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# **Social Exclusion:** Comparative Analysis of Europe and Middle East Youth

HILARY SILVER

THE MIDDLE EAST YOUTH INITIATIVE  
**WORKING PAPER**



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hilary Silver is a professor at Brown University and an affiliate of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. She has held visiting appointments at the Université de Lille, University of Sussex, New York University, and Columbia University. Silver is currently finishing a book on grassroots initiatives to combat social exclusion and unemployment in France and Germany. Her publications include “From Poverty to Social Exclusion: Lessons from Europe” in *Poverty and Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (2006) and “European Policies to Promote the Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups: Lessons for Latin America” in *Social Inclusion: Latin America’s Development Challenge* (2004).

**CONTENTS**

**Executive Summary** ..... 5

**I. Growing up in the Middle East**..... 9

**II. Frameworks for Studying Youth**..... 11

    Human Capital Framework..... 11

    Life Course Framework..... 11

    Social Exclusion Framework ..... 15

**III. Youth Exclusion in Europe and the Middle East**..... 18

**IV. Youth Inclusion Research: Lessons from Europe** ..... 22

    Context-specificity ..... 22

    Multidimensionality..... 23

    Processes, Trajectories, Mechanisms..... 26

    Relationality and the Social Exclusion of Groups ..... 27

    Consequences of Exclusion ..... 28

**V. Youth Inclusion Policy and Programs: Lessons from Europe**..... 31

    Social Insertion Programs for Youth..... 31

    Youth Employment Services: Information and Job Search ..... 34

**VI. Conclusions and Suggestions for Empirical Research**..... 37

*References*..... 40

*Endnotes*..... 46

*About the Middle East Youth Initiative*..... 47

*About The Wolfensohn Center for Development*..... 48

*About the Dubai School of Government*..... 48

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Historical Changes in Life Course Regimes.....	13
Table 3-1: EU Common Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion Primary Indicators.....	24

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Our goal must be to reduce these disparities across and within countries, to bring more and more people into the economic mainstream, to promote equitable access to the benefits of development regardless of nationality, race or gender. This – the Challenge of Inclusion – is the key development challenge of our time.

– James Wolfensohn, “The Challenge of Inclusion,” 1997

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most typically, analyses of youth have employed either the neo-classical economic framework of human capital or the socio-demographic framework of life-course research in the Middle East. While both have produced important findings and insights, their focus on supply-side processes of individuals is limited. The role of institutions on the supply side is especially important in understanding youth disadvantage in the Middle East.

As research turns to the sources of youth disadvantage, comparative studies may fruitfully adopt a perspective oriented to the idea of social exclusion. Whatever the content and criteria of social membership, socially excluded groups and individuals lack capacity or access to social opportunity. 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. In

particular, the framework emphasizes the following dimensions:

- Social Exclusion is *context-specific*: This means that applying the concept of social exclusion to the Middle Eastern and North African 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 national-specificity implies that any comparison between exclusion across regions internationally will require a context-dependent definition of social belonging and of what it means to be a fully participating adult. 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.
- Social exclusion is a *relational*: 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.

- Social exclusion is *multi-dimensional*: 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 economic outcomes.

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. However, 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. Thus, it is the intersection of youth with other dimensions of disadvantage that makes social exclusion a useful framework for analysis.

#### YOUTH EXCLUSION IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: FACING SIMILAR TRENDS

The comparison of youth exclusion in Europe and the Middle East is not as far-fetched as it may sound at first. 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. There are several important similarities and differences which make the comparison worthwhile:

**1. High Levels of Unemployment:** 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 Eastern countries, youth unemployment ranged from 37% of all the unemployed in Morocco to 73% in Syria. However, unlike Europe where the unskilled face more problems in the labor market than the well-educated, the well-trained in the Middle East are disproportionately unemployed.

**2. Labor Market Segmentation:** Despite their different income levels, 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.

**3. Rising Education and Delaying Marriage:** The trend, if not levels, of rising education and of delaying marriage and leaving home are also shared by the two regions. Both Europe and the Middle East have recently experienced a rise in the average ages of leaving home, marriage, and first birth (Lloyd 2005). These inter-related trends are partly attributable to the same causes, especially rising youth unemployment, extended education, and increasingly costly housing, and have contributed to declining fertility. However, there are important differences in these tendencies across countries, reflecting institutional and cultural variation.

**4. Redistributive Policies and Role of the State:** It is not so unreasonable to draw policy ideas and lessons from Europe for the Middle East. Unlike many regions of the developing world, Middle Eastern countries have long had redistributive anti-poverty policies, safety net and public employment programs, and social funds like some of the European welfare states. As in the Southern European welfare regime where youth unemployment is extremely high, Middle Eastern and North African kinship networks provide informal social support. This allows young people to remain in the parental home, spreading the risks of poverty and linking the job market with social contacts.

#### EUROPEAN YOUTH INCLUSION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS: LESSONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

There are number of lessons Middle Eastern countries can draw from European youth inclusion policies, which may help guide the development of programs in MENA countries aimed at reducing

youth disadvantage. Since exclusion is a multi-dimensional, relational, context-specific process, most European policies promoting social inclusion emphasize: (1) multi-pronged comprehensive interventions crossing traditional bureaucratic domains and tailored to addressing at once the multi-dimensional problems of excluded individuals and groups; (2) a long-term process of insertion and integration moving through transitional stages; (3) localized intervention sensitive to national institutional and cultural contexts; and (4) participation of the excluded in their own inclusion into economic and social life. The latter is especially important. We have seen that targeted and means-tested programs may unintentionally stigmatize their intended beneficiaries, and youth should have a say in how programs to help them are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Based upon this review of European policies to promote the inclusion of youth, several policy implications follow for Middle Eastern countries. First, as human capital and neo-liberal policies advocate, basic literacy and high-quality education remain important goals for the region, especially in rural areas and among women and disadvantaged groups. As for training, European experience shows the benefits of expanding the private sector role in training. Youth do better when they have an opportunity to learn on the job, and employers can screen these potential employees. The schools should not neglect specific skills needed for later life such as financial and business literacy, job search techniques, and how to use the internet.

Second, job creation policies should not be neglected. One important avenue is to expand aid to youth entrepreneurship and formal sector self-employment, preferably in partnership with the corporate and banking sectors. Barriers to credit, especially of women, should be dismantled, and training in business planning, marketing, and accounting extensively offered. Developing credit markets and financial literacy means more than small business loans. MENA countries need more access to consumer loans and mortgages. There are excellent opportunities in the private housing market to accomplish many goals at once. Low-interest credit can release pent-up demand for household formation, con-

struction is labor-intensive and thus, a source of new jobs that also allows for skill development and urban renewal. Rental housing often pays for itself over time, encouraging entrepreneurship.

Third, matching policies need development. Middle Eastern countries have an opportunity to establish or expand public or private employment and job search services. This is related to improving access to the internet which can be used for job search. The internet can also open up global business opportunities to make up for the loss of remittances from abroad. Policies to reconcile work and family responsibilities should be universalized in such a way that no sector is favored. Potential avenues for this are the tax system or family allowances which support the family while allowing caregivers to work. Indeed, child and elder care are important labor-intensive sectors that could also absorb young workers.

Finally, fighting social exclusion is more than a matter of the labor market. Middle Eastern countries need to offer youth a diverse range of positive outlets for their energy and aspirations that go beyond work and marriage. Religious and military activities are not the only ones that can occupy young people constructively. As discussed, there are myriad community-based projects in the arts, new technologies, infrastructure, sports, environment, and the like that keep young people out of trouble and benefit them and their neighbors. Including the younger generation in the effort to improve their own societies may prove the most valuable development strategy there is.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Cross-sectional household surveys have provided the vast bulk of the information currently available on Middle Eastern youth (Lloyd 2005). This makes it difficult to untangle causation, to discover the long-term effects of transitions during youth, and to examine contextual effects, including those of national setting. Future research in an exclusion framework should build in a temporal component, making it possible to identify sequences, mechanisms, and causal processes. If panel surveys are not feasible, life narratives may be instructive.

