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Identifying the Poor

Is "Headship" a Useful Concept?

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Identifying the Poor

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Identifying the Poor

Is "Headship" a Useful Concept?

Sandra Rosenhouse

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Sandra Rosenhouse is a demographer with the Population Council, New York City, and a consultant to the Welfare and Human Resources Division of the World Bank's Population and Human Resources Department.

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ABSTRACT

Policymakers concerned with the amelioration of poverty have singled out female-headed households as one of the key target groups deserving intensified attention. Studies have found that households headed by women are more common among the poor. Research conducted to examine the characteristics and well-being of these households, however, has employed a definition of headship commonly used in surveys, namely, that the head is the person other household members recognize as the head of household. The term "head of household" was originally introduced in surveys to avoid double counting of household members in household rosters, and, as generally applied, fails to reflect any of the elements of the definition of headship: regular presence in the household, overriding authority, and primary economic support.

This paper examines the characteristics of households reported to be headed by women to show the limited value of reported headship in reliably identifying the economic support base of the household. To be relevant for policymaking, the concept of headship should be defined on the basis of economic support. This paper presents one example of an indicator of headship which reflects work that is done to support the household. The concept of the working head helps investigators identify more clearly women supporting households in extreme circumstances than does the idea of the reported head, because it draws attention to the overall disadvantage of female heads: the lower return on their market hours of work and the overall work burden they carry to attain a given level of consumption for their household.

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INTRODUCTION

Female-headed households have been singled out in development policy research as one of the key groups to which poverty amelioration efforts should be aimed. Households headed by women are viewed as being at greater economic disadvantage than male or joint-headed households because females generally have lower earnings than males, and because time constraints imposed by having to fulfill both home and market work responsibilities often restrict their access to social and health services. However, the conventional definition of household head makes no reference to economic support. It is a premise of this paper that the current definition of head of household excludes a significant portion of households primarily or substantially maintained by women. Second, it maintains that the use of the concept of household head, which implies a single or dominant earner and decision-maker, may be unrealistic where multiple-earner households are the norm. Given the target-group strategy adopted by international donors in the late 1970s to combat poverty in a more direct manner, it is crucial that the target groups identified be in fact those which are most vulnerable to economic hardship, and that the household member(s) selected to be recipients of interventions be those who will bring most benefit to the household (Buvinic, 1983). Data collected from a Peruvian national sample between 1985 and 1986 by the World Bank's Living Standards Unit and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística of Peru are employed to examine the usefulness of the concept of headship for policy formulation.

This paper consists of five parts: (1) a discussion of prevailing headship classification systems; (2) an overview of the prevalence of

female-headed households, particularly in Latin America,^{1/} and a description of the characteristics of these households as reported in the literature; (3) an empirical analysis of the demographic characteristics of heads of household in Peru as identified by two contrasting definitions of headship, a conventional one, reported head, and an experimental definition, working head; (4) a discussion of an alternate indicator of family welfare; and (5) a summary and discussion of the policy implications of the study results.

^{1/} The literature review examines primarily Latin American data for two reasons. First, the focus of this paper is Peru. Second, the dynamics of the emergence of female headship in Africa are very different, and therefore, so are the characteristics of these households (Peters, 1983).

I. HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP: PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

A decade of research on women and development has consistently shown that women heading their own households are overrepresented among the world's poor, and that the proportion of households headed by women has increased significantly worldwide in the last two decades (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978; CEPAL, 1984; Buvinic, Lycette, and McGreevey, 1983). Although poverty in the developing world is not restricted to female-headed households, the mere size of this group and its disadvantaged position vis-a-vis joint or "male-headed" households suggest that these households should receive intensified attention in poverty amelioration and social adjustment programs.

While households headed by women fall disproportionately within the poorest segments of society, the indiscriminate use of the term "female-headed household" as a key indicator of the poverty of households introduces some conceptual problems. First, the use of the term assumes that households headed by women constitute a homogeneous group, obscuring the true variability that exists within the group. Not all female-headed households are equally disadvantaged, and some may not be disadvantaged at all. The success with which female-headed households adjust to their socioeconomic context varies substantially with their socioeconomic endowments (Peters, 1983), family composition, employment, and access to basic services such as health and education. Poverty reduction policies will have greater impact to the extent that they take this variability into account.

A second problem stems from the absence of a standard definition of headship. Despite its wide use, the concept of headship has remained vague. Many surveys employing the term fail to define it, leaving it up to the

interviewer to interpret its meaning. More recently, surveys have introduced more specific definitions. The result is that a variety of definitions coexist, limiting the comparability of the data available.

Given the absence of a standard definition, inconsistencies in the use of the term are common. For instance, in most surveys, a male 'head' and female 'head' are not equivalent. A male-headed household often refers to a family with an "intact" couple: both adult male and female are present. In contrast, a female-headed household implies an unpartnered woman, e.g. single, separated, divorced, or widowed. And, in cases where marriage implies legal status only, it can also include women living in consensual unions.

The most serious problem with the use of the concept of headship, however, has to do with the assumptions it carries. The term assumes that a hierarchical relationship exists between household members and that the head is the most important member; that the head is a regular presence in the home; has overriding authority in important household decision matters; and, provides a consistent and central economic support. Yet, persons defined as household heads may be absent for large portions of the year, may earn steadily but only erratically contribute income, and, as result of their absence, earning power, or other aspects of internal power relationships, may have little day-to-day decision making power over household consumption.

The common practice among survey researchers and analysts to impute the characteristics of the head to the household (Youseff and Hetler, 1983; United Nations, 1984) only serves to aggravate the problem. In doing this, researchers tacitly assume that the head's information is the most important;

that there is a single or primary earner and decision maker in the household; and, that the head is that person.

These commonly made assumptions regarding the relationship between the head and the household can result in a biased portrayal of the internal dynamics of households. This practice results in a classification system that underestimates the true number of women who are de facto or acting heads owing to spouses' absence, labor migration, or unemployed or underemployed status. On the other hand, the use of this definition may overstate the number of households headed by women by classifying nonworking older women supported by sons, daughters, or other relatives as a heads. Consequently, its use may lead to erroneous conclusions as to what the content and structure of policies aimed at improving the welfare of low-income households should be.

The original use of "head of household" in censuses and surveys was to identify a reference person within the household to whom to relate the various household members in order to avoid duplication of those enumerated. Surveys typically ask the interviewee who s/he recognizes as the head of the household. Thus, responses to this question tend to reflect the normative definition of headship in a given context, and often, the cultural biases of the interviewer as well (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978; United Nations, 1984). In practice, it is the oldest person, usually male, who is identified or reported as the head. Usually the designated "head" is the chief asset owner, owning either the land or house the family lives in, or a substantial portion of the household's capital goods. Women usually become chief asset owners after their spouse's death. This conventional definition of headship will be referred to

as "reported headship" throughout this paper, i.e. the person reported to be the head by the household members interviewed.

While several attempts have been made to adopt more meaningful definitions of headship (such as the person who bears the chief economic responsibility for the well-being of the household, or the person who exercises authority over the maintenance of the household), efforts to introduce changes have met with limited success. (Youssef and Hetler, 1983). Part of the reason why change has been slow to come is that determinations about economic responsibility and chief authority become difficult in cases where there are multiple earners and, by extension, the possibility of multiple decisionmakers. Faced with this complexity, respondents and enumerators alike may tend to identify the eldest male as the head.

The policy context is crucial in deciding whether and how to use headship. If headship, as defined by reported head of household, is meant to discover the economic well-being of members of the household, how useful is it when the term makes no reference to the head's economic support or physical presence? As a sole indicator of welfare, it fails to take into account the role of other household members, both as sources of income and as active participants in intra-household negotiations over the allocation of work and household maintenance responsibilities. Equally important, conventionally applied headship concepts do not allow for egalitarian arrangements.

