case, she was withdrawn from school at precisely this time and started work in the factories at 16. It is also important to note that in both the case studies, siblings died young during particularly sustained, economically-depressed times.

It is also evident from our cases that female children are more responsible and caring about their families than male children. Thus, female production workers will find ways and means to cut down on their expenditure in the urban context so that they can remit more money home. Male children often cannot find the extra money to send home and give the excuse that the cost of urban living is very high. Instead, there are a few cases where money is remitted from the village to them.

The question arises as to what happens if the daughter had to stop work. Two processes usually spell the end of the working daughter’s contribution to household income. The first is marriage and the starting of their own family. There is not enough data to show conclusively that the girls leave their jobs at the time of marriage. It appears to depend upon who they marry and whether the husband lives in Penang or not. For example, those who marry civil servants stop working. Those who marry men from outside Penang naturally have to leave. But girls who marry fellow workers remained working until the birth of their first child. But even this is dependent on whether or not they have a relative such as a mother or aunt who can look after the baby. In fact, the practice of sending away children to grandparents to look after (often in the kampung) while the parents work in town is common and a prevalent household strategy among Malays.

The second way in which the contribution of the working daughter to the household income pool may cease is retrenchment. At the time of the research, the factories were retrenching workers due to the recession. Yati, Mak Teh, and other girls lived in fear of losing their jobs. Some felt shy about going back to the village and being stigmatized as having done something wrong in the factory. But the overwhelming concern was how their families would cope without their incomes.

The above questions and observations have been posed from the perspective of the working daughter in the household context. As in the discussion of the family life-course, much depends on the situation of the household and the adaptive strategies adopted by each household to cope with each contingency and to adjust to the long-term macro-changes affecting the family. However, these strategies are constrained by the stage of the family life-cycle and its life-course: so the options that they choose
have to be determined within these constraints. This is better seen through the analysis of individual life-histories within the context of the family life-cycle.

6.4 METHODS OF ANALYZING HOUSEHOLD HISTORIES\textsuperscript{13}

This section examines the various methods of analyzing household histories, such as the study of average household size, cohort analysis and generational analysis. From this assessment, it becomes clear why the family life-cycle approach, leading towards life-course analysis is being used for family history and household histories.

It is important to distinguish conceptually between the study of households in the past, as by historians such as Laslett and the Cambridge Group and that of the contemporary households as household histories. The former is concerned "with great changes over the past centuries" (Cherlin, 1983: 61), while the latter with micro-level household structures, events, and transitions. Their basic similarities are: that both are interested in societal change, examining this issue by analyzing households or families; both incorporate some historical perspective; and both, by the inter-disciplinary nature of the concept of households are forced to use concepts and methods from a variety of social sciences, particularly history, sociology and demography. The differences between the historical study of families and the study of household histories lie in the scale (in terms of numbers of households and historical span), the aggregativeness of the data and therefore analysis, which all link back to the availability, type and quality of data on the household.\textsuperscript{14}

Historians of families in the past made use of censuses, vital registers of births, deaths, marriages (especially parish records)\textsuperscript{15} and even, where available, migration.\textsuperscript{16} The research by Hareven and Langenbach (1978) on Amoskeag, and Hareven (1982) on

\textsuperscript{13} Sections here are taken from Young (1987) "Analyzing household histories." presented at the IUSSP-EWPI Seminar on Changing Family Structures and Life Courses in Less Developed Countries, Honolulu, 5-7 January.

\textsuperscript{14} Some examples of the recent interest in the household approach is evidenced in the Seminar on Households and the World Economy in 1982 (see Smith \textit{et al.}, 1984), Symposium on Household: Changing Forms and Functions (see Netting \textit{et al.}, 1984) and the two training courses and research seminars in Urbanization in Third World Countries and the Household Economy held in 1983 and 1985 sponsored by the IGU Working Group on Urbanization in Developing Countries.

\textsuperscript{15} Examples from the works in Laslett and Wall (1972), Lee (1977), Levine (1977) and Wall (1983).