In addition to representative sample surveys, ethnography and qualitative methods can reveal important salient dimensions of youth exclusion. Given how many youth may have temporary or unsuccessful transitions to work and other adult roles, research must consider potential feedback effects or mutually reinforcing causation among various dimensions of exclusion. Poverty, depression, and poor health are usually seen as outcomes of unemployment, especially in the long-term, but they may also induce unemployment, especially if financial constraints or reduced self-esteem impede the job search. If possible, cohort panels with prospective data should be collected. In sum, multi-disciplinary multi-method panel research designs appear to hold the most promise for studies of the multi-faceted transitions of youth.

Indeed, individual investments and trajectories are only the beginning for understanding the multi-dimensional process of youth exclusion. First, the causal inter-relations among youth transitions can give rise to cumulative exclusions and social isolation. To uncover these, research must examine long-term trajectories and consider how they are

embedded in contexts of various levels. Second, youth exclusion mechanisms may differ by age (early adolescence through young adulthood), gender, and ethnic, racial, caste, tribe, language, religion, sect, and other social group. There is not much research on the impact of family-friendly labor policies, such as maternity leave, that would make it easier for Middle Eastern women to combine paid work and childrearing. There are even fewer studies of minorities in Middle Eastern countries. Third, since social exclusion is a relationship, more attention should be devoted to the causes of exclusion and to individual and institutional excluders. For example, discrimination studies are extremely rare in the Middle East compared to Europe and the US. Because of their legal implications, it is unclear whether audit or random assignment procedures can be implemented in this region. Finally, if new youth inclusion policies are implemented, it would be wise to include evaluation research that not only measures quantitative and qualitative outcomes, but also inputs and other costs. Control groups and baseline data are among the important considerations, and both short-term and long-term results need to be assessed.

## I. GROWING UP IN THE MIDDLE EAST

This paper presents a theoretical orientation for studying the multiple social problems confronting youth in the Middle East. According to Merton (1968), a “theoretical orientation” establishes a common field of inquiry by providing a framework for descriptive and explanatory research. The framework covers the identification and formulation of research problems, rationales for variable selection, and strategies for research design and data analysis.

As research turns to the sources of youth disadvantage, comparative studies fruitfully may adopt a perspective oriented to the idea of social exclusion. Most typically, analyses of youth have employed either the neoclassical economic framework of human capital or the sociodemographic framework of life course research. While both have produced important findings and insights, their focus on supply side processes of individuals is limited. Institutions are especially important in understanding youth disadvantage in the Middle East.

The more comprehensive social exclusion framework presented here takes institutions seriously. The approach has been applied effectively to studying youth in the European Union and also can provide a rigorous and robust research schema and direction for policies pertaining to youth in the Middle East context. But analysts should be mindful of the important differences between these regions. The meaning of social exclusion is contextually contingent and must be adapted to the setting of investigation.

Young people in the Middle East face numerous economic, social, and political challenges. The demographic pressures of a large youth cohort make it difficult to absorb all of the labor market entrants seeking jobs, despite average GDP growth from 2000 to 2005 of 4.7 percent and medium-to-high levels of secondary and tertiary educational enrollment. In some countries, the youth bulge has peaked, but this cohort is now currently crowding in the labor market and faces bleak job prospects.

Youth in the Middle East not only are disproportionately jobless, but those who do obtain work also are disadvantaged compared with their elders. For example, 69 percent of youth in Egypt work with-

out a contract. Over half of the employed youth in Syria, 46 percent of those in Egypt, and 32 percent of those in Morocco have temporary, non-career jobs; only in Iran is it a low 6.9 percent. It should not come as a surprise that many Middle Eastern youth blame insufficient job vacancies and their governments for their plight (Elder and Schmidt 2006; Dunlop 2006).

Among the regional factors associated with high unemployment and joblessness of Middle Eastern youth are not only excess labor supply and rising female labor force participation but also labor market rigidities such as public sector attractiveness and obstacles to private sector development (Kabbani and Kothari 2005; Yousef 2004). Among the particular issues for youth in these countries that the International Labor Organization identified are poor job quality, insufficient job creation, inadequate industrial investment – 47 percent of employment is in services and 26 percent in agriculture – managing internal and external migration, informal, network-based job search, reluctance of youth to work in the private sector, and civil conflicts (Elder and Schmidt 2006).

But the notion of youth exclusion goes well beyond the economic dimensions of disadvantage. In the Middle East, the average age at marriage has increased well beyond what is expected from rising educational levels, and independent household formation also is being delayed. Inclusion in central adult roles is thereby stymied. The gender gap in most social indicators has persisted despite young women’s increased schooling. Youth in the Middle East have limited opportunities for civic and political involvement, including participation in the military, sports, religious institutions, and other roles deemed age-appropriate (Waldner 1994). They may turn to the streets and other mischief without a productive outlet for their energies (Rhodes, Mihar, and Abu El-Rous 2002; Bennani-Chraïbi 1994). In brief, the problems of youth call for a multidimensional approach, a multidisciplinary perspective, and joined-up policy interventions.

This paper examines the interrelated processes of economic and social exclusion of youth in Europe and the Middle East. First, it discusses how the so-

*The more comprehensive social exclusion framework presented here takes institutions seriously. The approach has been applied effectively to studying youth in the European Union and also can provide a rigorous and robust research schema and direction for policies pertaining to youth in the Middle East context. But analysts should be mindful of the important differences between these regions. The meaning of social exclusion is contextually contingent and must be adapted to the setting of investigation.*

cial exclusion framework differs from two other dominant approaches to studying youth and from the more familiar income poverty perspective. Second, the paper discusses the appropriateness of comparing youth in Europe and those living in the Middle East. Third, it summarizes European re-

search on youth exclusion and policies to combat it. Based upon this overview and cognizant of the comparative limitations, the paper draws some conclusions about what and how to study youth exclusion in the Middle East and what can be done about it.

## II. FRAMEWORKS FOR STUDYING YOUTH

The two most familiar approaches to studying youth – human capital theory and the life course perspective – place emphasis on the youth themselves and, thus, the supply-side of the labor market. The micro level is especially important in the field of neoclassical labor economics. Human capital theory emphasizes supply side investments that, despite the short-term opportunity costs of foregone wages, maximize income over the entire life course. The central premise of this approach is that education, training, good health, and similar productivity-enhancing investments during one's youth will pay off later in life (Knowles and Behrman 2003). Schooling probably has received more scholarly attention than any other aspect of youth development, especially as it is considered a societal investment as well as an individual one. Rising education levels should increase national economic product, not only personal well-being. However, among women, intermittent experience on the job also accounts for lower human capital and thus, this perspective also incorporates an economics of the family (Becker 1991, 1975).

### HUMAN CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

Labor economists studying youth emphasize their role as potential workers. For example, the differential size of cohorts entering the labor force – baby booms and busts – and increasingly continuous female labor force participation might account for the declining economic status of youth, whether rising joblessness or falling wages. But in countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, this excess supply does not explain the long-term, apparently structural unemployment of youth. Rather, institutional barriers are at work, accounting for national variation in youth disadvantage and the length and number of spells of joblessness until stable employment is obtained (Blanchflower and Freeman 2000). It appears that youth are being sorted into two segments – educated, skilled, and well paid vs. less educated, unskilled, and unemployed or low paid. To span this divide, human capital theorists propose increased training of unskilled youth even if unemployment afflicts qualified young workers and evaluations show such “second chance” programs have disappointing results.

Most human capital studies examine the personal characteristics of young workers, especially their “disadvantaged backgrounds.” Thus, parental socioeconomic status, gender, disability, health, ethnicity, religion, place of residence, and geographical mobility are among the covariates that may interact with age and human capital to produce unemployment or low wages. These studies make use of micro data, mainly from national censuses or sample surveys, preferably from longitudinal ones.