If policymakers are concerned with the economic base of poor households, then ideally what is needed is a classification system that identifies whose work effort and income the household is most consistently

dependent on. This should include not only market hours worked (including both formal and informal sector) and returns to labor (both income and social benefits), but also who and how many work. In the case of households maintained by women's work, it is also important to account for hours of housework in order to have a more realistic measure of the dual burden borne by the female worker. In examining the dynamics and prospects of female-headed households, it is critical to learn the roles of other household members who often compensate for the generally lower returns to women's labor and the restrictions that may be placed on their market work by child care responsibilities.

II. HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY WOMEN: EVIDENCE FROM THE LITERATURE

The number of households headed by women, as defined by reported headship, varies by region and sample examined but can be as low as 4 percent of all households as in Israel in 1979 (includes only families with children; Kamerman, 1984) and as high as 50 percent in the Eastern Caribbean in 1970 (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978). Figures for the United States in 1979 show 18 percent of all households with children were headed by women (Kamerman, 1984). Variations in proportions of households headed by women in different contexts may be due to spousal age differences at marriage, differential rates of nonmarital fertility, marital instability, and migration by sex, and differences in life expectancies by sex.

Evidence compiled a decade ago on the prevalence of female headship in the Third World, where most of the world's poor are concentrated, estimated that approximately one third of all households in the developing world were headed by women (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978). These estimates, using data obtained primarily from published census compilations and a few micro studies, were the first attempt to quantify the frequency and distribution of these households. However, given the unreliable quality of many of these censuses, the use of different definitions of headship, and that these surveys were not designed to measure the prevalence of female-headed households, these figures should only be taken to reflect trends and patterns. More precise data have been obtained more recently from smaller scale household surveys and regional micro studies, and if anything, they point out that prevalence is greater than that detected in large scale national surveys and censuses.

Table 1 is a reprint of a table presented in Buvinic and Youssef (1978) and employs 1970 census information. Potential female headship is defined as those households without an adult male partner, a definition essentially reciprocal to reported male headship as defined by the presence of an adult male. Countries are grouped according to the proportion of all heads who are female. In this compilation, the percentage of heads who are women can vary from as low as 10 percent to as high as 48 percent. Central America and sub-Saharan Africa tend to dominate the two upper levels. Although not included in this table, the same report examines levels of female headship in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Levels there appear to be between 19 and 48 percent (Bermuda and St. Kitts-Nevis, respectively). The average proportion of households headed by women in 1970 in the Commonwealth Caribbean was 35 percent. These figures may be a slight underestimate, given that they exclude single-member households; however, such households were excluded in both numerator and denominator.

While Table 1 gives an overall glimpse of the ranges of female headship by country (as determined by the absence of a partner), it does not provide information on within-country variation. Table 2 displays figures obtained from various studies conducted in Latin America that employed secondary data to examine reported female headship. When available, the data are disaggregated by rural-urban residence and by income level.

Where comparisons can be made, the table reveals that the proportion of households headed by women can be substantially greater than that reported in Table 1. Three general patterns should be noted. First, the proportion of households headed by women generally increases with time. Second, the

Table 1: Percentage Ranking of "Potential" Female Heads of Households to "Potential" Total Heads of Households in the Developing World

Low (10-14%)	Low-Medium (15-19%)	High-Medium (20-24%)	High (25% and over)
Argentina	Bolivia	Guatemala	El Salvador
Ecuador	Brazil	Honduras	Panama
Mexico	Chile		
Paraguay	Colombia	Guadeloupe	Virgin Islands
Surinam			
Venezuela	Nicaragua	Algeria	
		Morocco	Botswana
Costa Rica	Bahamas	Yemen	Lesotho
	Cuba		
St. Pierre and Miquelon	French Guiana	Chad	
	Martinique	Congo	
	Puerto Rico	Madagascar	
Cyprus		Mauritius	
Kuwait	Bahrain	Mozambique	
Turkey	Iran	Tanzania	
United Arab Emirates	Iraq	Togo	
	Jordan	Uganda	
	Lebanon		
Brunei	Libya	Indonesia	
Hong Kong	Syria	Rep. of Korea	
Nepal	Tunisia	Vietnam	
Philippines			
Sri Lanka	Gabon		
Taiwan	Kenya		
	Liberia		
Rodriguez	Niger		
	Réunion		
	Rhodesia		
	Zambia		
	Kampuchea		
	India		
	Macao		
	Singapore		
	Thailand		

Source: Buvinic and Youssef, (1978).

Table 2: Prevalence of Female Headship by Residence and Income Level for Selected Latin American Countries (in Percent)

Country	Year	Total	Urban	Rural	Urban Low Income
<u>Costa Rica</u>	1982	17.0		20.6	
<u>Dominican Republic</u>	1980	21.7	26.1	16.8	
	1985		38.0	22.0	
<u>Panama</u>	1982		22.9		34.4
<u>Brazil</u>					
National	1970	13.0	15.7	9.2	
Belo Horizonte	1972		16.6		24.6
Northeast	1976		22.7	13.5	
<u>Colombia</u>	1977			15.0	
	1982		19.3		17.2
	1983			16.6	
<u>Peru</u>	1970	14.1	14.5	13.7	
	1981	22.0	23.0	21.0	
	1982		18.1		37.2
<u>Venezuela</u>	1982		21.0		30.6

Sources: Báez (1985); Bonilla and Vélez (1987); CEPAL (1984); Gómez and Gatón (1987); Merrick and Schmink (1983); Rey de Marulanda (1987); Tienda and Ortega Salazar (1980).

proportion of households headed by women is greater in urban areas than in rural areas. The magnitude of the differential, however, varies with the type of sample examined, the definition of rural and urban employed, and the definition of headship. Colombia and Peru have the smallest rural/urban

differentials. And finally, the prevalence of female-headed households is greater in lower income groups than in the general population. The relationship is uniform, with the exception of Colombia.

Some of the dimensions of the relative disadvantage of female versus male-headed households, as conventionally defined, are clearly visible when one compares the sociodemographic characteristics of both groups (Báez, 1985; Bonilla and Vélez, 1987; Buvinic and Youssef, 1978; CEPAL, 1984; Gómez and Gatón, 1987; León, et al., 1987; Merrick and Schmink, 1983; Rey de Marulanda, 1987; Tienda and Ortega Salazar, 1980).

The majority of reported female heads in these studies are unmarried,^{2/} mostly widowed or separated. Usually, between 80 and 90 percent of female heads are not currently in a union, compared with 10 to 15 percent of male heads. In urban areas, these figures are somewhat accentuated, with relatively fewer male heads and relatively more female heads being without partners. The higher concentration of female-headed households in urban areas is probably due to the high rates of female urban migration typically found in Latin America.

Closely associated with marital status is age. Female heads of household are generally older than male heads. However, differences between male and female heads vary by sample examined. For instance, in the Dominican Republic study, 22 percent of reported male heads were over 50 years of age, compared with 34 percent of female heads (Gómez and Gatón, 1987); results for

^{2/} The terms married, partnered, or in a union, always refer to couples in either legal or consensual unions.

urban Colombia were similar (Rey de Marulanda, 1987). In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, close to 50 percent of both male and female heads were over age 40.

Female heads usually have a lower educational attainment than male heads. Bonilla and Vélez (1987) found 36 percent of reported female heads were illiterate in rural Colombia compared with only 20 percent of male heads. Tienda and Ortega Salazar (1980) found male heads to have an average of two more years of education than female heads, in both rural and urban areas. In Jamaica, only 13 percent of female heads had a secondary education compared with 18 percent of male heads (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978).

