

policy is to set youth on a positive, upward trajectory and away from social exclusion.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION FRAMEWORK

A Social Exclusion Framework is compatible with human capital and life course approaches to youth but encompasses and transcends them. Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live (see Silver and Miller 2006; Silver 1994). Whatever the content and criteria of social membership, socially excluded groups and individuals lack capacity or access to social opportunity (Sen 2000). From the perspective of the larger society, exclusion breaks the larger social bond holding groups together. Thus, exclusion is at once a macro and a micro phenomenon. The theoretical orientation of social exclusion can be distinguished from the previous two approaches in that it considers trajectories of group relations as well as relations between individuals and examines not only those excluded but also the excluding institutions and individuals that benefit from the process.

Social exclusion has many definitions, reflecting national and ideological notions of what it means to belong to society (Silver 1994). These definitions are grounded in cultural understandings as well as legal official categories and economic statuses. Most nation-states construct their own selective historical narratives that are taught to citizens and may encompass justifications for internal social distinctions. What it means to be American, French, or German varies considerably and, thus, the definition of social exclusion varies, too. This means that applying the concept of social exclusion to Middle Eastern countries calls for analysis of what it means to be Egyptian, Moroccan, Iranian, or Syrian, to be a Muslim, an Arab, and so on. This qualification makes comparative social exclusion research a cautious enterprise.

Social exclusion is first and foremost a multidimensional conception of disadvantage. It transcends the narrow conception of material poverty, whether conceived in terms of income or the fulfillment of

basic needs. Social exclusion is less concerned with the distribution of material or monetary resources than with other forms of social disadvantage or group memberships that are related to poverty. Indeed, social exclusion is most frequently defined in contrast to poverty.

Although there are many dimensions of social exclusion, it is hard to argue that youth per se is such a dimension. Everyone goes through youth and most of us are socially included, making the “normal” transition to adult social membership. But studying the exclusion of youth as a status or group is justified insofar as age serves as a basis of social differentiation in both Europe and the Middle East that impedes full participation in adult social life. Indeed, the elderly constitute a similar status in that custom and even law sometimes require withdrawal from normal activity. Thus, it is the intersection of youth with other dimensions of disadvantage – notably here, unemployment – that makes social exclusion a useful framework for analysis.

Some European countries have adopted the exclusion lens when addressing the needs of youth. The British Social Exclusion Unit (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2005) studied “young adults with complex needs” or multiple disadvantages such as mental illness, drug misuse, criminal records, or homelessness. Of the 5.5 million people in Britain aged 16-24, 750,000 of them were not in employment, education, or training. The report identified the often arbitrary way in which programs and institutions are divided into youth and adult services and called for “blurring the age boundaries” of services for vulnerable young adults. Prohibiting young people from receiving income support, housing subsidy, or unemployment benefit while allowing them to vote or serve in the military may seem inconsistent, but every society draws boundaries around the rights and responsibilities of full adulthood from which youth are excluded. Sometimes abruptly, sometimes more gradually, the process of assuming adult roles is a dynamic one that changes over time. The older generation usually holds the keys, regulating access. In general, insiders deny outsiders equal rights and may even derive benefit – income, power, and other resources – from exclusivity. The outsiders, in this case youth, suffer mul-

multiple disadvantages that may accumulate over time.

Social exclusion is a relational rather than a redistributive idea. Although poverty can lead to social exclusion as well as the reverse, one can easily imagine rich members of excluded groups. Thus, it is not strictly a question of insufficient material resources. As Alain Touraine (1991) put it, exclusion is an issue of being in or out rather than up or down. Even the rich may, under certain circumstances and in certain domains, be socially excluded. But there is a tendency for difference to become inequality because social closure benefits insiders.

As a social relationship, exclusion has two parties. It is essential to examine the excluders as well as the excluded, adults as well as youth. When the excluders are the focus, the mechanisms of social exclusion are front and center. At the micro level, rejection, isolation, and humiliation are some of the mechanisms that exclude people from full participation in society. At the macro level, exile, expulsion, and deportation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, denial of human rights, and imprisonment are among the extreme processes of exclusion backed up by force. Policy must address both parties to the relationship of exclusion – the demand and supply sides, so to speak. Institutional and interpersonal discrimination and barriers to participation are central to the analysis.