In the Middle East, education levels have been rising. Although illiteracy is still widespread in Egypt, Morocco, and other countries, the unemployment problem is in fact disproportionately concentrated among educated youth (El-Hamidi and Wahba 2005). To be sure, the quality and nature of education may not fit labor demand, but it is difficult to argue that the level of human capital is the only reason for the region's unemployment. Uneducated young men go to work early and earn low wages, but educated young men and women wait for long periods in hopes of enjoying the standard of living they expect. The vast majority of jobseekers are new labor market entrants. Many reject private sector jobs so they will be ready for openings in the public sector, where wages are a third higher (Kabbani and Korthari 2005, 36). This is evidence of monopoly rents earned by insiders benefiting from institutional barriers excluding outsiders. It implies that a social exclusion framework may usefully account for at least part of the Middle Eastern situation.

### LIFE COURSE FRAMEWORK

The life course perspective considers how, over time, individuals move through a sequence of socially patterned, culturally defined age-graded roles and social transitions. Life course theory has three central ideas: trajectories, transitions, and turning points (Elder and Shanahan 2006). Social exclusion is a trajectory, not a simple transition. Life courses are comprised of dynamic trajectories of considerable duration. A trajectory is a pathway over the lifespan marked by sequences of transitions or turning points, relatively abrupt life events. A transition is a change in state(s), an entry and exit to a role. Age-graded transitions are embedded in social institutions and historical periods. A turning point is a substantial change in the course of a behavior trajectory.

The life course approach traditionally has considered how individuals adapt to turning points or events, socially defined transitions between positions in a given life domain, and life stage passages from one combination of transitions to another in different life domains. These individual adjustments are examined especially in the context of the family's interdependent life courses and its strategies to balance needs and the use and distribution of resources. Life course events such as transitions in and out of paid work, in and out of welfare, family and household transitions, and health and illness are among the most important topics of research. Unexpected life events or historic changes – incarceration, contracting AIDS, drought, or war – cause some to spiral into exclusion, passing through stages of social detachments – death or dislocation of family and villagers – and exclusion from assets such as land – needed for a livelihood. Norms dictate the appropriate timing and sequences of role transitions. Nevertheless, historic changes such as the Great Depression, social institutions such as government policies, and triggering life events may modify such trajectories. Social history, institutions, and social structure thus shape individuals' lives. Thus, the life course approach grounds the study of individuals in context and emphasizes the implications of social pathways in historical time and place for human development and aging.

Karl Ulrich Mayer (2005) posited that the life course has varied across historical periods and national contexts (see Table 1-1). He hypothesized that broad categories of welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990) or varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001) would structure the life course of various European countries but instead found that particular institutional rules and incentive systems do so. Specific mechanisms channel individuals into situations with risks and opportunities. The life course is institutionally patterned, but not according to simplified comparative typologies. According to the classification in Table 1-1, Middle Eastern countries combine some aspects of all four of Mayer's life course regimes. Although the male breadwinner model is most common in Middle Eastern cities (Moghadam 2002), some aspects of traditional and even post-fordist life courses are evident in the region.

The life course perspective reminds us that, in some times and places, no such separate socially recognized stage as youth existed. Although it has physical benchmarks, beginning sometime after physical puberty and persisting at least until reaching full stature or parenthood, the timing, sequencing, and duration of youth vary across societies. Thus, youth is a socially constructed age category, one often recognized in law and culturally marked by rituals. Many institutions are age-graded: school, army, the welfare state. The "age of majority," when one is legally an adult, varies cross nationally and may not coincide with religious and cultural definitions of adulthood.

Many contemporary societies define youth as an intermediate life stage between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a stage in the life course punctuated by many transitions: school-to-work, school-to-university, school-to-military, parental-to-own home and marriage, and marriage-to-parenthood. Young people are expected to prepare for at least five "key adult roles: adult worker, citizen and community participant, spouse, parent, and household manager" (Lloyd 2005, 3). But youth is not only about assuming adult privileges and responsibilities. It is a normatively defined life stage in its own right. Throughout the world, especially with the spread of the prohibition against child labor, it is also lasting longer.

Arnett (2004) has argued that "emerging adulthood" has become a separate stage of life lasting from the late teens through the twenties. It is a period in between adolescence and adulthood, in which adult responsibility is somewhat dreaded as an end to independence, spontaneity, optimism, and wide-open possibilities. In the United States, adulthood now means assuming long-term responsibilities for one's actions, making independent decisions, and being financially independent rather than marriage or parenthood. Emerging adults self-centeredly search for their adult identities by trying out different experiences and partners whereas adults are stagnant. During this age of experimentation, uncertainty, and instability, hopes flourish and everything seems possible. Education is supposed to pay off, and delaying marriage will result in finding a perfect mate. Because they have not yet con-

Table 1-1: Historical Changes in Life Course Regimes

Life course regimes	Traditional	Early Industrial	Fordist	Post-Fordist
<b>Unit</b>	Family Farm/ Family Firm	Wage Earner	Male Breadwinner, Nuclear Family	Individual
<b>Temporal Organization</b>	Unstable, Unpredictable Discontinuity	Life Cycle of Poverty, Discontinuity	Standardized, Stabilized, Continuity, Progression	Destandardized Discontinuity
<b>Education</b>	Minimal  Elementary	Medium  Compulsory	Expansion of Secondary, Tertiary Education and Vocational Training	Prolonged, Interrupted, Lifelong Learning
<b>Work</b>	Personal Dependency; Family Division of Labor	Wage Relationship; Firm Paternalism, Unemployment	Full Lifelong Employment; Upward Mobility; Income Progression	Delayed Entry, High Between Firm/Between Occupation Mobility; Flat Income Trajectories, Unemployment
<b>Family</b>	Partial and Delayed Marriage; Instability due to Death; Property Centered; High Fertility; Early Death	Delayed Universal; Fertility Decline	Early Universal Marriage, Early Childbearing, Medium Fertility	Delayed and Partial Marriage, Pluralized Family Forms, Low Fertility, High Divorce Rate, Sequential Promiscuity
<b>Retirement/ Old Age</b>	With Physical Disability, Old Age Dependency, Early Death	Regulatory or by Disability, Low Pensions	Regulatory: Middle Pensions	Early Retirement; Decreasing Pensions; Increasing Longevity; Increasing Chronic Illness

Source: Mayer 2005

fronted the disappointments of real life, emerging adults “believe that everything will work out as they planned, because even if things are going badly now, no doors are firmly closed, few decisions are irrevocable, their dreams may yet prevail.” Consequently, there are different sequences and timings of conventional transitions – the end of education, the beginning of work, the move out of the natal home, the start of sexual relations, and the assumption of marital or parenting responsibilities.

In France, too, the transition of the younger generation to adulthood has been likened to a labyrinth in which the rules keep changing so each must find an individual way into active life (Nicole-Drancourt 1991). Gender differences in the quest for identity and the transition to adulthood cannot be understated. In Nicole-Drancourt’s study, young women emphatically did not want to be housewives in a traditional family, however tough their job search or restricted their occupational choices may be.

The young men, by contrast, no longer can follow their fathers’ path directly from school to work, so they spend a long period exploring themselves, becoming individuals, deciding what to do. They look around for references and contacts but feel powerless to influence their chances. In anxiety and fear, they flee the labor market and engage in leisure and hanging out with peers, precisely when their female counterparts are diving into employment. Young men are single and do not think about marriage or work while young women are already planning how to combine work and family. However, for many of these youth, the delay in the transition to adulthood is inconsequential since they ultimately assume adult roles. But for excluded youth – those with little education or a criminal record – the postponement can be devastating.

“Youth cultures” and distinctive styles of dress, music, media, and other pastimes provide a set of practices through which adolescents can work out their separation and rebellion against the older generation in constructive ways. Emerging adults raise moral issues for their elders: dating, premarital sex, changing gender roles, drug abuse, crime, and protests. Moreover, sports, clubs, dancing, and other youth social activities often require money, making

it difficult for poorer, unemployed youth to socialize with others through shared consumption. This in turn constricts their social lives and contributes to cultural disaffection. When youth rebellion has no constructive outlet, peer group relations can lead to drug abuse, criminal gangs, or even uprisings.