A comparison of the work characteristics of reported male and female heads of household clarifies further why female-headed households remain at a relative disadvantage. Studies based on urban samples, e.g. Brazil and Colombia (Merrick and Schmink, 1983; Rey de Marulanda, 1987), show that male-headed households are more likely to be employed in the more stable formal sector and to have higher earnings. In the Brazilian sample, 53 percent of female heads were employed in the informal sector compared with 12 percent of male heads.

Differences in occupation and education translate to differences in income. Mean earnings of male heads, controlling for age, education, whether working in the informal sector, and for presence of young children in the household, were found to be 73 percent higher in this urban sample (Cr\$614 for males, Cr\$354 for females). In the Colombian sample, 40 percent of female heads earned the minimum wage compared with 21 percent of male heads. National level data for the Dominican Republic show that in 1983 only 4 percent of

male-headed households fell into the lowest income bracket, compared with 23 percent of female-headed households (Gómez and Gatón, 1987).

Studies employing rural samples show lower access to land, capital goods, and technical assistance by female heads (Bonilla and Vélez, 1987; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1987). Further, a greater proportion of income derives from nonfarm sources in rural female-headed households than in male headed households. Finally, female heads work more market hours than male heads. In Colombia, female heads worked a daily average of 5.2 hours, compared with 3.7 worked by male heads.

III. FEMALE HEADSHIP IN PERU

This section contains a description of the data employed in this study, and an analysis of the demographic characteristics of heads of household as defined by the survey, i.e. the person recognized by household members as the head (reported head of household). An experimental measure of headship reflecting market work contribution to the household (i.e. working head of household) is introduced. This is followed by an examination of the demographic characteristics of household heads as identified by this new definition and a comparison of the characteristics of heads as identified by both definitions. Finally, to obtain a clearer picture of the welfare of households, both groups are compared in terms of work effort (both at the individual and household level) and household consumption.

The Data

As mentioned at the outset, the data employed in the analyses that follow were collected as part of the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS). The survey was conducted in Peru between June 1985 and June 1986 and contains information on a national random sample of about 5100 households including approximately 26,000 individuals.^{3/} It contains information on household composition and socioeconomic characteristics as well as detailed information on each household member's contribution to household income and production, both in terms of hours allocated and income or product generated.

^{3/} For further details about the survey design and the instrument, see Grootaert and Arriagada (1986).

The analyses were all performed at the household level. Most household level variables were generated from the full 26,000 case file. A total of 5,095 households were analyzed. All analyses were performed for both the total sample of households and by place of residence.^{4/} Forty-five percent of the sample is rural so disaggregation by place of residence is important.

Reported Head: Whom Does the Household Recognize as the Head?

The Peruvian LSMS employed the reported definition of household head, i.e. it asked the respondent who s/he acknowledged as the head of household. Out of the 5,095 households included in these analyses, 883 households (17 percent) declared themselves to have a female head. Table 3 shows the distribution of headship by sex of head and place of residence for both the 1981 Peruvian Census and the Peruvian LSMS. For the latter it also shows headship by sex of head for the poorest quintile of the sample.^{5/} As the table indicates, the LSMS detected a lower proportion of households headed by women than the 1981 Census. This may be due to the fact that the LSMS excluded domestics, who would otherwise have been classified as heading their own

^{4/} Residence classifies households by whether living in the Lima metropolitan area (including Callao), other urban areas (more than 2000 inhabitants), or rural areas (fewer than 2000 inhabitants).

^{5/} This includes the poorest 20 percent of households as measured by per capita consumption expenditures at June 1985 prices. For a discussion on the use of expenditure data to measure welfare, see Glewwe (1987).

households.^{6/} The data not only display the same rural/urban differentials found in other surveys (i.e. greater prevalence of female-headed households in urban than rural areas), but also show that the prevalence of households where a woman is declared head is greater in lower income groups than for the general population. Twenty percent of households in the poorest quintile of the Peruvian population are reported headed by women, compared with 17 percent found for the total sample. In urban areas, however, almost 30 percent of households headed by women were in the poorest quintile.

In order to determine the normative definition of head of household in Peru, some demographic characteristics of those reported to be heads in the LSMS were examined. Given that age is positively associated with authority and respect, and capital accumulation, an analysis was performed to determine to what extent age alone could predict headship. A simple linear regression predicting headship by age showed that age alone explained 97 percent of the variance. In 80 percent of all households in the Peruvian LSMS, the person reported as head was the eldest person in the household, and in an additional 18 percent the second eldest; among the latter, it is likely that in the majority of cases, the spouse of the head was slightly older.

The analysis described above does not discriminate by sex of head. As the analysis that follows will show, other variables, particularly marital

^{6/} A total of 300 individuals were classified as domestics in the survey, 62 of whom were under age 14 and were related to other domestics in the same household. Of the remaining 238 individuals, 95 percent were female and could have been classified as heads of household. Including them in the sample would raise the proportion of households headed by women to 21 percent, close to the figure obtained in the Peruvian Census.

status, predict reported headship for each sex. Table 4 displays some demographic characteristics of those reported to be heads of household in the LSMS for all heads and by sex of head. Table 5 contains the same variables disaggregated by place of residence. Overall, the tables confirm what has been found in other studies that examine the characteristics of male and female reported household heads. Although there are no differences by place of residence between male and female heads of household, there are significant differences by sex of head in terms of age, education, marital status, work status, work contribution, and presence in the household,^{7/} both for all heads and by residence (all X²s are significant at p<.001).

Close to 60 percent of reported female heads in the sample are over 50 years of age compared with only 38 percent of male heads. Female heads are, on average, seven years older than male heads. A comparison of mean age of head by residence indicates that the greatest disparity exists in rural areas where female heads are on average nine years older than male heads. In fact, 66 percent of rural female heads are over 50 years of age.

^{7/} Education represents years of schooling completed; work status indicates whether the head was employed in the formal or informal sector during the previous year, and refers to main occupation only; work contribution indicates whether the head was the only worker, the person who worked the most hours (main worker), not the main worker, or not working during the previous 12 months, and includes hours worked in both main and secondary occupations; presence in the household indicates how many months the head was not living in the household during the 12 months preceding the survey.

Table 3: Distribution of Households by Sex and Residence of Reported Head for the Peruvian 1981 Census and the Peruvian LSMS (in Percent)

Peruvian Census (1981)

	All Peru	Urban	Rural
Male Headed	78	77	79
Female Headed	22	23	21

Peruvian LSMS (1985-86)

	All Peru	Lima	Other Urban	Rural
Male Headed	83	82	82	84
Female Headed	17	18	18	16

Peruvian LSMS (1985-86), Poorest Quintile*

	All Peru	Lima	Other Urban	Rural
Male Headed	80	71	71	83
Female Headed	20	29	29	17

*This includes the poorest 20 percent of households as measured by per capita consumption expenditures at June 1985 prices.