\textsuperscript{16} Smith (1977) derived births, deaths, marriage patterns and migration from population registers of Nakahara. He supplemented these demographic information with tax and land records.
New England textile cities employed company records, vital records linking to census data, and oral histories for the richness often lacking in statistical analyses. The technique of linking different sets of data for reconstitution has also been used by Mitterauer and Sieder (1979) and Sieder and Mitterauer (1983) in their historical study of households in Austria. Whilst this group is constrained by the nature of their data, generally those who work on household histories, because they use field techniques such as surveys, have a flexibility of what data to collect including retrospective data like life-histories and oral histories. However, their major drawback is recall and memory problems of the respondents. On a larger scale, but far rarer is the use of panel studies such as Elder's (1974) famous work which used Stolz and Jones study of adolescents in Oakland in the thirties, following them up in the sixties to study the impact of the Depression, and Elder's (1985) research based on the Michigan Study of Income Dynamics. Often the problems of such data sets are their high costs to collect, and even if the first survey had been done, the researcher who wants to follow up on this group may have superfluous data (as they have been collected for a different purpose) and very small unrepresentative groups.

The study of household size and structure in past times is related to the debate as to whether industrialization in Europe influenced extended households to become nuclear (see Lasch, 1975). Laslett (1972a, 1983) concluded that the mean household size had not varied much between the sixteenth and the late nineteenth centuries in England and that the extended family was not the norm before industrialization. Similar findings were found in Western Europe, Japan and North America (see Laslett and Wall, 1982). Many criticisms have been levelled at Laslett's (1972b) conclusions; the main ones being the fact that the evidence for England and Wales was based on cross-sectional data (from 100 parishes) which captured households at different stages of the life-cycle; the question of the operational definition of a household which was too narrow and different from that of the census-takers (these listings were not true population censuses as they were prepared for tax assessments and military recruitment); their failure to take into account cultural variations between countries; and that a major reason for small families in those days was that mortality was so high that three generation families were uncommon (Berkner, 1975). From the perspective of methodology, the important point to emphasize here is that the data, being cross-sectional, devoid of information on age, was not able to extract effectively, the different phases of the development cycle of the families.

17 For example Carter (1984), and Young and Salih (1987).
To try to overcome the inherent problems of cross-sectional data which merely takes a "slice" of time, in the form of a snapshot, there were attempts to capture the family as process. A few methods emerged from this. Of some importance and certainly a technique often employed by demographers is that of the cohort method which can use census-type data by casting them into longitudinal sequence. By selecting an age-specific group of people, say, those aged 10 at the 1970 census and following them up at age 20 in the 1980 census, it is possible to analyze historical changes in the family. According to Ryder (1965), discontinuities in a pattern, that is, how successive cohorts in each stratum differ in composition and behaviour from previous ones signify social change. An example of how such a technique is used effectively is found in Uhlenberg's (1978) study of white American women from 1870 to 1930, comparing the timing of major events such as marriage, childbearing, widowhood, and death. Methodologically, the cohort technique is able to isolate specific age-groups, follow them through time in an aggregative manner, and measure their changes rather than deal with a mass of undifferentiated population at one point in time.

Another way of studying change over time in families is to trace differences between generations. Hill (1970) analyzed changes in long-term financial planning and consumption patterns of families among three generations. Greven (1970) examined the patterns of inheritance and transmission of property across generations among the first settlers of Andover, Massachusetts. However, conceptually and methodologically there are problems. Conceptually, the term "generation" may be used loosely as to cover at least three categories: generation as in ascendant-descendant (grandparent-parent-child), generation as life-stage (childhood, youth, adulthood), generation as cohort (people of the same age sharing similar historical and cultural experiences) (see Troll and Bengtson, 1979). As elaborated with many examples by Kertzer (1983), it is crucial that the concept of generation be properly defined. Methodologically, one of the major problems of using the generational approach is that one generation may in fact contain members from different age cohorts with very different historical experiences (see Vinovskis 1977: 266-9).