When the excluded receive attention, processes of exclusion, such as spirals of cumulative disadvantage and exclusion traps over the life course, come into view. Thus, exclusion is a dynamic concept. In addressing the trajectories of social exclusion over the life course of youth, the accumulation of social disadvantages across many dimensions becomes evident. Britain's Social Exclusion Unit defines exclusion as "a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems." This is even more the case when, as Vleminckx and Berghman (2001) claim, exclusion implies entrapment or intergenerational transmission.

Too often, exclusion discourse overemphasizes the downward trajectories at the expense of trajectories that interrupt the accumulation of disadvantage. This does not only require change on the part of

vulnerable youth. It takes two to knit social relationships between adults and youth or to include youth in networks that can help them move into adult roles. European experience teaches that insertion, activation, training, and related interventions to improve life chances of youth fail without sufficient jobs, public works, or places in programs and without equal rights and opportunities for women, including enforceable anti-discrimination laws. Otherwise, program participants who gain entry to spheres from which they were excluded simply trade places with others who drop out. This process of "musical chairs" – *la galère* (Dubet 1987) or "yo-yo"-ization (Walther 2002) – in youth insertion programs can give rise to frustration, anger, and violence. Trajectories must ultimately lead to social inclusion.

As discussed below, policies to address young people's transitions to work via school, vocational training, career advice, labor market programs, and so on have some social exclusion traps of their own. Supply side programs narrow the idea of social integration to labor market integration alone and ignore local demand conditions. What were once interconnected transitions to adulthood – in the spheres of family, housing, gender roles, lifestyles – are being replaced by "de-standardized 'yo-yo'-transitions" – ups and downs, either-ors, neither-nor adult and youth. Indeed, transitions to adulthood are reversible and trajectories are precarious. When there is a mismatch between training and skill demand, youth simply enter "waiting loops." In sum, society cannot call exclusively on the excluded to change; the perpetrators of social exclusion must also be transformed. Exhorting young people to study and work is fruitless if there are no avenues to social inclusion.

Exclusion varies across contexts and therefore has a situated or spatial aspect. Inaccessibility to the means of social participation may reflect segregation or sheer physical distance. "Residential segregation further accentuates the pernicious consequences of poverty by limiting interaction between lower and middle classes, thereby perpetuating the cycle of social exclusion that stymies the life chances of even the most industrious youth" (Tienda and Wilson 2002, 4). Indeed, sometimes employers dis-

criminate simply on the basis of living in stigmatized neighborhoods. Joined-up, spatially concentrated social problems are associated with the idea of an “urban underclass.”

The framework controls for background characteristics shown to be important in human capital research on youth, and it emphasizes the contextualization and institutionalization of trajectories emphasized in life course research on youth. It offers a dynamic perspective on multiple dimensions of exclusion from both primary – economic – and

secondary – social – spheres of social activity, indicating that causality between these spheres is reciprocal. The framework distinguishes the dimensions of exclusion from adult roles from the consequences of that exclusion, including poverty, delayed household formation, mental illness, and the like. It also specifies the ways in which exclusion may feed back on itself, multiplying the dimensions of rupture and closed opportunities over time, whether through unemployment, migration, loss of social ties, or poverty.

III. YOUTH EXCLUSION IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The idea of social exclusion originated in France, from which it dispersed to other countries, partly via the EU during the term of Commissioner Jacques Delors (Silver and Miller 2006). France has the most extensive commitment to fighting exclusion with a full-blown “law of prevention and combat of social exclusions” and a National Observatory for the Study of Social Exclusion, but Britain and other countries also established official agencies specifically charged with reducing exclusion. Through the process of diffusion, the concept changed meaning several times. Whereas the French understood exclusion primarily in Republican terms of the social bond (*lien social*), the EU, with a British-dominated Poverty Program and a continental tradition of Social Democratic tripartite corporatism, tweaked the concept to incorporate both material disadvantage and social rights. When the EU member states agreed to submit National Action Plans for Social Inclusion, allowing Brussels to monitor progress, each country emphasized different, often specific dimensions, even if they reported on a common set of mainly economic income and joblessness indicators (Atkinson, Cantillon, Marlier and Nolan 2002). For example, the British approach to social exclusion focuses on “problem groups” and “joined-up problems.”

