calls and deadlines.

The stories O'Donnell shares reflect the challenging households mothers manage. With increased participation in the paid labour force, her interviewees discuss not being available for housework, child care and eldercare. She also hears about the changing roles of men in the household. She describes how cooperation from spouses, employers and schools is required for women to achieve their aspirations and reach their full potential.

Their success may be impacted by stigmas and assumptions about women who are managing many different roles. Such stigmas include the notion that if a woman is a mom and an employee, then she must be a bad mother or a bad performer, or both, and that there is no way that women can be hard workers and good mothers without either her work or her children taking

## Mogul, Mom, & Maid: The Balancing Act of the Modern Woman

Liz O'Donnell. Brookline, Massachusetts: Bibliomotion, Inc., 2014.



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a back seat. O'Donnell's interviewees also discuss what work, life and family means to them, as well as their expectations and aspirations.

O'Donnell uses stories and statistics, combining quantitative evidence, anecdotes and personal reflections to convey the various realities faced by today's mothers – and what it all means in the 21st century. Meant as a cautionary tale of “why women are key to the future and what we must do to support their choices at home and at work,” O'Donnell is hopeful that her collection of ideas and stories about women navigating home-life and work-life realities will inform the conversations about women in all of their roles. *Mogul, Mom, & Maid: The Balancing Act of the Modern Woman* is ideally suited to anyone interested in better understanding modern families and the complexity of modern motherhood. ◀

*Sara MacNaull is responsible for Networks, Projects and Special Events at the Vanier Institute of the Family.*



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