In the Middle East, “fraternities” may arise in which young men meet to socialize. These trusting exchanges extend to assistance with finding a job or a wife. Friends help obtain goods and subvert state regulations. In some cases, they pressure men to give up drugs and go to the mosque; in other groups, drug consumption is the basis of sociability. The obligations of fraternity pull men away from their families. There is also some indication that religious extremism among some young men will moderate with military service and marriage, but if the fraternity is very influential, it can lead to militant Islamism (Ismail 2006, 105-6; Meijer 2000). Faced with government clientelism that allocates economic opportunities, young men may join Islamic movements that mirror the patronage from which they are excluded (Waldner 1994). As James Wolfensohn (1997) argued, “corruption by definition is exclusive: it promotes the interests of the few over the many.” A typical reaction to exclusion is “dual closure;” based upon rejection by insiders, the outsiders develop their own solidarity (Parkin 1979).

Arnett argues that emerging adulthood is not a universal but rather a culturally specific life stage, one found in which the age of marriage and parenthood occurs in the late twenties or later, as in post-industrial countries of the West and in Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. He argues that it is less widespread in developing countries. But even there, this life stage is experienced by some groups, especially in urban areas and depending upon socioeconomic status and life circumstances (Arnett 2004, 22). Indeed, some life course literature suggests that young people from poor and disadvantaged families can overcome their backgrounds during the years of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2004; Sampson and Laub 1993). As secondary school completion rises through the world, the ages of marriage and parenthood are rising, too, creating opportunities for social mobility. The challenge for

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.

#### IV. YOUTH INCLUSION RESEARCH: LESSONS FROM EUROPE

Context-sensitive lessons for the Middle East drawn from the exclusion framework's role in Europe may be organized along the lines already enumerated: context-specificity and multidimensionality, the dynamic nature of exclusion, and its emphasis on social relations.

##### CONTEXT-SPECIFICITY

Social exclusion is a situated, socially embedded concept. Not only does it differ empirically across national and cultural contexts but also across regional and local conditions. The most common comparisons are across the Anglo-American liberal, continental corporatist, Nordic social democratic, and Mediterranean traditional family "welfare regimes." For example, Gallie and Paugam's (2000) comparison of individual social exclusion trajectories identified differences between northern and southern Europe.

Similarly, the Exclusion and Social Protection Group (EXSPRO) comparative study found that, even after controlling for employment status, education, household, citizenship, health, national social policy or welfare regime-specific factors influenced social exclusion (Begg and Bergmann 2002). But another larger study of unemployed youth in ten European countries reported no differences across the welfare regimes in the relationship between unemployment and social exclusion (Hammer 2003, 209).

Local comparisons also take context seriously. Although poverty studies often take spatial context for granted as a research site, research increasingly is taking neighborhood effects into account in predicting individual disadvantage of youth (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Neighborhoods may affect life chances for several reasons. Interaction within them gives rise to alternative social norms and peer effects. Neighborhood effects may reflect spatial distance, impeding access to needed resources (for example, Wilson 1996). Too much internal interaction may socially isolate residents and limit information networks. The despair in poor, jobless neighborhoods of ethnic and racial minorities such as the suburban Parisian *quartiers d'exil* – the neighborhoods of exile, to use Dubet and Lapeyronnie's (1992) metaphor – can produce

periodic and increasingly violent disorders in the French *banlieue* and American and British inner cities.

For example, a German study found local differences in the status passage from school to work. The job placement strategies of young people varied across three neighborhoods: an old downtown neighborhood in Munich, a modern housing area on the outskirts of Munich, and a semi-rural small town seventy miles from Munich. Important interactions between individuals' characteristics and qualifications – for example, gender, family background, level of schooling – and the structure and climate of the three neighborhoods generated distinctive coping patterns, leading, in turn, to more or less successful placements in the labor market (Hubner-Funk 1987).

Local effects such as these might be expected in the Middle East. Shantytowns throughout the global south crowd the destitute in substandard housing where public services and basic hygiene are lacking and residents must cooperate to provide them. In Cairo, the *bara* was a basic social and political unit and, in many places, still provides a neighborhood-based spatial identity for youth and their interrelated practices (Ismail 2006). As multi-level analytic techniques have become available, it should be possible for the Middle East Exclusion Project to estimate the independent impact of local conditions upon the social inclusion of youth.

There is a debate in the policy literature about what to do about local variation in social exclusion. Some argue that "aid to people" makes the most sense. Escaping areas with high poverty concentration and deviant norms by "moving to opportunity" in more affluent suburbs is one possible solution. Socioeconomic integration of neighborhoods may help youth stay in school and avoid crime, even if their grades do not improve or the benefits for parents are less apparent (Sanbonmatsu, Kling, Duncan, and Brooks-Gunn 2004; Goering and Feins 2003).<sup>1</sup> Others argue that "aid to places" and other interventions at the community level maintain social bonds and relations upon which poor families rely.

Instead of abandoning poor areas, they should be developed, improving infrastructure, water quality,

and transportation linkages. Community development also creates jobs, as the American program YouthBuild and the British urban regeneration programs illustrate. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Labor established programs at 36 low-income sites, aimed at those aged 16-24 in distressed minority areas. These comprehensive neighborhood systems of interconnected programs seek to improve school attainment, long-term employability, and earnings. Programs range from case management, tutoring, and college and career exploration to internships and training in moderately skilled growth fields. Parenting, sports, community service, and other activities offer an alternative to the street (Edelman, Holzer and Offner 2006).

There are also examples of neighborhood programs for at-risk youth in the Middle East. For example, “pro-social” projects of the Questscope program in two low-income neighborhoods of Amman, Jordan – one a “ghetto,” the other an “urban village” – sought to overcome impediments to youth development. These included frustrated aspirations, family changes, neighborhood deterioration, truncated roles for youth, and ineffective institutions. To address these problems, the projects provided constructive and supportive outlets for youth volunteers, many already school dropouts, to improve their local surroundings. Collective participation knit social bonds and gave rise to greater self-esteem. But evaluation suggests that is crucial to connect local projects to national organizations for counseling, training, and other services (Rhodes, Mihyar, and Abu El-Rous 2002). Capacity building and scaling-up are also recommended for American and European community based organizations.

Finally, local and national contexts are embedded in larger transnational networks and identities. These are most evident in the case of migrant communities where guest workers, say, in the Gulf, come and go. In transnational communities, people orient their social action to more than one place at a time. Transnationalism is not really new, even if it has proliferated with international travel and new telecommunications. Nationalism can also provide a connection among citizens of different countries, as the Palestinians and Kurds illustrate. The Middle East provides important examples of transnational-

ism. The nation-state is too confining for the solidarities of pan-Arabism and Islamism.<sup>2</sup> Religious communities have long transcended the sometimes-arbitrary borders of nation-states. One reason to call attention to the transnational level is that exclusion from global ties can also give rise to other forms of disadvantage (Bhalla and LaPeyre 1999; Munck. 2005). The isolation of the Middle East from foreign trade of commodities other than oil has ramifications for other dimensions of social exclusion (Yousef 2004).

### MULTIDIMENSIONALITY

There are innumerable bases for social exclusion, some of which might appear arbitrary. After all, human beings make distinctions all the time. Scientists believe that categorization or labeling is a necessary mental process that simplifies the endless complexity of the outside world. Learning to separate oneself from one’s parents is the first developmental stage to becoming an individual. Sorting the world into friends and strangers gives rise to identities that pattern differential interaction. Enduring social distinctions become culturally ingrained, transmitted across generations. Soon, distinctions between insiders and outsiders become hard and fast social boundaries, policed with formal and informal sanctions. Some boundaries appear insurmountable, others porous.

Thus, it is reasonable to ask which of the many dimensions of social exclusion ought to receive attention when considering the problems of Middle Eastern youth. For example, one survey of Arab youth by the Right Start Foundation found that the number one concern of a vast majority is unemployment and that 88 percent of young people believe they will not find a job easily (Dunlop 2006, 13). This would seem to justify the Youth Exclusion Project’s and this paper’s emphasis on this issue.