The study of mean household size and household composition had failed to take into account the developmental phases of the household. Generational analysis, while valuable for analyzing transmission of values, goods and services between parents and children does not identify processes within the family. In contrast to these approaches, that of the family life-cycle is an attempt to capture the different stages families pass through and the major events which delineate these stages. Developing from the early
works of Hill (1964) to Glick and Parke (1965), Duvall (1967), and Rogers (1962) — who refined Duvall's eight stages to a cumbersome 24 — and the application of the family life-cycle to India and US (Coliver, 1963), Japan and China (Morioka, 1967), this approach has the advantage of viewing the family as passing through stages. Useful typologies can be developed from the family life-cycle, identifying important areas for analysis. Related to this is the emphasis on the importance of compositional and size effects on family life which impinges on the household as a unit of production, accumulation, consumption, and transmission.

Although the family life-cycle has sensitized researchers to the complexities of family research, it has a series of disadvantages. In spite of the fact that the family life-cycle assumes a developmental perspective on the family, giving it flexibility through role changes (Hill, 1964), examining the family as a collective unit (Hareven, 1978a), it remains a series of typologies based on stages of parenthood (Elder, cited in Hareven, 1978a: 99). At a methodological level, during empirical analysis, it is difficult to disentangle three effects — that of age, period, and cohort — on the life-cycle even though the conceptual distinction is simpler (Oppenheimer, 1982). When applied to families in history it is inappropriate as the stages are based on the contemporary family. Most family cycle models rely mainly on the changes introduced by the addition and departure of children from the family. In the past, these movements stretched over a longer time span which meant these events overlapped, blurring the sequential typology of stages. Similarly, the family life-cycle focuses on family members in creating the stages. In the past, the family and non-family members in a household were less distinct, incorporating boarders, lodgers and servants (Vinovskis, 1977: 273-4). In demographic terms, the impact of higher levels of mortality resulted in a less orderly sequence of stages, the higher birth rates meant that children were spread along a broader age range within the family, and often the family does not experience an "empty nest" stage (Hareven, 1978a: 99-100). Finally, the family life-cycle construct fails to deal with the timing and sequencing of events in the lives of family members.

It is precisely to overcome these inadequacies that the concept of the life-course was formulated. This concept accepted the family as process (Hareven: 1974); that individuals in a family move through transitions rather than stages (Hareven, 1978b); and most importantly, that the life-course encompasses both the individual and collective family development making it a truly family approach. Elder (1977: 279), the main proponent of the life-course approach introduces it as "processes of family
adaptation and change over time”, involving “the timing, arrangement, and duration of events” in the “ever-changing pattern of inter-dependence and synchronization between the life-histories of family members and the cycle of generational exchange and succession”. Of importance too, is the idea that the life-course concerns interaction between historical change and the changing household unit, and accepts that there is cumulative impact of earlier transitions on subsequent ones. Thus, the concepts later propounded by Hareven (1977, 1978b, 1982) on family time (the synchronization of individual with family transitions), historical time (of individual with family relates to important periods, e.g. the Depression, World War II, etc.) and industrial time (the industrial trade cycles) are a logical extension of the life-course construct.

While the life-course construct is now widely accepted as an organizing framework for analyzing household history, both by historians dealing with families in past time as well as by other social scientists dealing with contemporary households, the major problem is finding operational methods of analysis to implement its basic postulates. Both cohort analysis and dynamic event-analysis, the choice being dependent on whether the data available for analysis are cross-sectional as in census data or longitudinal as in panel studies or with retrospective data, have been used to analyze family history using the life-course construct as the theoretical basis. While cohort analysis as explained earlier relies on age-graded classifications of subject groups for comparative analysis (see Vinovskis, 1977: 276-82), event-analysis focuses on analysis of the timing, sequencing and duration of events. Life events have been classified as age-graded, non-normative-graded or history-graded (Schaie, cited in Simons and Thomas, 1983: 117). There have been some promising examples at devising methods for event-analysis (see Hogan, 1984, for an attempt to combine the two techniques in the analysis of life events, and the earlier effort by Modell et al., 1976). However, no satisfactory model exists to date that can fully exploit as well as enhance the analytical power of the life-course construct. The Markov model has been suggested as one such technique (Tuma et al., 1979). Other alternative approaches include those suggested by Carter (1984) and the Mitterauer-Sieder method, which will be discussed below.