Table 4: Characteristics of Household Heads by Sex of Reported Head

Characteristics	Total	Male Headed	Female Headed
N=	5095 (100%)	4212 (83%)	883 (17%)
<u>Residence</u>			
Lima	26.8	26.7	27.4
Other Urban	28.5	28.2	30.4
Rural	44.6	45.1	42.2
<u>Age of Head</u>			
<20	0.4	0.3	0.8
20-29	9.6	10.6	4.9
30-39	23.6	25.6	14.2
40-49	24.5	25.4	20.5
50-59	20.2	19.4	24.2
60 +	21.6	18.8	35.4
Mean Age in Years	47.4	46.2	53.2
<u>Years of School Completed by Head</u>			
None	15.9	11.1	38.8
Primary	48.8	50.8	39.6
Secondary	24.1	25.5	17.5
Post-Secondary	11.2	12.7	4.2
Mean Years of Schooling	5.4	5.8	3.5
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Single	4.6	3.6	9.2
Married/in a Union	75.7	90.5	5.4
Divorced/Separated	7.6	1.8	35.0
Widowed	12.1	4.1	50.4
<u>Work Status of Head (Main Occupation)</u>			
Not in the Labor Force	6.8	4.4	18.4
Formal Sector	32.6	36.5	14.2
Informal Sector	56.6	54.8	64.8
Both Sectors	4.0	4.3	2.6
<u>Work Contribution by Head (last 12 months)</u>			
Only Worker	17.1	15.4	25.1
Main Worker	51.1	55.2	31.0
Not Main Worker	24.8	24.8	25.3
Not Working	7.0	4.6	18.6
<u>Head's Presence in the Household (last 12 months)</u>			
Always present	80.4	79.6	83.9
Absent 6 months or less	15.5	16.0	13.1
Absent 7-9 months	2.4	2.5	2.2
Absent 10+ months	1.7	1.9	0.8

Note: All figures represent percentages of households in each category.

**Table 5: Characteristics of Household Heads
by Sex of Reported Head and Residence**

Characteristics	Lima		Other Urban		Rural	
	N=1126 M	N= 242 F	N=1186 M	N= 268 F	N=1900 M	N= 373 F
<u>Age of Head</u>						
<20	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.1	1.4
20-29	12.1	6.6	12.5	7.1	8.6	2.1
30-39	26.6	16.5	26.4	18.3	24.4	9.6
40-49	24.9	21.5	24.4	19.4	26.3	20.6
50-59	19.2	24.0	19.3	27.2	19.6	22.2
60 +	16.9	31.4	16.9	27.2	21.0	44.0
Mean Age in Years	45.1	51.6	45.4	50.2	47.4	56.5
<u>Years of School Completed by Head</u>						
None	1.1	7.4	4.2	26.9	21.3	67.7
Primary	31.0	45.9	45.5	47.4	65.8	29.8
Secondary	43.3	38.0	32.9	20.5	10.2	1.9
Post-Secondary	24.6	8.7	17.3	5.2	2.7	0.5
Mean Years of Schooling	8.7	6.4	7.2	4.2	3.2	1.1
<u>Marital Status</u>						
Single	6.0	12.0	3.5	8.2	2.4	8.0
Married/in a Union	89.9	6.2	92.2	6.3	89.8	4.3
Divorced/Separated	2.0	41.3	1.9	42.9	1.6	25.2
Widowed	2.1	40.5	2.5	42.5	6.2	62.5
<u>Work Status of Head (Main Occupation)</u>						
Not in the Labor Force	6.7	29.5	5.4	17.6	2.4	11.8
Formal Sector	58.3	22.8	43.9	15.4	19.0	7.8
Informal Sector	31.8	44.0	46.7	65.2	73.6	78.0
Both Sectors	3.2	3.7	4.1	1.9	5.0	2.4
<u>Work Contribution by Head (last 12 mos.)</u>						
Only Worker	19.9	21.6	20.6	27.7	9.5	25.5
Main Worker	51.1	25.3	53.2	30.0	58.9	35.4
Not Main Worker	22.0	23.6	20.3	24.3	29.2	27.0
Not Working	7.0	29.5	5.9	18.0	2.4	12.1
<u>Head's Presence in the Household (last 12 months)</u>						
Always present	82.8	83.9	75.0	83.6	80.6	84.2
Absent 6 months or less	13.0	12.8	18.1	13.8	16.4	12.9
Absent 7-9 months	2.5	1.6	3.6	1.9	1.8	2.7
Absent 10+ months	1.7	1.7	3.3	0.7	1.2	0.2

Note: All figures represent percentages of households in each category.

Three times as many women heads as male heads never attended school (39 percent compared with 11 percent). At the upper end of educational attainment, three times as many male heads received post-secondary schooling as female heads. Men received, on average, two additional years of schooling in comparison with women. This concurs with results obtained by Trienda and Ortega Salazar (1980). Looking at years of schooling completed by residence, the greatest male/female differential in educational attainment lies in "other urban" areas. There, six times as many female as male heads have received no schooling at all.

As in other studies, marital status is highly correlated with headship, although differently for each sex. Ninety percent of male heads were in a union at the time of the survey, compared with only 5 percent of the female heads thus identified. Thus, union status is also a strong predictor of reported headship. The relationship holds across place of residence. In this survey, 50 percent of all reported female heads are widows. The corresponding figure for male heads is only 4 percent. Even where the proportion of female heads who are widowed is smallest (Lima), it comprises 40 percent of reported female heads. Widowhood, therefore, has a strong influence on the characteristics of reported female heads in this sample.

The few demographic variables examined to this point corroborate results obtained in previous surveys, namely, female heads are older, unmarried, and less educated, all of which contribute to the economic disadvantage of female-headed households vis-a-vis male-headed households as conventionally defined. However, the head's economic status cannot be assumed

to directly reflect the household's economic status unless the household is maintained primarily or entirely by the head's earnings.

As the next two variables show (head's work status and work contribution to the household), households are not necessarily maintained by the head of household's work. Turning to work status, one finds that although heads are assumed to bear the brunt of household maintenance, 7 percent of all reported heads (male and female) are not even in the labor force (and had not been in the 12 months preceding the survey). In Lima, almost 30 percent of female heads do not work.

Among heads who are in the labor force, there are significant differences by sex in terms of the proportion of heads working in the informal sector. In all cases, more female than male heads work in the informal sector. Sixty-five percent of the women heads are employed in the informal sector compared with 55 percent of the men. Female heads employed in the informal sector represent 79 percent of all working female heads. For male heads the corresponding figure is 57 percent. The same pattern emerges when examining difference in work sector status by residence.

Not only are several heads recorded as unemployed, but as work contribution to the household shows, a large number of heads are not the primary workers in the household. This means that in as many as 32 percent of households the head is not bearing the major burden of maintaining the household. Twenty-nine percent of male heads fall in this category. Among women heads, the figure is as high as 44 percent. Another interesting point brought out by this table is that the nuclear family with a working male head and a female homemaker is a minority category. Only 15 percent of male-headed

households fit this description. Among women classified as heads, as many as one-quarter are sole supports. Thus, contrary to popular assumption, the sole male breadwinner is less common than the sole female breadwinner.

Another assumption usually made when employing the term household head is that the person is a "usual resident," regularly present in the household. As the final variable in Table 4 shows, 4 percent of all heads were not regular household members as they were absent more than six of the twelve preceding months. Seven percent of male heads in other urban areas were absentee heads.

Given the information above, is the concept of headship as conventionally defined meaningful for the design of target-group interventions, when it neither reflects primary economic responsibility nor regular presence in the household? Is it useful, when it does not necessarily identify the person bearing the primary burden of maintaining the household? Is it meaningful, when it does not take into account other household members as both earners and decisionmakers? For the moment, one must respond that headship, as commonly defined, is insufficient and at times seriously misleading for policy purposes. The eldest male is so readily identified as the head--irrespective of work contribution and in some cases even regular presence in the home --that age and gender considerations and normative assumptions about men's roles overpower the concept. As it stands, it should be employed only as a reference person to enumerate household members without duplication.

Working Head: Who Bears the Burden?

While admitting that headship itself may prove an erroneous approach to identifying poor households, it is important to increase the utility of available survey data to explore issues of household headship and poverty by developing other formulations of headship that may capture more about the locus of household support responsibilities. The following analysis is presented to demonstrate how much information can be gained on the socioeconomic condition of households when a more realistic indicator of headship is employed.