The EU decided on a limited number of dimensions in line with its emphasis on employment and social protection. The EU has developed a number of primary and secondary indicators of social exclusion that are broken down by age and gender (Atkinson et al. 2002). Between 2001 and 2003, Tony Atkinson and other experts in the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee worked

on developing common indicators for the National Action Plans on social inclusion. They used a “shorthand,” or working definition of social exclusion, because it is so difficult to define, and drew upon available data. Although most of the indicators covered material and labor market deprivation better than social, political, or cultural dimensions, they provided an initial framework for the national comparisons in the first two Joint Reports on Social Inclusion in 2001 and 2003. Education and health measures were added in the second EU Joint Inclusion Report.

The EU has three levels of social exclusion indicators. Level 1 has a small number of leading or primary indicators to be reported in all National Action Plans. Nine Level 2 secondary indicators elaborate these. Level 3 refers to nationally specific indicators. The revised list of primary indicators used in the second 2003 Open Method of Coordi-

nation round appears in Table 3-1. Although this official list stresses consumption and production, work continues to measure more social and political dimensions of exclusion. The 2005 joint report underlined “the need to better capture the multidimensional nature of social exclusion” and “adapting to the diversity of challenges in the member states.”

Sociologists have gone beyond material, economic, and the human capital dimensions of health and education to consider exclusion from social and civic participation. For example, David Gordon and associates (2000) conducted a new “Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain” survey for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that examined income poverty and material deprivation, exclusion from the labor market and from public services, and four aspects of exclusion from social relations: socializing, social isolation, social support, and civic engage-

**Table 3-1: EU Common Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion Primary Indicators (broken down by age and gender)**

- 
- At Risk of Poverty (household size- and composition-adjusted disposable income relative to 60 percent of nationally equivalent median income with OECD equivalence scales, before and after social transfers) by economic activity, household type, housing tenure.
  - Income inequality (top 20-percent-to-bottom-20-percent quintile share ratio)
  - Persistent at-risk-of poverty (share of the population below the poverty line for current year and at least two of three preceding years)
  - Relative median poverty risk gap (ratio of median income of those at risk of poverty and the at risk of poverty threshold)
  - Regional cohesion (coefficient of variation of employment rates among territorial regions)
  - Long-term unemployment rate (share of those 15-64 in active population who were unemployed by ILO definition for 12 months or more)
  - Share of children and working age adults living in jobless households
  - Early school leavers not in education or training (proportion of those 18-24 with only lower secondary education and not in education or training in the prior four weeks)
  - Life expectancy at birth
  - Self-defined health status (as bad or very bad) by bottom and top of income distribution
- 

*Source: Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion. Brussels, July 2003, Appendix.*

ment. Other empirical studies have distinguished exclusion based on four aspects: production (economy, labor market); consumption (income, non-monetary assets); citizenship, public services, and politics and civic engagement (civic exclusion); and social relations, family, and social support (Hills, LeGrand and Piachaud 2002). Research with the 1998 German Welfare Survey developed both material distributional measures – labor market unemployment, inadequate standard of living, income poverty, no vocational training, poor housing conditions, unsafe, poor neighborhood – and relational, participatory measures – no social relationships, political pessimism and disinterest, anomie and loneliness, depression – plus long-term poor living conditions (Boehnke 2001).

Social exclusion is usually defined as the accumulation of multiple dimensions of disadvantage, and therefore correlations among indicators are examined. The spatial concentration of multiple disadvantages exacerbates the problem. Mechanisms of exclusion include “cumulative continuity,” which results from individual and family values inducing people to live in compatible environments, reinforcing dispositions. By contrast, “cumulative disadvantage” results when, say, problem youth associate with others like themselves in inner city neighborhoods, where they also lack family support (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder and Sameroff 1999).

Tsakoglou and Papadopoulos (2002) made operational social exclusion as “chronic cumulative disadvantage,” an index of deprivation in income, living conditions, basic needs, and social relations that lasts over several years. Similarly, a study in ten European countries found very little social exclusion – defined as deprivation on multiple dimensions such financial, social, political, well-being and mental health – among youth aged 18-24 as a result of unemployment, defined as (Hammer 2003). Third, the Youth Unemployment and Social Exclusion (YUSEDER) project studied the risk of social exclusion among long-term unemployed youth in six European countries. Unemployment was considered a stressor that increased vulnerability but could be buffered by protective social mechanisms and support, depending on the societal context (Kiesel-

bach 2000). Indeed, quite a few studies based upon European survey data found that income distribution and unemployment are weakly associated with sociability and community participation (Gordon et al. 2000; Hills et al. 2002; Boehnke 2001) and that material deprivation even may be related positively to social relations in southern Europe which most resembles the Middle Eastern context (Gallie and Paugam 2000). The economically deprived may have more time and opportunity to engage in social and civic activities.

European researchers are examining other dimensions as well, including poor future prospects, financial precariousness, multiply-deprived areas in depressed regions and large cities, access to the Internet, housing, and homelessness. Some studies examine exclusion from public and private services, from social support, even from leisure and culture. Regional disparities aside from unemployment also exist, including exposure to crime and dangerous environmental conditions. Events increasing the risk of exclusion, such as prior delinquency or a prison record, are considered. The duration, accumulation, and spatial concentration of any of these “ruptures” also can be measured. The list can go on and on, as NGOs and the “social partners” participate in the statistical process, giving a voice to the excluded in devising benchmarks that hold governments accountable for social inclusion.

Among other things, the risk of exclusion or the incapacity to participate fully in society may be based upon personal characteristics. For example, they can include health, disability, gender, age, place of birth; discrimination against one’s social and cultural background such as family, language, color, nationality, religion, sect, level of religiosity; spatial inaccessibility that includes living in rural areas, in urban slums or lacking transportation; ineligibility for resources or opportunities that includes – public services, land and other assets, credit, schooling, training, jobs; legal obstacles and cultural constraints that includes – lack of citizenship, civil rights, gender prohibitions, criminal record, or substance abuse; social isolation; and basic poverty.

A wide variety of social institutions also can contribute to exclusion. Although the state or public

sector is often juxtaposed to the market, the boundary between them is no longer so rigid and hybrid institutions also exist. Similarly, the lines separating state and market from “civil society” institutions – family, religion, NGOs, neighborhood, village, or community, and free space for sport, entertainment, and culture – is blurry, especially in Middle Eastern countries. Social exclusion may originate and manifest itself in any of these institutional spheres. The Middle East Youth Exclusion Project is focused upon unemployment but might consider all of these dimensions and more.

Because social exclusion is multidimensional, policies to address it need to be comprehensive, multi-pronged, tailored to individual sets of needs, and “joined-up” across agencies. For example, France’s “Road to Employment” scheme [TRACE] from 1997-2002 targeted unskilled school leavers and offered them a holistic approach to employment: training, accommodation, health, and work experience. After five years, an evaluation found seven out of ten youth moved into work, but the most qualified did best. Similarly, the EU set a target that every unemployed youth should be offered a “new start” – training, work experience, and the like – before reaching six months of joblessness. However, the policy also attempted to prevent exclusion and creaming. In 2005, the European Council adopted a European “Pact for Youth,” calling for action in multiple areas (European Commission 2005):

- Employment, integration, and social advancement – policies to integrate young people into the labor market and increase their employment; improving apprenticeship opportunities; encouraging employers and businesses to “display social responsibility” for the vocational integration of youth; encouraging young entrepreneurs; and mobilizing the public employment services in this goal through tailored counseling and job search plans and centralized services in “one-stop” job centers.
- Education, training, and mobility – knowledge imparted to youth should match the needs of the economy; special help for school dropouts.
- Reconciliation of family and work – although targeted on women, as if young men may not have such tensions.

