RALEIGH, N.C. — Because three-quarters of the jobs lost in the recession were previously filled by men, women are expected to outnumber men in the workplace by the end of this year, according to the Center for American Progress.

Women who take on the role of being the primary breadwinner are under increased the pressure balance the demands of work and home, said Philip Cohen, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill who studies women's roles.

"The pressure falls on them, and all the progress that we've made has not so far alleviated that pressure," Cohen said.

Nicole Learn decided to return to work at Cisco Systems Inc. after her daughter was born, and she's expecting a second child in January.

"The mental stimulation of the work I'm doing and also the sense of accomplishment (has) always been important in my career path," Learn said. "Being a professional and doing well at work, you have certain standards, and you want to apply that in your home as well. So you are trying to do the best you can at everything."

Cohen said that do-it-all attitude explains part of the pressure mothers face. Some working women who decided to stay home treat parenting the same way as they would a rigorous career.
"Some people think that it's ratcheted up the demands of parenting for everybody," he said.

Ellen Schwartz, a mother of two, quit her job as an insurance underwriter 15 years ago to stay home with her son.

"I knew that I wanted to be the one to take care of my child, and I wanted to experience everything that he was going to experience," Schwartz said.

Yet, the pressure to do well in her job as mother still affects her.

"I think that I'm very critical of myself," she said.

While demands at home and in the office have gone up for women, Cohen said, research has shown that not much has changed to ease the load on women.

"The workplaces haven't changed that much. They haven't become as flexible as people would like to think they have. Husbands have changed their behavior, but not that much," he said.

Learn said she's fortunate that Cisco provides lots of flexibility for parents. Still, she said, she's had to compromise on things occasionally.

"You can't be perfect at everything. Everything is not going to run smoothly," she said.

Watch the video at: http://www.wral.com/lifestyles/family/story/6346285/