In an effort to develop an indicator of who bears chief economic responsibility and who controls resources in the household,--i.e., what is normally assumed when the term "head of household" is employed--a new variable reflecting work contribution toward household welfare was constructed. Employing detailed information on work activities of all household members, each member's share of the total hours of market work (including goods produced at home but excluding housework) contributed to the household during the 12-month period preceding the date of interview was calculated. Work hours of both primary and secondary occupation were included. Household headship was designated on the basis of who worked the greatest proportion of hours, i.e. the working head. Because the measure covers a period of 12 months, the effects of short-term economic fluctuation and seasonal variation are minimized.

An issue which must be considered in proposing this definition is whether it clearly distinguishes the majority contributor among all working members. Are there cases, for example, in which one household member works

only five hours more than the person selected as head? An examination of the data revealed that in only 16 percent of all households were there less than 10 percentage points difference between the proportion worked by the person selected as head and the next contender. In only one-third of these cases (or about 6 percent of all households) was there only one contender, representing cases where two members contribute approximately the same amount of work to the household ("joint headship"). In these few cases selection between the two might appear arbitrary. However, given that the same criteria were applied regardless of sex, one could assume that as many men as women "missed" being heads by a small percentage.

Clearly, amount of market hours worked is not equivalent to income earned. One cannot assume that all household members are equally productive and that the value of their time is equivalent. However, income earned has several drawbacks that market hours worked does not. First, income data tend to be fairly unreliable due to frequent misreporting. Second, it is extremely difficult to get an accurate accounting of income from individuals who do not work for wages. Close to 50 percent of all workers in the survey were recorded as being self-employed or unpaid family workers, and thus income contributed per household member could not be reliably calculated. And third, although it may be argued that income reflects potential contribution more accurately, at least among wage workers, income earned and income contributed to the household are not identical. In many settings, for example, male earners contribute a lower proportion of their income to the household than female earners. Indeed, women's income is typically family income with very little held back for unproductive personal uses (Bruce and Dwyer, 1988).

Thus, although market hours worked does not necessarily reflect control of resources or chief economic contribution, it is a good indicator of work efforts on behalf of and commitment to the household. Detailing the hours worked by the head and other members may provide a fuller picture of who bears the burden of the household's support strategy. This approach may be particularly pertinent when examining the welfare of poor femaleheaded households, since evidence indicates that the importance of women's market work increases with poverty (Buvinic, 1983). The poorer the country, the more hours women work in incomegenerating activities (Birdsall and McGreevey, 1983), and women in poor households work longer hours than men (Bonilla and Vélez, 1987). This increase in income-generating activities occurs without a complementary decline in women's reproductive and domestic work. This combined work effort may be especially intense in cases where the female head is the only available adult worker. In sum, despite its limitations, the use of hours worked is a first step toward a more reasonable measure of headship, if that term is to mean the most consistent central economic support.

Employing this new definition, the number of households in the sample is reduced to 4,994 because several households declared no workers or had incomplete information for at least one member. Only 68 percent of reported heads qualified as "working heads". Three-fourths of those that did not qualify were males.

Table 6 displays a breakdown of the LSMS data similar to that presented in Table 3 for both definitions of head of household. Information for the poorest quintile is also included. As can be noted, the two definitions produce different results. Not only is the proportion of

households headed by women much greater when the working head definition is employed, but the distribution of these households by place of residence differs. The working head definition identifies close to one-third of all households as female heads. This is much higher than the 17 percent detected by reported head. In contrast to reported head, it shows rural areas to have more female-headed households than urban areas. As expected, both definitions show a much greater prevalence of female-headed households among the poorest sector of the population.^{8/}

In order to get a clearer picture of who these working heads are, and how they differ from reported heads, their demographic characteristics were examined. Table 7 contains data on the characteristics of working heads by sex of head. Table 8 contains the same information by place of residence. With the exception of age, differences by sex for all variables in Table 7 were significant (X^2 test of significance, $p < .001$). In Table 8 only head's presence in the household in Lima was not significant.

Briefly, these tables show that there are no differences in age by sex of working head, although differences in educational attainment persist. The pattern remains unchanged when disaggregating by residence. However, working heads appear to be better educated than reported heads. The expected marked difference in marital status by sex of head emerges, but a different pattern from that seen for reported head. Fewer male working heads than

^{8/} Figures for Lima are based on approximately 30 cases and may be fairly unreliable.

Table 6: Distribution of Households by Sex and Residence of Head, Employing Two Definitions of Head of Household: Reported and Working Head (in Percent)

Reported Head

	Total Sample				Poorest Quintile*			
	All Peru	Lima	Other Urban	Rural	All Peru	Lima	Other Urban	Rural
Male Headed	83	82	82	84	80	71	71	83
Female Headed	17	18	18	16	20	29	29	17
N=	5095	1368	1454	2273	889	34	166	689

Working Head

	Total Sample				Poorest Quintile*			
	All Peru	Lima	Other Urban	Rural	Peru	All Lima	Urban	Other Rural
Male Headed	71	76	71	68	66	81	61	66
Female Headed	29	24	29	32	34	19	39	34
N=	4994	1319	1422	2253	877	32	163	682

* This includes the poorest 20 percent of households as measured by per capita consumption expenditures at June 1985 prices.

Table 7: Characteristics of Household Heads by Sex of Working Head

Characteristics	Total	Male Headed	Female Headed
N=	4994 (100%)	3542 (71%)	1452 (29%)
<u>Residence</u>			
Lima	26.4	28.2	22.1
Other Urban	28.5	28.7	28.0
Rural	45.1	43.1	49.9
<u>Age of Head</u>			
<20	4.8	3.9	7.2
20-29	18.6	18.5	18.7
30-39	26.7	27.8	24.1
40-49	22.1	22.7	20.5
50-59	15.5	15.8	14.8
60 +	12.3	11.3	14.7
Mean Age in Years	41.0	41.0	41.2
<u>Years of School Completed by Head</u>			
None	15.5	8.8	31.7
Primary	44.7	46.7	39.9
Secondary	27.5	30.2	21.0
Post-Secondary	12.3	14.3	7.4
Mean Years of Schooling	5.8	6.4	4.3
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Single	16.6	15.2	20.1
Married/in a Union	69.8	79.7	45.6
Divorced/Separated	6.7	2.0	18.3
Widowed	6.8	3.1	15.9
<u>Work Status of Head (Main Occupation)</u>			
Not in the Labor Force	-	-	-
Formal Sector	36.6	42.4	22.5
Informal Sector	59.6	53.0	75.5
Both Sectors	3.8	4.6	2.0
<u>Working Head's Relation to Reported Head</u>			
Head	69.2	83.6	34.1
Spouse	11.6	0.2	39.5
Daughter/Son	14.0	11.6	19.8
Other Relatives	5.0	4.3	6.5
Nonrelatives	0.2	0.3	0.1
<u>Head's Presence in the Household (last 12 mos.)</u>			
Always present	82.1	80.2	86.9
Absent 6 months or less	14.2	15.6	10.8
Absent 7-9 months	2.5	2.8	1.9
Absent 10+ months	1.2	1.4	0.4

Note: All figures represent percentages of households in each category.