- Special help targeted on the most vulnerable young people – those without qualification, from poor homes or ethnic minority communities, migrants and refugees, long-term unemployed who are at the greatest risk of social exclusion and should receive special help.

#### PROCESSES, TRAJECTORIES, MECHANISMS

Social exclusion is a process, not just a condition that is the outcome of a process. Yet it remains unclear how the many dimensions of social exclusion are interrelated over time. As Table 1-1 illustrates, economic and social aspects of exclusion have reciprocal effects. Even when disadvantages accumulate, a self-reinforcing cycle makes it difficult to attribute causality to any one factor. Poverty may produce unemployment – by way of inadequate schooling, for example – and unemployment will produce poverty in the long run – in the absence of family assistance, charity, or the welfare state. Lack of social contacts makes it hard to find a job and without a job, one’s social life is curtailed. Sometimes, even social assistance and youth insertion programs can produce exclusion through stigmatization of participants. Exclusion dynamics exist at the collective – national, urban, neighborhood – as well as the individual level.

One solution to the dilemma of causal direction is to follow individual trajectories through time, watching how disadvantages accrue over the life course. Robert Castel (1991), for example, eschews the term exclusion, preferring the notion of disaffiliation because people may be more or less attached, but it is virtually impossible for human beings to exist totally outside societal influences. Serge Paugam (1991), another French sociologist, refers to a process of social disqualification. These authors consider exclusion to sit at the end of a continuum with intermediate steps of vulnerability or precariousness.

Research has identified some patterned interrelations between economic and social dimensions of exclusion. Examining child development reveals both the negative consequences of a bad childhood and the potential for overcoming it. There are spirals of disadvantage in which one problem gives rise to another. Youth is an especially critical age when

*Whereas poverty and inequality refer to distributions of valued resources, social exclusion refers to a social relationship. This means that exclusion involves two parties, excluders and excluded. Unfortunately, much research, especially analyzing microdata, focuses only on the latter.*

one mistake can be paid for repeatedly throughout one's life. For example, a longitudinal study of delinquent children through their youths and young adulthoods found continuity in deviant behavior. Episodes of unemployment or breaking up with a partner also were associated with committing a crime, demonstrating how important social exclusion can be.

But there were also discontinuities in which young people "turned their lives around." Individuals can overcome their adolescent antisocial behavior, especially through forming important social bonds or having a solid love relationship. Sampson and Laub (1993, 13) document that a strong marriage, positive school experience, military service, moving place of residence, and a good steady job can provide the social stability and support for ex-offenders to stop committing crimes. Silverberg et al. (1998) found that German apprentices with attachment to adults were less likely to approve of or engage in delinquency and were also more optimistic regarding their occupational future.

The interaction of economic and social factors is also clear in life course analyses of youth in developing countries. For example, poor excluded youth from three poor urban neighborhoods of Fortaleza in northeast Brazil were at considerable risk of growing up without their father in a violent, unsafe neighborhood and of becoming pregnant or a father early in life. This study conceived of poverty multidimensionally, with indicators of hunger, early pregnancy and fatherhood, violence, crime, drug

use, low levels of social capital, and low educational attainment (Verner and Alda 2004). In the Middle East, research into individual youth trajectories is in its infancy. However, one longitudinal study of young Moroccan men with diplomas found a sort of labor market segmentation between a primary and secondary sector in terms of finding a job. There were differences among the long-term unemployed, unstably employed, and stably employed. Geographical mobility for family reasons did little to help the unemployed find a job (Bougroum and Werquin 1995).

#### **RELATIONALITY AND THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF GROUPS**

Whereas poverty and inequality refer to distributions of valued resources, social exclusion refers to a social relationship. This means that exclusion involves two parties, excluders and excluded. Unfortunately, much research, especially analyzing microdata, focuses only on the latter. It is instructive to examine other data sources that examine relations between included and excluded groups. For example, unfavorable public attitudes, incidents of violence or disorder, segregation of minority groups, and harassment of women also are useful indicators of exclusion.

Youth exclusion cannot be studied solely by examining youth. Adult-youth relations at the individual level and intergenerational relations at the collective level are implicated in exclusion and inclusion processes and are meaningful topics of research.

Exclusionary institutions and laws are likewise important to consider. Already discussed are the many institutional barriers and insider-outsider differences that impede the social inclusion of youth. The insiders benefit from exclusion. Artificial scarcities drive up rents. Public sector workers, those in patronage positions, property owners, and older adults in general profit from keeping youth out. Again, context is central to this discussion because impersonal institutions, the law, culture, and demographic structures pattern relations between groups. To complicate matters, there is evidence that the norms defining youth and adulthood are changing. Nevertheless, it is clear that youth from particular backgrounds and groups face more disadvantages as a result of discrimination and institutional exclusion. In this paper, gender will illustrate this point.

### CONSEQUENCES OF EXCLUSION

Prolonged material disadvantage and social isolation has many deleterious consequences which, if they are not dimensions of exclusion per se, nonetheless often result from the process (See Table 1-1). Although there are many more, this section discusses family and psychological outcomes.

Social inclusion and the transition to adulthood are not only about getting a job but also about setting up one's own domicile. Both Europe and the Middle East recently have experienced a rise in the average ages of youth leaving home, marriage, and first birth (Lloyd 2005). These interrelated trends are partly attributable to the same causes, especially rising youth unemployment, extended education, and increasingly costly housing, and have contributed to declining fertility. However, there are important differences in these tendencies across countries, reflecting institutional and cultural variation. Welfare regimes appear to play a role in demographic change.

Although nearly all Western European countries are no longer replacing their populations through natural increase, they diverge in terms of low vs. "lowest-low" fertility rates (above vs. below 1.3). The southern European countries such as Italy and Spain have much lower fertility and later first births than the northern European and American ones. One reason is that the institutional context of the

Italian and Spanish welfare states provides less support for childbirth and childcare than that of France or the Nordic countries while labor market rigidities and traditional family gender roles make it difficult for women, whose educational levels are rising, to combine work and motherhood.

The "opportunity costs" of childbearing are lower in the more flexible labor markets of the Danish and Dutch welfare states (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2002). In southern Europe, strong extended families make up for the deficits of the public sector and labor market, but this also encourages postponement of leaving home and, therefore, marriage and fertility. As in the Middle East, the concentration of unemployment among the young in southern Europe delays the transition to adulthood.

Indeed, there is a new tendency for adult children who have left home – a trend increasing with rising higher education – to return to their families of origin during their twenties (Berrington and Murphy 1994). This is partly because universities are not always situated near home, making life in dormitories, barracks, and other group quarters an experience of "semi-autonomy" intermediate between living with parents and maintaining a truly separate household (Goldscheider and Davanzo 1986). When graduates do not find employment and marry, they may go home, as in southern Europe or France (Galland 1997) or, as in Britain, live alone or with unrelated single young adults well into their twenties (Heath 1999).

In general, youth become independent more slowly in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy, and earlier in Nordic and Anglo countries. France is in the middle of the pack with one-quarter of those aged 16-25 not yet independent in 1996 (*Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale* 2000, 78). However, less educated youth, with an unemployment rate three times that of youth with diplomas and who come from large immigrant families, have more difficulty leaving home. Five years after leaving school in 1992, 30 percent of these dropouts had not become independent in housing, had no job, and lived in a "situation of exclusion" (p. 80).

Whereas parental aid allows more privileged youth to live on their own, a small number of excluded

youth are totally isolated – living alone and having no income. A study of the Transition Resources for Adult Community Education (TRACE) program identified the importance of family in the transition to adulthood. Different groups had different trajectories. Youth of the housing projects in inner cities lived at home while going through programs and some youth became adults early on because of family. Indeed, homeless youth often flee problems at home and rely on illegal or informal sources of income.

The median age of leaving home is highest in Europe for men – 26.7 years and 23.6 years for women in Italy and lowest in Sweden – 20.2 and 18.6 years, respectively (Billari, Philipov, and Baizan 2001, p. 345). In Eastern Europe, however, early marriage does not necessarily give rise to early home leaving; many 30-year-olds still live in the parental home. National differences in the pattern of leaving home reflect the interplay between the socioeconomic situation of youth and the institutional and cultural contexts (Billari, Philipov, and Baizan 2001).