This national specificity implies that any comparison between exclusion in Europe and the Middle Eastern countries also will require a context-dependent definition of social belonging and of what it means to be a fully participating adult. Asking people what they consider to be the most important dimensions of inclusion or exclusion is the most direct strategy to accomplish this. For example, a British study (Gordon et al.) asked a representative sample what social activities they considered to be “normal.” Then the study examined the constraints on participating in those activities: lack of affordability, spatial accessibility, family responsibilities, time limitations, cultural inappropriateness, fear. This approach addresses both normative criteria of membership and the sources of exclusion, not the disabilities or faults of the excluded.

To be sure, it will be useful to draw upon the EU’s common indicators for comparative perspective, but there may be some dimensions of inclusion in

Middle Eastern societies that are relatively unimportant in Europe, and the reverse. For example, the exclusion of immigrants or racial minorities may have greater importance in the global north, whereas childlessness or caste may be a source of social exclusion in the global south. Nevertheless, such comparisons call attention to some excluded groups, such as women, that receive attention in both Europe and the Middle East while other excluded ethnic, tribal, religious, and linguistic minorities – Copts, Berbers, Kurds, Sunnis or Shiites, etc – in the Middle Eastern countries deserve more study.

Not all countries and cultures socially construct a distinct life stage called “youth” or “young adulthood” with special roles and ways of life. However, to the extent to which young people are institutionally identified and normatively expected to participate in certain prescribed activities, then those who are unable to do so shall be considered “socially excluded.” In the context of the Middle East, prescribed activities for this age group traditionally included work, citizenship, marriage, and the establishment of independent households. That large numbers of youth are unable to fulfill those roles implies that youth exclusion in the region is rising. Exclusion from the labor market, institutions, family and social relations, and politics are the major dimensions identified in the four countries under study.

Does it really make sense to use a theoretical orientation that originated in the developed world to study the global south? The social exclusion framework may have originated in the developed world, but it has been applied fruitfully to developing countries (Rodgers, Gore, and Figuereido 1995; De Haan 1997, 1999; Sen 2000). Exclusion discourse is not only heard in the EU context but also in Latin America and beyond (Buvinic and Mazza 2004; Silver and Miller 2006; Silver 2004). Social exclusion in both contexts arises from the common processes of market globalization and neoliberalization (Bhalla and LaPeyre 1999). Some even propose the concept of social exclusion as a new paradigm to explain the social effects of globalization, recognizing the link between deprivation in the global north and south (Munck 2005 p. 21). This suggests that the

perspective may be fruitfully applied to the Middle East with appropriate adaptation to that context.

Yet there are only a few studies explicitly dedicated to exclusion in the Middle Eastern countries (Hashem 1996; Bedoui 1995; Bedoui and Ridha 1996). These predominantly Muslim, Arabic-speaking countries span from Morocco in the west to Iran and Pakistan in the east. But it would be simplistic to portray the region as culturally or religiously homogeneous. Different countries exhibit different aspects of social exclusion, reflecting their specific colonial and revolutionary histories, demography, and other characteristics. Iran is especially an outlier in the region, given its language, Shia majority, and imperial and revolutionary history. Again, it is important to tailor the definition of social exclusion and research on the subject to the contexts in which it is studied and to develop a systematic comparative research design taking variation into account.

The comparison of youth exclusion in Europe and the Middle East is not as far-fetched as it first may seem. This is because young people in both parts of the world face similar challenges, especially unemployment rates that are usually double or more that of prime-age adults. In most of the Middle East, youth unemployment ranged from 37 percent of all the unemployed in Morocco to 73 percent in Syria, with young women's unemployment rates 50 percent higher than men's (Yousef 2004, 4).