Both the family life-cycle approach and the event-analysis method are amenable to Markov chain techniques in analyzing household transitions. While the family life-cycle format uses cross-sectional data, the event-analysis technique, as exemplified by Tuma et al., (1979), generalizes the transition states to critical events in the household history and thus, can capture longitudinal processes. In a similar manner, when the data permit, Markov-chain analysis may also be applied to the life-course approach.
This requires the reduction of the family life-course to some summary state of events of transition and thus the summary or integration of individual transitions within the event-graded family life-course. Therefore, while the application of the Markov-chain technique to the dynamic analysis of events enables the analyst to fully exploit the rich detail of event-analysis data, as mentioned by Tuma et al., (1979), this latter problem is still an intractable task.

Carter (1984) had considered the problems of modelling household histories as Markov processes. Most of the studies he reviewed had focused on household type sequences. He suggested that such work suffered from the same ambiguities as do household types themselves. For instance, the concentration on positional definition of household members in terms of kinship relationship to the head of household ignored such factors as seniority queues and the economic relationships between potentially independent household components. More importantly, even when a more adequate sequence of household types can be derived, as for example from the summary indexation of household events as mentioned above, it is not possible to define these transition states as though they were independent of previous household types or states, a mathematical requirement of Markov-chain analysis. It is in the nature of household histories that preceding states or transitions will affect current and future events. Duration of event for a given household or the length of stay in a given state will also influence transition probabilities. Historical events such as age at marriage and mean ages of maternity and paternity will all affect family formation, for instance at much later stages. Thus, the need to focus on the events in the household history and the decisions that give rise to these events. Therefore, the Markov-chain approach is not necessarily a very promising technique for analyzing household histories.

In general, Carter (1984) believes that available methods of synchronic, cross-sectional analysis do not provide an adequate substitute for the longitudinal approach. No matter how the classification of household types is arrived at, they fail to take account of changes in household composition that may influence the subsequent actions of household members. Carter (1984: 59) suggests that the minimal elements of a household history consist of the kinship relations between any given member of the household to the head of household, the position of that member in the household personnel system, rules of seniority in the household, and tracking of the movements of members in and out of the household unit, and the manner in which events affect the viability of the household unit and the opportunities of its members to pursue their own goals. Household histories, thus, are histories of changing household structure.
according to movements of personnel and resources through the household. The tracking of these developments in the household economy over time requires the calculation and tracing of relevant indicators of household change. Carter had suggested several ratios as indicative of these dynamic changes in the household: the size of the household, the amount or value of resources, the producer/consumer ratio, and the ratio of resources to personnel, to name a few.

Carter's approach is essentially anthropological, relying on household genealogical and compositional data, and the various ratios at several points in the household historical time. The results are essentially ethnographic and highly descriptive, and while the potential is there, the scope for quantitative analysis is hampered by less than dense data over the period of observation in his household case studies.

A similar but more graphic approach, relying more heavily on family compositional data using serial records as sources, was undertaken by Mitterauer and Sieder (1979) (see also Sieder and Mitterauer, 1983). The Sieder and Mitterauer project was the reconstruction of the family life-course for different families in the past using census listings supplemented by vital records. They suggest several methods of analyzing these historical household data. Some of the quantitative methods relate to (i) analysis of changes in household composition, to make it possible to establish cross-connections between population structure and development of family cycles; (ii) analysis concerning duration, such as the length of co-residence of children with their parents, and (iii) frequencies of certain developmental processes, for example, the succession to household headship (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1979: 260-1).