In southern Europe, age of leaving home is strongly related to employment and income, but these factors have little impact in the social democratic welfare states (Assave, Billari, Mazzuco, and Ongaro 2002). Where state support substitutes for family support, youth's individual resources are less necessary. In contrast, where the welfare state excludes young people from housing, health, social security, or income subsidies, they fall back on the family safety net. In these societies, there may be concern about controlling and integrating youth and encouraging their socioeconomic independence when they do move out on their own (Coleman and Warren-Adamson 1992).

Living at home inhibits adult children from union formation and cohabitation, adding a dimension of social exclusion, but even here cultural factors give rise to variation. As in Muslim countries, Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, and Poland frown on cohabitation and exhibit a longstanding “late-leaver” pattern, in contrast to northern Europe and Britain (Billari, Philipov, and Baizan 2001). Reher (1998) argues that the influence of Islam in southern Europe is a source of the emphasis on intergen-

erational kinship and prolonged stay of children in the parental home, where they also care for the elderly. Italian and Spanish women especially do not leave home until marriage. Extramarital births and divorce are rare. Indeed, parental divorce is a predictor of leaving home (Juang, Silbereisen, and Wiesner 1999). By contrast, cohabitation before marriage is very common in Scandinavia and may even take place within the parental home in Eastern Europe. Nordic countries are the most age-graded and, alone or with a partner, youth march in lock-step into their own households, thanks in part to state support.

In the Middle East, there is now the phenomenon of “wait adulthood,” prolonged “engagements” until betrothed couples can afford to marry and move into their own homes (Singerman 1995). Delayed marriage has reduced fertility in line with the demographic transition thesis. However, it is also giving rise to a new life course stage with new rules, institutions, and identities. In this life stage of limbo, unmarried youth remain financially dependent on their parents well into their twenties. Even after marriage, the prohibitive cost of housing may require a couple to move in with in-laws. In Cairo, over one-third of newly married couples live in complex family households (Singerman 1995, 113). But there is some evidence that Arab youth now prefer to live in their own homes and delay marriage until they can afford to be wed (Dhillon 2007).

The age at marriage is rising in much of the world. In the United States, the average age of marriage is now twenty-five years for women and twenty-seven years for men, up by four years in a mere three decades. In Europe, cohabitation has become “normal,” but not in the Middle East, where, despite the practice of *‘urfi*, or common law marriage, premarital sex is frowned upon. In the 1990s, 63 percent of Middle Eastern men married by their late twenties, but today, scarcely 50 percent do, mainly because it is unaffordable (Dhillon 2007; Singerman and Ibrahim 2001). The Middle Eastern countries went through a demographic transition, with falling infant mortality and rising female education contributing to lower fertility. Age at marriage and fertility in the Middle East appears to track the economy

rather well, with high oil or phosphate prices allowing couples to marry early and have large families and, when these markets collapse as in the 1980s, the reverse occurs (Courbage 2000). Another obstacle to marriage and leaving home is the underdeveloped housing market. Middle Eastern governments might improve documentation of property rights and encourage low-cost mortgages to facilitate housing transactions (Dhonte, Bhattacharya, and Yousef 2000).

Perhaps most studied are the subjective or psychological outcomes of unemployment. Some of the earliest studies of social exclusion examined the coping strategies of long-term unemployed individuals. Dutch and German joblessness gives rise to a variety of adaptations, some more positive and optimistic than others (Engbersen et al. 1993; Kronauer 1998; Leisering and Leibfried 1999). They reveal a variety of adaptations to multiple disadvantage and joblessness, some more positive than others.

There is a great deal of evidence that unemployed youth, especially in the long run, become depressed, anxious, and ill (Hammer 2003; Kieselbach 2000a). A two-wave European panel study of “emerging adults” following the transition from high school found that disruptions in work roles – getting fired or being unemployed – are linked to higher levels of depressed mood, heavy episodic drinking, and poorer quality of life. In contrast, enrollment in college programs and full-time work are associated with lower levels of depressed mood and more positive quality of life.

Ongoing responsibilities are important for emerging adults’ sense of progress toward adulthood (Aseltine and Gore 2005). Failure may cause their self-esteem to falter and they feel ashamed, causing them to withdraw further into social isolation. To the extent that shame in turn adds to the rupture of social bonds, it may be considered as an important social exclusion mechanism, not just a consequence of exclusion. But unemployed youth may rationalize their failure to achieve. A longitudinal interview study of 200 young people leaving secondary school in Bremen, a German city with a very depressed

economy, revealed that they remained optimistic in their search for apprenticeships and tended to accept personal responsibility for improving their prospects instead of turning against society or giving up (Heinz 1987). In sum, reactions to social exclusion and unemployment are mixed.

Such variation is not simply idiosyncratic. In northern European countries, which are more individualistic, persistent poverty and long-term unemployment tend to give rise to social isolation. Families break up under the strain of too much dependence. Friends can support each other for only so long without reciprocity. Joblessness and poverty may give rise to homelessness. One’s identity and self-esteem erodes; one feels like a failure, not “counting” to others. Exclusion thus entails humiliation. This pattern is less pronounced in southern Europe. In fact, the unemployed in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece tend to become more socially active. This is largely because family obligations have remained intact and high structural unemployment rates make this condition less stigmatized (Gallie and Paugam 2000).

In the Middle East, too, longer unemployment gives rise to psychological, affective, and relationship problems, aside from the material difficulties it caused. The International Labor Office conducted a number of “School to Work Surveys” on this youth transition to adulthood. Four Middle Eastern states were among those surveyed: Egypt, Iran, Syria, and Jordan. The joint report (Elder and Schmidt 2006) identified a group of “vulnerable” youth at risk of social exclusion. Similarly, in a study of Tunisians looking for work, family and marital problems were common. They became poorer, lost confidence, and became fatalistic and submissive. Over the long run, the majority saw unemployment as a source of disequilibrium, humiliation, and even oppression. Where Tunisians attribute unemployment to divine will, however, they could fall back on their parents, cousins, or friends and their savings to survive. This was especially true of return rural migrants more than the urban jobless (Bedoui and Ridha 1996).

## V. YOUTH INCLUSION POLICY AND PROGRAMS: LESSONS FROM EUROPE

### SOCIAL INSERTION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

Most programs to address youth exclusion seek to integrate young people first and foremost into the labor market. The leading indicator of youth exclusion is “inactivity,” or the percentage of people aged 16-25 who are not in school, training, or work. About 10 percent of youth in Sweden and Britain are inactive, that is, not in education or the labor market (Ryan 2000). This statistic suggests a high degree of social detachment that may have long-term consequences. While educated youth may rely upon their families until they finish schooling, young people with no skills and disadvantaged backgrounds often abruptly face independence. The latter group has become the target for many special “insertion” programs. But most Middle Eastern countries lack such “second chance” training programs (Kabbani and Korthari 2005) and may learn from the experience of the US and Europe in designing their own.

The EU’s Social Funds support youth and other groups with high unemployment and at risk of social exclusion – for example, the disabled, ethnic minorities, and women. They co-fund socially useful local projects and active labor market programs such as YouthStart, Horizon, and Integra to help young people qualify for jobs and the EQUAL program, a community initiative to combat exclusion, discrimination, and inequality in the job market. Youth looking for work are a target group. They might benefit from a wide range of active labor market interventions, including vocational training and apprenticeships, basic literacy and numeracy, counseling, community employment, work placement and job search assistance, aids to promote geographical and occupational mobility, encouragement to employers to introduce more flexible patterns of work and recruitment subsidies, care for dependents, and specialized advisory services for those exposed to exclusion.