**Table 8: Characteristics of Household Heads
By Sex and Residence of Working Head**

Characteristics	Lima		Other Urban		Rural	
	N= 998 M	N= 321 F	N=1015 M	N= 407 F	N=1529 M	N= 724 F
<u>Age of Head</u>						
<20	2.5	2.2	2.3	3.9	5.9	11.2
20-29	22.2	21.2	19.9	18.7	15.1	17.5
30-39	30.0	33.0	29.8	28.8	25.1	17.5
40-49	22.4	26.2	22.5	21.4	23.1	17.5
50-59	15.0	10.9	16.6	13.5	15.7	17.3
60 +	7.9	6.5	9.0	13.8	15.1	18.9
Mean Age in Years	39.5	38.6	40.5	41.6	42.2	42.2
<u>Years of School Completed by Head</u>						
None	0.8	5.6	2.9	17.9	17.9	51.0
Primary	24.4	31.2	40.1	41.8	65.7	42.7
Secondary	47.1	44.6	38.7	30.0	13.6	5.4
Post-Secondary	27.7	18.7	18.3	10.3	2.8	0.8
Mean Years of Schooling	9.2	7.9	7.7	5.7	3.7	1.8
<u>Marital Status</u>						
Single	19.9	27.3	13.2	16.5	13.4	19.0
Married/in a Union	76.3	39.6	83.2	44.2	79.6	49.1
Divorced/Separated	2.3	23.7	2.1	22.8	1.7	13.3
Widowed	1.5	9.4	1.5	16.5	5.3	18.6
<u>Work Status of Head (Main Occupation)</u>						
Not in the Labor Force	-	-	-	-	-	-
Formal Sector	66.6	48.6	50.1	28.1	21.6	7.7
Informal Sector	29.9	48.6	45.6	70.2	73.1	90.5
Both Sectors	3.5	2.8	4.3	1.7	5.4	1.0
<u>Working Head's Relation to Reported Head</u>						
Head	80.0	35.2	85.7	38.1	84.6	31.4
Spouse	0.2	35.2	0.2	37.8	0.1	42.4
Daughter/Son	13.0	21.5	10.2	17.7	11.6	20.2
Other Relatives	6.3	8.1	3.7	6.2	3.5	5.9
Nonrelatives	0.5	-	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1
<u>Head's Presence in the Household (last 12 months)</u>						
Always present	83.4	84.7	75.3	84.3	81.3	89.4
Absent 6 months or less	12.8	11.8	18.3	13.3	15.6	8.9
Absent 7-9 months	2.7	2.2	3.6	2.0	2.4	1.7
Absent 10+ months	1.1	1.3	2.8	0.5	0.7	-

Note: All figures represent percentages of households in each category.

reported heads are married, and a greater proportion of male working heads are classified as single. These may represent households where the head is old and has reduced his work hours, with the household being maintained primarily by a son or daughter.

The pattern that emerges for female working heads by marital status is also quite distinct from that found for female reported heads. First, only 16 percent are widowed, compared with 50 percent of reported heads. Altogether the proportion who are separated, divorced, or widowed is reduced from 80 percent to 34 percent. Second, 46 percent of female working heads are married, compared to only 5 percent of reported heads. And, the number in the "single" category increases. Disaggregating by residence shows Lima to have proportionately fewer widows and more singles. The proportion married is greatest in rural areas.

A look at the working head's relationship to the reported head of household gives evidence on who is working when the head is not, or when the head is not working the most. Owing to missing information on workers in 101 households, this table does not include all reported heads. As can be seen 84 percent of male working heads were also reported heads. The corresponding figure for females is only 34 percent. However, 40 percent of female working heads were recorded as spouses of reported heads in the Peruvian LSMS. Less than 1 percent of male working heads were declared as spouses of reported heads. This shows that many households are maintained by someone other than the reported head and suggests that many households are jointly supported (there are two or more main workers). Also, it appears that the younger generation plays an important role in household maintenance. The work role of

sons and daughters is more important in households with a female working head. Although the coding scheme did not allow a disaggregation of "other relatives" to see whether they were siblings of the head, or cousins, etc., it is interesting to note that the importance of other relatives as contributors to household welfare is greatest in Lima. Studies conducted in other urban areas in Latin America have shown a tendency for adult siblings to share a household, even when married (Buvinic and Youssef, 1978; Nieves, 1979). This may be the case in Lima as well.

The final two variables, head's work sector status and head's presence in the household, display the same patterns as those found for reported heads. Only half of the male heads work in the informal sector compared with three-quarters of the female heads.

To summarize, female working heads are similar in age to male heads, and almost half of them are married. However, important disparities by education and labor force characteristics remain. The data indicate that households which appear to be at a disadvantage because of the work status and educational endowment of the head are more apt to adopt extendedfamily living arrangements to increase the household's labor supply. Although not shown here, female-headed households are more likely to be multi-generational. Thirty percent of households headed by women (working head) have more than one generation living in the household; only 20 percent of maleheaded households fit this description.

Work Effort and the Welfare of Households

To arrive at a clearer picture of how households in this sample are managing, several variables reflecting work effort both of the head and other household members, and household welfare, are examined. Head's work effort is measured by average monthly market hours worked by head (including market-oriented home production), average monthly hours of housework by head, and average total monthly hours worked by the head (a sum of the two previous variables). Household-level work effort is measured by number of workers in the household, number of nonworkers per worker in the household, and per capita hours worked (including both market and housework) in the household.

Welfare is measured by adjusted per capita monthly household expenditures at June 1985 prices. Total monthly expenditures are adjusted by adult equivalence scales^{9/} to control for differences in household composition. The measure includes food and housing expenditures, outlays for land, and the use value of durables. While some might argue that welfare is better assessed by employing income data, previous research has shown that consumption data are a better indicator of life cycle welfare than income because they fluctuate less. In addition, expenditure data are easier to measure than the income of self-employed workers. (For a discussion of the

^{9/} Rather than dividing household expenditures by household size, expenditures are divided by an adjusted household size that gives lower weights to younger children. The following weights were employed: Children under 7 years of age have a weight of 0.2; children between 7 and 12 years have a weight of 0.3; and, children between 13 and 17 have a weight of 0.5. These were the same weights employed in Glewwe (1987). For a theoretical discussion of household equivalence scales in developing regions, see Deaton and Muellbauer (1986).

measurement of welfare in Peru, see Glewwe, 1987, and Glewwe and van der Gaag, 1988). Tables 9 and 10 contain work and welfare variables for reported heads and working heads, respectively.

A glance at the top of Table 9 shows that male reported heads contribute nearly 50 percent more market hours per month to the household than female reported heads. On the other hand, female reported heads contribute three to four times as many hours of housework. The result is that overall, women heads contribute 17 more hours of work (including both market and housework) per month to the household than male heads. Although the difference is significant in all but Lima, it boils down to only 4 extra hours per week. Turning to household-level work characteristics, reported male-headed households have more workers, but have a greater dependency load, i.e. more nonworkers per worker. Per capita hours worked in the household are greater in female-headed households although the difference is only significant when examining data for rural areas or the total sample (45 percent of which is rural).

In view of the striking difference in average market hours worked by male and female heads, one would expect per capita expenditures of households headed by women to be significantly lower than expenditures of households headed by men. However, they are only slightly lower, and none of the differences are significant. The largest difference is found in urban areas (Lima included). It appears that earnings derived from other workers in the household are compensating for the fewer market work hours contributed by female reported heads.

Table 9: Work and Welfare of Households: Means by Sex and Place of Residence, Reported Heads of Household

Characteristics		All Heads N= 5095	Lima N= 1368	Other Urban N= 1454	Rural N= 2273
<u>Of Household Head:</u>					
Average Monthly Market Hours Worked by Head	Total	190**	182**	184**	198**
	Male	201	198	195	207
	Female	136	107	136	156
Average Monthly Hours of Housework by Head	T	44**	49**	43**	41**
	M	29	32	28	29
	F	112	131	110	101
Total Monthly Hours Worked by Head	T	234**	231	227**	239**
	M	231	230	223	236
	F	248	238	247	256
<u>Of Household:</u>					
Number of Workers in Household	T	2.9**	2.5**	2.5**	3.3**
	M	3.0	2.6	2.6	3.5
	F	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.4
Number of Nonworkers per Worker	T	1.1**	1.3**	1.5*	0.7**
	M	1.1	1.4	1.5	0.7
	F	0.9	1.1	1.3	0.6
Per Capita Monthly Hours Worked in Household	T	154**	148	140	168**
	M	152	147	138	164
	F	165	151	145	188
Per Capita Monthly Hhld. Consumption Expenditures	T	663	956	754	428
	M	671	974	772	429
	F	622	869	672	423

Note: Figures in the first row are means for all heads, second row for male heads, and third row for female heads. T-tests were performed on differences by sex of head. The asterisks appear by the figure for total households on the top row. Per capita expenditures are adjusted for household age composition. Expenditures are in intis at June 1985 prices. The exchange rate at that time was about 10 intis per US \$1.00. ** Significant at $p < .01$ level; * Significant at $p < .05$ level.