A second group of methods rely on qualitative interpretation of specific events or sequences of events, which are not, in their view, amenable to computer-generated quantitative analysis. Such analysis pertains not only to the development of individual households but also to several interacting households or to individual careers traced through different households. Such cross-connections among households would not have been revealed by cross-sectional data, whereas the analysis of serial lists would present most clearly "the connections between individual biography and the development of familial groups" (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1979: 281).

The problem with the Mitterauer-Sieder approach, as well as the Carter approach, is the cumbersome detail of household micro-level data which do not lend themselves easily to aggregative analysis. Kertzer (1985: 103-4) had criticized the Sieder-
Mitterauer approach on two counts. One, it was too difficult to generalize from the mass of pictorial representations of individual household histories. Two, it failed to account for the timing and sequencing of family events. Whilst the life-course diagrams suggested below do incorporate timing and sequencing of household members’ transitions, a similar problem of assimilating many complicated diagrams face us. The ability to summarize these diagrams without losing the richness and complexities of the family processes represents one of the major challenges to methodology in the analysis of household histories.

6.4.1 A Framework for the Analysis of Household Histories

The Life-Course Framework

From the review of various approaches and methods in the analysis of household histories in the above section, the life-course framework appears to have a number of features useful in analyzing household histories. As Hareven (1978a: 103) suggests;

“it offers a comprehensive integrative approach, which steers one to interpret individual and family transitions as part of a continuous interactive process ... it helps one view an individual transition as part of a cluster of other concurrent transitions affecting each other ... and it treats a cohort not only as belonging to its specific time period, but also as located in earlier times, its experience shaped therefore by different historical forces.”

Life-course analysis, thus, focuses on transitions in individual and family behaviours involving two levels: one is the relationship between individual life-history and the collective history of one’s family unit, and the other the relationship between individual and family changes and changes in the larger society (Hareven, 1978a: 98). The problem for analysts is to translate this household history framework into a practical methodology in order to extract meanings and patterns from these processes. The issue relates to both the problem of adequacy of method and the adequacy of data, as discussed in the previous section. The ultimate objective is both description and interpretation. The method proposed and applied within this framework involves three levels of analysis: first, at the level of representation and depiction; second, at the level of summary statistics in order to derive patterns of household transitions; and third, at the level of linkage between household transitions and broader historical change.
Figure 6.3
Hypothetical Structure of the Life-Course Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Time</th>
<th>Critical Events</th>
<th>World War II</th>
<th>Year of Independence</th>
<th>New Economic Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Life Histories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling and Sex Order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**
- ● Marriage
- △ School education
- ▲ Schooling with scholarship
- ○ Work
- ○ Part-time work
- --- Domestic work in household
- / Stopping of education/work
- X Migration
- /// Death

- Death of children during war years
- Marriage of son & co-residence with family
- Death of head of household

Father migrated so the whole family had to follow
Wife forced to work due to death of husband
The Life-Course Diagram

Using individual life-history data, obtained through retrospective surveys of every member of a contemporary household, it is possible to depict the history of any household in terms of a life-course diagram as in Figure 6.3. It is organized such as to represent the individual, family, and external transitions (or historical time in Hareven’s terminology), with household members’ individual career lines being arranged in the order of birth beginning with the household head. Events or transition points (birth, entry and termination of schooling, entry into the labour force, job changes, migration, marriage, birth of children, etc.) in the individual’s life-history are given standard symbols, enabling the analyst to examine timing and duration of individual events and relate them to other members of the household. Family transitions are depicted in the lower portion of the life-course diagram, with vertical lines marking critical family events such as death of the household head, the addition of new producers or employed household members, etc. These events may then be related to the individual member’s responses and life changes. Finally, historical time is represented in the upper portion of the diagram where critical events or reference points that may affect the household history can be indicated, or a whole transition period, such as the war years or some other significant historical event, may be shown. Details on these transitions can also be added to the diagram depending on the analyst’s choice of the degree of significance and clarity intended.