But unlike Europe and the United States, where the unskilled face more problems in the labor market than the well educated, the well trained in the Middle East are disproportionately unemployed. The problem is rather lack of demand for the skills they have. This can appear unjust, giving rise to protests, as the unemployed graduates movement in Morocco illustrates (Bennani-Chraïbi 1994). Moreover, poverty is not related to unemployment in the region – except in Iran – because of family and government safety nets.

The trend, if not levels, of rising education and of delaying marriage and leaving home are also shared by the two regions. Poverty in the Middle East declined until the 1990s and is now lower than that in East Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa. In 1998, the probability that a young person in the

Middle East lived on \$1 a day or less was 2.1 percent, down from 4.3 percent in 1987, and the probability of living on \$2 a day or less was 29.9 percent (Lloyd 2005, pp. 61-3). The huge differences between these regions should not obscure some similarities and the value of learning from the experience of others and perhaps adapting practices to new contexts.

Despite their different GNP, levels of industrialization, religious traditions, and colonial histories, some of the same mechanisms are responsible for accumulating disadvantages among labor market outsiders. The labor markets in both regions suffer from economic restructuring and insider-outsider problems. Social exclusion is strongly expressed in Middle Eastern countries through many dimensions of labor market segmentation. Organized insiders with seniority benefit from rents – higher wages, better benefits, and greater tenure – by monopolizing jobs and restricting access to particular sectors (see Silver 1994). Outsiders, such as youth and new labor market entrants, suffer from longer unemployment durations, skill atrophy, and declining health, as well as the social dimensions of exclusion from work.

Labor market segmentation on the basis of age works through many institutional mechanisms. The Middle East has differential minimum wages between urban and rural areas, encouraging migration to the cities. Although coverage is uneven, minimum wages raise unemployment and encourage informality, at least in Morocco (Yousef 2004, 141). Second, women are disfavored in hiring when there are generous maternity benefits that employers must pay for and prohibitions against night work. In some Middle Eastern countries, family laws also require fathers or husbands to give permission for women to work, seek a loan, start a business, or travel for business reasons (Moghadam 2002, 242). Third, there is a vast difference in the employment security, wages, and nonwage compensation of the public and private sectors, so that there are long waits for government jobs.

The attractiveness of public employment relative to the private sector is especially great for women and minorities, something also found in many European

In many Middle Eastern states, an authoritarian bargain between non-democratic regimes and the citizens exchanged economic security and social welfare for restrictions on political participation and union militancy. Free and open admission to university, rent control, progressive taxation, and universal health care all served to bloat the public sector and inhibit private sector growth or health insurance.

societies. More generally, labor market regulations discourage job creation and impede labor market adjustments to economic changes. During the last decade, in response to such structural rigidities, Egypt and Morocco have deregulated the labor market, introducing flexible part-time and temporary employment.

In the oil-producing states, a final basis for labor market segmentation is the division between nationals and expatriates. These countries have sought to address rising unemployment among nationals with strict visa requirements, quotas, and subsidies to “nationalize” the private sectors. But it is usually difficult to price nationals into private sector jobs for which guest workers are so much cheaper and work under what are sometimes exploitative conditions.

Similarities in labor market institutions are not the end of the comparison. It is not so unreasonable to draw policy ideas and lessons from Europe for the Middle East. Unlike many regions of the developing world, the Middle Eastern countries long have had redistributive anti-poverty policies, safety net and public employment programs, and social funds like some of the European welfare states (Tzannatos 2002). Even some cash and in-kind transfer programs exist in countries like Morocco. The state tends to provide free health and education. Health and living standards have increased, and most countries have achieved universal literacy and primary school enrollment and rising secondary school enrollments. Although they are often uneven in coverage and poorly enforced, the region has training,

pensions, social insurance, and labor regulations such as maternity leave.

In the formal sector, there are social security systems to which employers contribute. Most Middle Eastern countries have severance pay for laid-off workers and Iran and Tunisia offer unemployment assistance. In contrast, only Algeria and Egypt offer contribution-financed unemployment insurance, and it is restricted to formal sector workers (Youssef 2004). Unions and social movements exist, even if they are often state-controlled. As in the southern European welfare regime where youth unemployment is extremely high, Middle Eastern and North African kinship networks provide informal social support, allowing young people to remain in the parental home, spreading risks of poverty, and offering social contacts that lead to jobs.