When the working headship classification is used (Table 10), the sex difference in market hours worked decreases (male heads contribute only 6 percent more hours than female heads). At the same time, sex differences in housework hours performed persist. The result is that female heads work on average 58 more hours per month than male heads, or, approximately 15 additional hours per week. Households with female working heads have fewer nonworking dependents, and thus, household members work more hours per capita than household members of male-headed households. Unlike what was found for reported heads, the differences are all significant. And, as before, they are largest in rural areas.

Given the small difference in market hours worked by sex of working head, and additional work input by household members in households headed by women, one might expect differences in consumption between the two household groups to be small. Yet, as Table 10 shows, households of male working heads are significantly better off than those headed by females, regardless of place of residence. Saying it differently, households headed by male working heads can afford to consume about twenty percent more than households headed by women. These findings suggest that despite the additional work effort contributed by households primarily dependent on female wages, male/female wage differentials continue to translate into lower welfare for these households. This is true particularly in urban areas (Lima included) where the difference in consumption by male and femaleheaded households is three times greater than in rural areas.

Table 10: Work and Welfare of Households: Means by Sex and Place of Residence, Working Heads of Household

Characteristics		All Heads N= 4994	Lima N= 1319	Other Urban N= 1422	Rural N= 2253
Of Household Head:					
Average Monthly Market Hours Worked by Head	Total	226**	225**	222**	228*
	Male	230	231	226	231
	Female	216	207	212	223
Average Monthly Hours of Housework by Head	T	48**	44**	45**	52**
	M	27	26	24	30
	F	99	100	96	100
Total Monthly Hours Worked by Head	T	274**	269**	267**	281**
	M	257	257	250	261
	F	315	307	308	323
Of Household:					
Number of Workers in household	T	2.9	2.6*	2.6	3.3
	M	2.9	2.5	2.6	3.4
	F	3.0	2.8	2.6	3.2
Number of Nonworkers per Worker	T	1.1**	1.3**	1.4**	0.7**
	M	1.2	1.4	1.6	0.8
	F	0.8	1.0	1.1	0.5
Per Capita Monthly Hours Worked in Household	T	156**	150*	141*	169**
	M	152	148	139	164
	F	165	155	147	179
Per Capita Monthly Hhld. Consumption Expenditures	T	658**	944*	755**	428*
	M	690	971	791	440
	F	577	861	663	402

Note: Figures in the first row are means for all heads, second row for male heads, and third row for female heads. T-tests were performed on differences by sex of head. The asterisks appear by the figure for total households on the top row. Per capita expenditures are adjusted for household age composition. Expenditures are in intis at June 1985 prices. The exchange rate at that time was about 10 intis per US \$1.00; ** Significant at $p < .01$ level; * Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Overall, the working head definition discriminates households with low consumption more starkly than the reported head classification. By identifying more accurately the person on whom the household is largely dependent upon for economic support, it provides a more realistic assessment of the household's economic base. Furthermore, "working head" may have another advantage as an identifier of households under stress. The use of this definition shows not only that female heads work almost as many market hours as male heads, but that they contribute three to four times more housework hours than male heads. This represents an increased workload for female heads of 23 percent. Employing the reported headship definition, the increase in workload is only 7 percent. It seems, then, that working head gives a more realistic view of the dual burden working females have to bear, than does reported head.

In sum, the working head definition appears to be a better discriminator of women carrying central economic responsibilities for the support of their households. However, both the present and previous analyses indicate that these women are not struggling alone; other household members' work and earnings play an important role in the maintenance and survival of many households. Only 19 percent all of households in the sample depend on a single earner; another 29 percent depend primarily on two. This means than 50 percent of all households rely on more than two earners.

IV. MULTIPLE EARNERS, HEADSHIP, AND WELFARE

If more workers need to be enlisted to maintain a given level of welfare, then poor households will be more likely to have multiple earners. This has been found as well in other studies (Tienda and Ortega Salazar, 1980). In the LSMS sample, 50 percent of all households have more than two workers, compared with 65 percent of all households in the poorest quintile of the population. More female-headed households (employing the working head definition) than male-headed households are in the lowest income quintile of the population (23 percent versus 18 percent). And, as expected, female-headed households are more likely to have additional workers. Looking at all income levels, 47 percent of female-headed households have three or more workers compared with 25 percent of male-headed households. However, the difference in prevalence of multiple-earner households diminishes with decreasing income. In the lowest income quintile, 54 percent of female-headed households have multiple earners compared with 40 percent of male-headed households. That is, the difference by sex of head of household decreases from 22 percent to 14 percent. This suggests that very poor male-headed households are also having a difficult time maintaining a given level of living.

Given the predominance of multiple-earner households among low income groups, a final analysis was performed. The analysis is included to illustrate two points: first, sex of head is not all that matters when trying to locate the poor; second, much can be learned about a household's economic situation by focusing on a variable that does not assume a single earner and decisionmaker. The existence of multiple earners in a household makes the idea of a unified household and single decisionmaker somewhat untenable. Poor

households are forced to increase their overall labor force participation to make ends meet. The existence of more than one primary earner within the household is likely to introduce changes in the power relations within the household, and therefore in patterns of intrahousehold negotiation over resource allocation and control. While it is likely that gender affects bargaining power to some extent, economic contribution may override its effects.

Table 11 presents the same information included in previous tables disaggregated by the number of earners in the household. Single-earner households have one earner; joint-earner households have two primary earners (i.e. they each work at least 40 percent of the hours and thus there may be a third earner working a minimum amount of hours); multiple-earner households have three or more "primary" earners and none works more than 40 percent of household hours. Means by sex of working head are also included. In the case of multiple-earner households, the head is, as before, the person who worked the most hours.

For the sake of brevity only a few features of Table 11 will be noted. First, the number of earners in a household appears to be associated with a life cycle stage. Heads of multiple-earner households are the youngest; single earners are the oldest. Joint-earner heads are at the middle of the age-range compared with single and multiple-earner heads, except in the case of male heads. Male single earners are just slightly older than male joint earners. Female single earners are considerably older than female joint earners.