These diagrams may be constructed for each household, which schematically maps each household history for descriptive and comparative purposes. Extensions of this basic diagram to cover generational transitions (say, for a three-generation household history, where the data permits) may be done by “stacking” the relevant household history diagrams. Two (or several) household histories may be compared by mapping the lifelines of critical members of each household, for example the heads of households, the working members of each household and any other member relevant to a particular analysis (for instance, marriage patterns, migration or employment history).

These life-course diagrams are useful in facilitating descriptions of family transitions, and in narrative explanations of critical household events and their impact on individual members. Synoptic judgements of the impact of external events on household history are also possible. It is the depiction of household processes that are buried in the individual life-histories, seen synchronically, and supplemented by household narrative history, which constitute the most useful feature of these life-
course diagrams.

This method of depicting household histories, theoretically is applicable to both the contemporary household, using retrospective life-history data, and to analysis of past households using serial lists or linked data, or, if one is fortunate, panel data. The latter application is of course too demanding of data, thus the life-course diagram may be used as a test of completeness in order to identify gaps in the description. It may also be possible to interpolate between missing data in some of the individual and family transitions.

6.5 ANALYZING THE LIFE-COURSE AS HOUSEHOLD HISTORY

6.5.1 Life-Course Analysis of Two Malay Households

The two cases of household history as illustrated in Figures 6.4 and 6.5 summarize the life-histories of household members (including those who have migrated but contribute to the household income, or are subsidized by the household and therefore, participants in the income-pooling). They examine with more accuracy the transitions of individuals within the life-course. Unlike the individual case studies of Mak Teh and Yati, which had touched on family members in a more qualitative sense, the household case studies are able to depict the integration of the concepts of “individual”, “family”, and “industrial” times, meshed together within a household in “historical” time (see Hareven, 1977; 1978a; 1982). Thus, we are able to see in a clearer time perspective how personal tragedies such as the death of the main income-earner forces the household to adapt and cope in various ways, for instance by migrating, or by increasing the number of jobs for the other household members. Likewise, we are able to capture, albeit rather starkly, the different configuration of labour input within the domestic domain and productive work of family members through time. As in the individual case studies, the same issues of sibling order, sex order, labour input, and income-pooling, etc. within the household economy and household strategies are examined.

The diagrams are arranged with historical and family time along the horizontal axis and the parents and family members arranged along the vertical axis, according to sibling order and sex. Symbols are used to indicate the major transitions in the individual life-histories such as birth, schooling, migration, job changes, marriage, and their own family formation. In this way it is possible to see the inter-relationships
Figure 6.4
Life-Course Diagram of Household History: Case Study 1

Key
X migration
△ school education
▲ school with scholarship
O marriage
□ work
/ stopping of education or work
☑ part-time work while still at school
— domestic work in household


NEW ECONOMIC POLICY
difficult years
father died
maternal male
died
became paralysed
paralysed

sells cakes

soldier

temporary clerk

trenched
electronics
worker
taps rubber
labourer with
govt body

brought up
by grandmother for first 12 years
very impersonal about this family

head of household

X

death of father
stayed with and
supported by uncle

X

religious
school

X

X

X

stop school
due to racial conflict

A

migration due to husband
being a policeman and
transferred regularly

cooking classes

mother died

husband died

brother died

X

odd job in village

O

O:

sell clothes

tapped rubber

worked in padifields

sold cakes in the
school and during Raya

Figure 6.5
Life Course Diagram of Household History: Case Study 2


NEW ECONOMIC POLICY
grandma died

1925 1930 1940

- domestic work in household
- work
- stopping of education or work
- marriage

X migration
△ school education
○ marriage
□ work

○ tapped rubber
○ look after two cows
○ went to sea, started by washing boats
- tapped rubber