In many of the Middle Eastern states, an “authoritarian bargain” (Youssef 2004, 2) between nondemocratic regimes and the citizens exchanged economic security and social welfare for restrictions on political participation and union militancy. Free and open admission to university, rent control, progressive taxation, and universal health care all served to bloat the public sector and inhibit private sector growth or health insurance. In Egypt, guaranteed public employment for all graduates of higher education encouraged human capital acquisition but led to high unemployment among graduates waiting for a public job. The latter offered nonwage benefits such as job security and family allowances. Restrictions on the right to fire added to labor mar-

ket rigidities. Nationalizations of industry also expanded the size of the public sector. This system remained afloat because of oil revenues, migrant remittances, and foreign aid until the 1980s. The resulting fiscal crisis required curtailing food subsidies, public employment, and other state expenditures that provided the Middle Eastern safety net. But the cutbacks were executed gradually because of political considerations, much like the welfare state reforms in Europe during the last two decades.

The Middle Eastern countries have enacted demand-side job creation policies for the unemployed. Public works projects are extensive in North Africa. In the 1990s, Egypt introduced them in response to the rise in unemployment accompanying structural adjustment. Morocco's and Tunisia's programs were mainly situated in rural areas. But these efforts are temporary and do not contribute to the long-term employability of participants.

Another type of job creation program in the Middle East aims to promote self-employment among the poor. Although only a small share of the unemployed are covered (Abrahart, Kaur, and Tzannatos 2002), unemployment lending programs provide small capital loans for the jobless, mostly men, to invest in new businesses. Microfinance is the most common strategy. A Tunisian job creation program established in 1981 used the national fund for the promotion of artisans and small trades (FONAPRA) to launch 16,000 projects, each generating an average of four positions. The rotating loan fund helped qualified youth to start a business (Bedoui and Ridha 1996). But microfinance was less successful in Egypt. Microenterprises tend to be in the informal sector and provide little security or growth potential. To reduce business failures, technical assistance and entrepreneurship training should accompany small loans. Although they have worked in South Asia, especially among women, to ensure high repayment rates, small rotating credit programs may have some negative side effects in the family. In general, self-employment assistance programs can have serious deadweight and substitution effects.

Finally, some Middle Eastern countries have instituted the same sorts of social and active labor market

policies to address youth joblessness as Europe and, unfortunately, they share many of the same shortcomings (Yousef 2004; Abrahart, Kaur and Tzannatos 2002). The common policy emphasis on training reflects the human capital approach to youth unemployment so influential in neo-liberal policy-making, one that discourages job creation efforts. I will review some of the findings based upon evaluation of these programs.

To be sure, there are types of social exclusion that beleaguer European societies that are less of a problem in the Middle East, and the reverse. Rural-to-urban migration is largely over in Europe but is an important basis of disadvantage in the Middle Eastern countries. In the United States and Europe, the number of single parent families, one of the most socially excluded categories, has increased astronomically. But in the Middle East this is still not a big problem although the rising number of older singles – “bachelors” and “spinsters” – and practices that disadvantage women are.

Europe considers connection to the Internet to be a source of social integration so that “e-exclusion,” or the digital divide, is socially relevant. But a 2000 online survey found that of the 378 million internet users worldwide, scarcely 1 percent were in the Middle East (Castells 2001, 260). Not only are there fewer telephones in Arab countries, but only 1.6 percent of the population have Internet access (Dunlop 2006, 15). This is not to say that Internet and communications technology access and training are unimportant in the Middle East; the private sector, including Cisco and Microsoft, actively have sought to increase the region's ICT literacy (Dunlop 2006). But it is less of a priority.

In sum, social exclusion varies by context. The relevant dimensions of social exclusion, its agents, processes and mechanisms, and the institutionally patterned life course all differ across countries. Any program addressing youth should pay systematic attention to the contextual dimensions that distinguish its country cases, if possible by drawing upon local and national sentiment about the relevant dimensions of social inclusion.