Table 11: Single, Joint and Multiple-earner Households:
Means by Sex of Working Heads of Household of Demographic,
Work Effort and Household Welfare Measures

Characteristics		All Heads N= 4994	Single Earner N= 962	Joint Earner N= 2451	Multiple Earner N= 1552
<u>Of Household Head:</u>					
Age of Head	Total	41.0	45.4**	41.9	37.0
	Male	41.0	42.8	41.9	37.5
	Female	41.2	51.8	42.0	36.4
Years of School Completed by Head	T	5.8**	6.8**	6.1**	4.7*
	M	6.4	7.6	6.5	5.2
	F	4.3	4.8	4.4	4.0
Proportion of Heads Unmarried	T	0.3**	0.4**	0.2**	0.4
	M	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.4
	F	0.5	0.9*	0.6	0.4
Proportion of Heads Working in the Informal Sector	T	0.6**	0.5**	0.6**	0.7**
	M	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7
	F	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
Average Monthly Market Hours Worked by Head	T	226**	188**	231**	243
	M	230	204	234	241
	F	216	147	217	247
Average Monthly Hours of Housework by Head	T	48**	56**	42**	52**
	M	27	35	27	22
	F	99	109	103	92
Total Monthly Hours Worked by Head	T	274**	244**	273**	296**
	M	257	239	261	263
	F	315	256	320	339
<u>Of Household:</u>					
Number of Workers in Household	T	2.9	1.0	2.7**	4.5**
	M	2.9	1.0	2.8	.7
	F	3.0	1.0	2.5	4.1
Number of Nonworkers per Worker	T	1.1**	2.2**	1.0**	0.5
	M	1.2	2.5	1.0	0.5
	F	0.8	1.4	0.8	0.5
Per Capita Monthly Hours Worked in Household	T	156**	162*	148*	166
	M	152	157	144	165
	F	165	172	164	167
Per Capita Monthly Hhold. Consumption Expenditures	T	658**	848**	693**	486
	M	690	897	714	478
	F	577	726	608	496

Note: Figures in the first row are means for all heads, second row for male heads, and third row for female heads. T-tests were performed on differences by sex of head. The asterisks appear by the figure for total households on the top row. Per capita expenditures are adjusted for household age composition. Expenditures are in intis at June 1985 prices. The exchange rate at that time was about 10 intis per US\$1.00. **Significant at p<.01 level; * Significant at p<.05 level.

The life cycle begins in young adulthood when the individual begins to work. An individual begins working while living in his/her parents' household, in order to compensate for his/her aging parents' reduced work hours and increased household expenditures caused by greater consumption requirements of children who are reaching adolescence and adulthood. Because this household member has not acquired sufficient human capital (training, job experience) to enable him/her to obtain the earnings necessary to support a household unaided, s/he remains in the household contributing a share of the income. As an individual begins to acquire the human capital necessary to become independent, and younger siblings enter the labor force, s/he moves out, to form his/her own household, or to share with a spouse or another person. Whether the household becomes a single-earner household or joint-earner household depends on the earner's ability to provide for the family. Judging by the age difference between male and female heads among single earners, it seems male heads attain economic self-sufficiency sooner than female heads. Sixty percent of female joint-earner heads are unmarried, suggesting that women have a choice of forming a single or joint-earner household when leaving the parents' home or when losing their partner through death or separation. Their choice obviously depends on their resources.

Second, a brief comparison between the three household groups shows that the pattern of differences by sex of heads of multiple-earner households differs from that found in the other two groups. Overall, differences between male and female working heads in multiple-earner households are either smaller than in single and joint-earner households or nonexistent. Male and female heads of multiple-earner households are of similar age and marital status, and

differences in education and informal sector employment are smaller. Also, their per capita household expenditures are almost the same. In other words, both male and female-headed multiple-earner households are equally disadvantaged. They each can afford to consume only half as much as single-earner households.

Women-headed multiple-earner households also work as many market hours as their male counterparts. However, they perform many more housework hours than men. Thus, any difference in work burden between male and female head is entirely due to differences in amount of housework performed. The result is that women heads work 76 more hours per month than comparable male heads. The comparative figure for single earners is only 17 hours. So, female heads of multiple-earner households end up working 11 hours per day, 7 days per week! Thus, although per capita consumption of male and female heads of multiple-earner households is almost identical, the work burden entailed to achieve this level of consumption is strikingly different.

CONCLUSION

Policymakers concerned with the amelioration of poverty have singled out female-headed households as one of the key target groups deserving intensified attention. Studies have found that households headed by women are overrepresented among the poor. However, research conducted to examine the characteristics and wellbeing of these households has employed a definition of headship commonly used in surveys, i.e. the person other household members recognize as the head of household. This term was originally introduced in surveys to avoid double counting of household members in household rosters, and in no way reflects any of the dimensions the concept of headship assumes: regular presence in the household, overriding authority, and primary economic support. This paper demonstrates the limited value of reported headship to reliably identify the economic support base of the household. While reported headship does show female-headed households to be at greater economic disadvantage than male-headed households, it is mainly because generally it is the widowed, separated and divorced women who are reported as female heads. Often these women do not provide any economic support to the household, and more often, have other household members contributing to household support.

If the concept of headship is to be policy relevant, indicators of headship should be constructed to reflect that aspect of the concept being examined. If economic support is in question, then headship should be measured in terms of economic contribution. If authority and power relations within the household are of interest, then indicators of headship should include these dimensions. This paper presents one example of an indicator of headship which reflects work effort in support of the household. The working head definition

was found to discriminate more clearly women supporting households in extreme circumstances than the reported head definition because it highlights the elements that contribute to the overall disadvantage of female heads: the lower return on their market hours of work and the overall work burden they carry to attain a given level of consumption for the members of their household.

If policymakers are primarily concerned with poverty, then indicators to identify poor households, regardless of sex of head, may be more relevant. Once the poor are identified, then specific subgroups within that population can be examined. As this paper shows, very poor households are at extreme disadvantage, regardless of whether headed by a male or a female. Multiple-earner households comprise 50 percent of all households in this sample. They have on average 4.5 workers per household and can only afford to consume half as much as single-earner households. Clearly, the concept of headship becomes less meaningful in this context.

The concept of headship also becomes less relevant in contexts where multiple-earner households predominate. It is unlikely that a household classification system that implies a single earner and decisionmaker is as useful as one reflecting a more complex scenario of decisionmaking and resource allocation. Further research is required to discover how this process takes place.

The policy implications of this research depend on what approach to poverty amelioration is taken. Policies designed to combat poverty can be of three types. The first are policies to raise income directly through direct transfers of goods, services or funds. The second set of policies are geared

to alter relative prices, including wage rates, to increase the income of the poor. This can include subsidies for goods and services, or increases in the price of labor by integrating the poor into market production. Finally, the productivity of poor workers can be increased either through income-generation schemes or training.

If direct transfers are the preferred approach to poverty amelioration, then the recipients of such transfers have to be identified. Should it be to the eldest male in the household? The working female? What differences exist in the distribution of benefits according to which household member receives them? Similarly, if policies aimed at reducing poverty focus on increasing the productivity of household members, who should be trained?

Other policy-relevant questions need to be considered. How fluid are these households over time? Who goes and who stays in times of economic crisis? Do patterns of authority and influence change significantly in the short run? Which household members are the most stable ones--who remains in the household and retains some degree of authority throughout the various changes in composition a household may experience? What is the role of the different generations in the maintenance of the household and how is economic responsibility organized between generations and conjugal groups? Are there independent "sub-economies" within the more complex households?

The multiple-earner household predominating in this Peruvian sample is likely to be equally common in other poor countries. In times of economic crisis the number of female-headed and multiple-earner households is sure to increase. At the same time, development funds and national budgets are being reduced. If development efforts are to be more efficient, they must adopt

strategies that will take into account the potential fluidity of these households and their internal dynamics. Current definitions of headship, and the models of household decisionmaking they imply, tend to obscure these realities.

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Telephone: (202) 477-1234
Facsimile: (202) 477-6391
Telex: WUI 64145 WORLDBANK
RCA 248423 WORLDBK
Cable Address: INTBAFRAD
WASHINGTONDC

European Office

66, avenue d'Iéna
75116 Paris, France

Telephone: (1) 40.69.30.00
Facsimile: (1) 40.69.30.66
Telex: 640651

Tokyo Office

Kokusai Building
1-1, Marunouchi 3-chome
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan

Telephone: (3) 3214-5001
Facsimile: (3) 3214-3657
Telex: 26838