○ fishing
○ look after coconut plantation
○ worked in padifields
○ sold bananas
- worked in padi
- sewing

○ labourer in sand mine
- trader

○ stopped work because sick
○ 2 cows from government
- stopped work in Bending
- stopped sewing
- trader

○ student (repeating form 5)
selling jewellery
clerk
staying with mother

□ sick

X husband

□ NS
□ LLN
□ technician
□ sell jewellery

○ fish in padifields
○ worked in padifields
○ MAS
□ NS
○ X1 divorce
□ X2 sick
○ X housewife
○ X stay with 2nd daughter

○ father died
○ died
○ stay with grandma
\[ \text{Learn to be housewife with grandma} \]
\[ \text{Stayed with 2nd daughter} \]
between a family member's transition with the rest of the family and the significance of that transition at particular junctures of the family life-cycle when read vertically.

Figure 6.4 consists of a female-headed household with five children, the eldest son of whom is already married with five children. It is a poor household, belonging to the lower echelons of economic status in the village. It has just the basic essentials, possessing only a bicycle by way of transport, and only recently acquired a black-and-white television set. The life-history of the head of household was affected by the death of her father, which resulted in her migration to stay with her uncle. After marriage, when all her children were still at school and her younger daughter was only nine years old, the most traumatic event affected her family – the death of her husband. From being the rather carefree full-time housewife of a policeman, with time even for cooking classes, and a regular income and barracks provided, she was suddenly left with five school-going children, no income, and no housing. She brought her family back to her village of origin where her brother provided her with a small house. She was now forced to survive by taking on multiple jobs such as sewing, tapping rubber, working in the padi fields earning about RM100 per month during the planting and harvesting season, and selling cakes in the school and during Hari Raya. She also took on all types of kerja kampung (village work). She received only RM190 in widow’s pension per month for the first nine months before settling at RM250 per month. This meant that she struggled to keep her children at school. Fortunately all received scholarships and were able to remain in school, supplementing their incomes by selling cakes for their mother.

It was during this economically-depressed period that the eldest daughter, while still in Form 6 (Year 12), left to work in the factories. She became a major contributor to the family income, giving all of her wages (RM230) to the family, but caused much stress when she was retrenched in mid-1986. To augment the family income she tapped rubber since her retrenchment, while applying for all types of work. A few months later the fourth child, a daughter, got a temporary job as a clerk for RM200 per month (she gave her mother most of it), which gave the family some reprieve, although they worry about what will happen when her job ends.

When the daughter started to work in the electronics factory, the household income situation appeared to ease somewhat, but the situation worsened when the eldest daughter was retrenched, followed by the sudden paralysis of the youngest who had just reached Form 5 (Year 11). Her medication was expensive. The boys in the family
did not contribute. In fact, the eldest was hardly perceived as part of the family, having been brought up entirely by the grandmother. He had been left with his grandmother because his father, as a policeman, was transferred regularly which would interrupt his schooling. After the death of the grandmother he lived only one year with his parents and siblings before marrying. After his marriage, his mother had to give him RM300 to set up house (this was before his father’s death). As for the other son, he could hardly make ends meet. His mother gave him RM20-RM30 whenever she could, in spite of the fact that he was unmarried and was earning as a soldier. In this case, the family’s economic situation was balanced rather precariously, depending very much on the two girls who were able to get work.

The second household (Figure 6.5) consisted of both husband and wife and six children, the oldest two girls already married. In contrast to the first case, at least three children have worked in the electronics factory and two were still actively contributing to the household income. With the capable entrepreneurship of their mother as a trader, this was a household well above the average economic status in the village, unlike the first household. The house was completely renovated and full of consumer durables, furniture, refrigerator, cabinets, colour television, carpets, and the like. As in the previous case study, aspects of household adaptive strategies, income pooling, sibling and sex order all play a role in this household. The head of the household was not the husband but the wife. Pak Cik (the husband) was quiet, meek, and sickly – and quite peripheral to the family. His relationship with his wife started to degenerate with his failing health, culminating in his leaving the house between 1984-85 to live with his second daughter. Because of Pak Cik’s inability to earn enough (due to his ineptitude), Mak Cik (the wife) started to work in the padi fields and to sew clothes immediately after marriage. She said that life was much easier prior to marriage. After marriage it became very difficult, especially when the children arrived. Her first child died during these initial years of economic pressure.

