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Comparative Essay

### Mothers With A Divided Heart

The importance of raising children to be productive members of a rapidly evolving, achievement oriented society, is paramount to the success of the family and the global economy. At the same time, the stresses of every day individual economic and personal fulfillment needs are a significant counter force. This force works against the available time and effort required for mothers to successfully nurture their young. It has resulted in societal "Mommy Wars", pitting the working mom against the stay-at-home mom, in a battle over which model offers the clearest path to nurturing success. Bridging the gap requires each to accept that there is not one right choice for every family and to understand and respect each individual decision. All moms have one thing in common: they make sacrifices to do what is best for their families. To a working mom, this means not spending as much time with her children, and for stay-at-home moms, this means not getting much time to herself. Being home or not with the children is not as important as creating an environment where the children can thrive and feel loved.

Stay-at-home moms are often viewed as <sup>3</sup>soap-opera-watching couch potatoes<sup>2</sup> with no ambition. Rather than being praised for their decision to stay home, they often feel they need to defend it. Society talks so much about family values, yet gives little respect or value to stay-at-home moms who raise the families. In addition, stay-at-home moms find it challenging to provide a social setting for their children when being at home all day is the only stimulation they have. Furthermore, the strain of not bringing in money for a better standard of living can lead to self-doubt and isolation. That feeling of insecurity can be put to rest, however, with the peace-of-mind that comes from knowing that the child is being well taken care of. Stay-at-home moms have the opportunity to become more involved in the children's school activities as well. This can be important to both because it shows interest in the child and that leads to higher self-esteem for the child. This way of living is beneficial for the children as well because there is only one set of rules to follow. The children feel a constant unconditional love from their own parents that is unlike any other love. Children can thrive with a routine and rely on the stability they feel when they have mom to count on <sup>3</sup>being there<sup>2</sup> all the time. Staying home to raise a family is healthy for the family to grow together and to support each other's roles.

Family support is important, however, working moms are often viewed as deserting their children in order to have nicer cars and homes. They are said to <sup>3</sup>want it all.<sup>2</sup> Yet at times, they are denied <sup>3</sup>it all<sup>2</sup> in the work place specifically because they are moms. Working moms experience the stress of being pulled in so many directions, it is like living with a divided heart. The pressure of economics that force many single mothers into the workplace makes the choice a limited one and creates a sense of guilt. The guilt about not <sup>3</sup>being there<sup>2</sup> for the children and the fear that they are not being well taken care of adds to the stressful decisions working moms need to make. The guilt multiplies when there is a feeling of selfishness wanting to pursue a career and wanting <sup>3</sup>more<sup>2</sup> for the children and the family. In spite of these drawbacks, working moms have many benefits. They have the luxury of learning and growing every day independent of their families. The mental satisfaction of knowing that they contribute to the success of their company is very satisfying. It is rewarding to know the children are learning how to play, share and laugh with others. Working moms are so anxious to see their children after a day at work, it creates a sense of bonding when they get home. Moms and kids have the evenings to really focus on each other and learn about each

other. They are also pulling their own weight with an income of their own, and this builds personal self-confidence which is healthy for the whole family. Financially, it is easier to provide a larger home and a higher education for the children. The advantages to the children lie in the social skills they

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acquire being in different settings and interacting with other people. If the children are in a daycare setting, they can learn how to adapt to change, share with other children, and prepare for school which is important for their roles as future adults. Working moms should feel proud of their accomplishments and good about themselves for giving their children the gift of independence, self confidence and love.

Happy, healthy children is the common goal for every mom. The environment mothers place them in is up to each individual. Both kinds of moms have a lot in common: both miss what the other has, both make sacrifices, and both find themselves having to justify their decisions. Dr. Jacqueline Lerner, a psychologist at Penn State, did a study of each group and found that <sup>3</sup>the most poorly adjusted children were those with mothers who wanted to work but were staying home, and those with working mothers who felt they really should be home.<sup>2</sup> Although it makes sense that happy mothers will raise well-adjusted children, the problem for many mothers is the guilt and worry they feel no matter which route they take. Moms should be proud of the work they do and confident that they are doing what is best for the family. After all, children are unconditionally accepting, and all they ever want is to be loved.