The first two girls were then taken out of school early to help with the housework and to look after the younger siblings. The economic situation eased somewhat with the second daughter working as a production worker in National Semiconductor Company from the age of 16. She was to be a major income contributor for 11 years, helping in her siblings’ education (none had a scholarship) and the household expenses. All the other children helped in pooling income by working in the padi fields, sewing, and later, when the mother became a trader, assisting her in selling crockery sets, carpets, bedspreads, pots, and jewellery. Even after her marriage and the arrival of her son, the
electronics worker continued working. This marriage was to end in divorce within the next year, so she and her son went back to her mother's household. In fact, she continued working until her second marriage six years later, at the time when her youngest sister entered the electronics factory and took over as the other major contributor to the household (other than the mother). The boys do not appear to contribute, except to help her sell her goods in their workplace.

The younger children comment on how easy their lives have been compared to their two older sisters. For example, the eldest daughter was so poor that her mother often gave her money to help her family. She was married off (arranged by her grandfather) after the second daughter had started taking over the housework. And it was the second daughter, the one who had contributed most to this household, who had a strong say in household decisions. Although the youngest sister was now the main contributor, certainly for most of the house renovations, she deferred to her eldest sister and mother.

What these life-course diagrams are able to show is the timing, sequencing and duration of events among individuals within the configuration of the family structure. In a sense it has depicted the synchronization of individual events with family events and integrated them into historical time.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The household histories have demonstrated the interplay of complex family transitional forces which impact on the migrant. They have shown how some females, because of their being females and their particular order in the family structure had to be taken out of school to help the family at times of economic crises. They also show the importance of timing and sequencing of events and how various factors are brought to bear on the female that positions her as the next household member to migrate. This chapter also shows the importance of household adaptive strategies. As certain events impact on the household and its members, the household adjusts to cope with the new circumstances. Thus, a person migrating to seek income, while being affected by and adjusting to the other constraints, is also a strategy to help the family members.

Her contribution to the rural household has become important because of its regularity. Her family has become dependent on it and she herself would prefer to remain in the factories, thus, the genuine fear of retrenchment. So what may have started off as a
temporary employment, as the family starts to depend on the worker’s income, she sees her migration out of the village as permanent. And as shown in the previous chapter, the TNCs are having a longer-term interest in Malaysia as they themselves adjust to technological change. This will certainly add significantly to the dissolution of the two-circuits, making this rural-urban migration paramount.

There are at least three major advantages of using the household approach in the analysis of migration. The first concerns the linking up of the broader political economic factors as they impinge on the household. As argued earlier, these processes must be analyzed at different levels for a more meaningful study of migration. The second advantage is that the historical approach enables us to analyze how the different economic impacts have affected the household and how the household itself responded as the family life-cycle progressed.

Third, the household approach provides a better understanding of how migration processes operate. This deals with the question of who migrates and why he migrates. A cross-sectional study of migration usually describes the migrant in terms of his characteristics and what these imply. As to why he migrates, the answers are inevitably reduced to economic rationalization by the migrant. A household analysis allows one to integrate all the family elements, such as the family life-cycle exemplified as sibling order, labour allocation, etc. as demonstrated in the case studies, to get a better understanding of a complicated process.

The methodological issue of generalizing from the rich data embedded in a life-course diagram remains a problem that seeks a future solution. As a method, the life-course diagram imposes some discipline in the organization and treatment of individual and family demographic data. But the broad patterns are clear from the framework of analysis which lays great importance on the inter-relationships of forces – economic, social and political at the different levels as they affect the household and the individual decision to migrate.