European countries vary considerably in the rate of youth unemployment relative to the overall rate, partly reflecting differences in how they prepare young people for professional life. There is a big difference between Sweden, and especially Germany, on the one hand, and France, Spain, and Britain on the other. The former countries have compro-

mises between the social partners that tie schools and employment services to private employers. Sweden and Norway even guarantee all citizens under 20-years-old either employment or education, an idea that has made its way into European-wide Employment Guidelines. Germany long has kept its youth unemployment rate closer to the national average through its “dual apprenticeship” system, one that combines classroom and on-the-job training.

Apprenticeship provides a bridge from school to work, from adolescence to adulthood that has no counterpart in other countries (Hamilton 1987). It is responsible for Germany being the only OECD country in which the youth unemployment rate did not substantially rise (Blanchflower and Freeman 2000). But during the 1990s, as labor demand shrunk overall and youth unemployment rose, German employers offered fewer apprenticeships precisely at a time when they were most needed and stopped hiring their successful apprentices. Hiring currently has resumed, and German apprenticeships have expanded.

European countries vary in their expenditures on active labor market policies to help people cope with rapid change, unemployment, and transitions to new jobs. Activation refers to welfare-to-work income support programs that require participation in economic or socially useful activities. Between 1997 and 2004, activation policies consumed about 0.6 percent of total European GDP and ranged from 1.6 percent to 0.05 percent of national GDP. Denmark is a leader in this respect. Other above-average spending countries are Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway. Below-average spending countries include Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Britain (European Commission 2007). As for active labor market programs for youth – public employment service, training, employment subsidies, and other measures – far less is expended. Only in France, Britain, and the United States does spending on youth programs constitute over 15 percent of all activation expenditures. Indeed, in France and Britain, youth comprise over one-quarter of the participants in labor market programs (Ryan 2000). These countries are thus more aware than most of the potential for youth exclusion.

Britain's new Labor government strongly was committed to fighting social exclusion, even to the point of establishing a dedicated Social Exclusion Unit.<sup>3</sup> In 1998, Britain introduced the New Deal for Young People program designed to activate six month unemployment benefits for those 18-24 by helping them into jobs and increasing their long-term employability. Participation is compulsory and failure to participate results in benefit sanctions. It takes a "work first" approach in that youth are encouraged to accept regular employment immediately. If still unemployed after intensive counseling and four months of job search, they must participate in one of four work experience or training programs. Like the 1996 American welfare reform that created Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, the new deal reduced the number of benefit recipients (White and Riley 2002). More youth went to work than expected from a control group and long-term youth unemployment was reduced. But the program has "a revolving door effect" in that youth end up unemployed again. There is also evidence of creaming: the most disadvantaged youth end up in the nonprofit sector initiatives (Davoine 2005).

France has had a wider range of activation and insertion programs targeted at unskilled and disadvantaged youth, but like Britain and Spain kept tinkering with them. Frequent policy changes reflect lessons drawn from government evaluations but make it difficult for both youth and employers to plan to take advantage of these programs. Today, nearly half of unemployed youth participate in activation plans, making them an institutionalized stage of the life course.

In 2005, the Borloo "Social Cohesion" Law introduced new youth programs. It required all youth to have an occupational project and enlisting local agencies to help prepare them for work. But do youth insertion programs work? Many complain of cycling through program after program, with job prospects worsened for the experience. Although many youth participate in short-term training plans, they rarely find a stable job afterwards.

In France about 7 percent, or 60,000 young people, left school without a diploma or necessary skills in 2002, relegating them to the bottom of the hiring

queue and threatening their integration into society. The schools often fail these unskilled youth, who harbor feelings of injustice and desires for recognition. In French public schools, where headscarves are banned and language problems abound, cultural misunderstandings between teachers and immigrant youth are commonplace. Despite the Education Priority Zones (ZEP) program, spatial segregation of minority low-income youth still gives rise to social segregation and isolation from the mainstream workplace and secure jobs. Indeed, French and Spanish youth insertion policy became a principal method of circumventing union contracts, deregulating the labor market and increasing temporary jobs. Young people are the majority of those in short-term employment and nearly half of French workers under twenty-five have atypical employment contracts. The proliferation of fixed-work contracts has been criticized as a source of social exclusion in that they lead to unemployment and may have lasting effects (Schoemann, Rogowski and Kruppe 1995).

Most evaluations report that some insertion measures are more successful than others. In France, the *contrat d'adaptation* and *contrat de qualification* appeared to have positive results but mainly reflect selectivity or "cream-skimming" (DARES 1997; Lefresne 2005; CEREQ). The probability of success was strongly related to initial education in all measures. In 1999, 57 percent of youth recruited in qualification contracts had a baccalaureate or better. The only effect of the program was to encourage employers to hire a younger person rather than an experienced one.

As in the German dual system, measures closest to enterprises – *contract d'alternance* – work best to assure youth a positive professional trajectory, but they absorb youth with better preparation (Belleville, Charpail, and Klein 2002-3). Young people who did poorly in school reject the constraints, strict schedules, and theoretical apprenticeships of *contrats d'alternance*, so they end up in programs – for example, *contrat emploi solidarite* – with few chances of getting a subsequent job. In general, the less targeted the measure, the more the selectivity, creaming, and exclusion of the weakest.

A comparative analysis of employment subsidies in Germany, Sweden, Britain, and France pessimistically concluded that all these programs have a relatively weak net impact, even on the microeconomic level. Rather, “perverse and wasteful (deadweight, substitution) effects appear to dominate” (Gautie et al. 1994). Evaluations of recruitment subsidies targeted on the long-term or youth unemployed also report sizable displacement effects and deadweight losses, even when employment increases (OECD, 1993). For example, the French Initiative-for-Employment Contract (CIE) was designed to overcome displacement effects by denying aid to employers who laid people off during the last six months of the program. Unfortunately, by eliminating an earlier distinction between long- and “very long-term” unemployed workers, it also encouraged windfalls and creaming.

By contrast, the more targeted the measure on the disadvantaged, the more it stigmatizes participants, negatively signals employers, and confines weaker youth to a life of precarious work or unemployment. The only winners are weaker youth in selective measures. Given the potential deadweight and displacement effects, closely targeted, short-term, on-the-job training programs – usually those aimed at hard-to-employ groups that price them into work – have the best results and fewer unintended effects, but short-term training seems to be of little help (Abrahart, Kaur and Tzannatos 2002).

Targeted tax exemptions, credits, or subsidies for firms that hire unskilled, low-wage, female, minority, or long-term unemployed workers can shift or redistribute employment toward the more disadvantaged, even if they create no new net jobs. But classifying hard-to-employ groups inadvertently may increase their difficulties in finding employment. Targeting tends to establish legal distinctions among equal citizens in societies in which social rights usually are universal. Recently, American programs have prepared youth for release from prison into employment, housing, and other aspects of life where they meet discrimination and exclusion. Otherwise, they end up homeless, jobless, and dependent upon their old acquaintances and criminal activities.

In some countries, young people rotate among unemployment, labor market programs, and long periods of inactivity. In France, 20 percent of school-leavers in 1986 without a baccalaureate remained jobless for the first three and a half years, although most participated in at least one transitional labor market program (Recotillet and Werquin 1995). The labor market programs mean the youth are not officially counted as “long-term unemployed” but they do not manage to enter the primary labor market. Perhaps more than any other country, France has a wide variety of youth programs to encourage the transition to employment. It is not difficult to understand how delinquency and disorders develop in neighborhoods with many of these frustrated youth.

There is little evidence from the Middle Eastern countries on the effectiveness of training programs in the region (Kabbani and Kothari 2005, 49). Private businesses in the Arab world are beginning to establish school-to-work, on-the-job, and entrepreneurship training and mentorship programs (Dunlop 2006). Tunisia has some programs to encourage youth employment that were modeled on the French. They seek to treat difficulties of individuals looking for their first job, facilitating insertion through temporary work experience, and training in enterprises.

There are three kinds of programs. The largest is the Employment-Training Contract – *contrat emploi-formation* (CEF) – established in 1981. Supposedly 73 percent of those leaving the program have an effective insertion. Second, programs of initiation into work life for youth (SIVP 2) was established in 1988 and had placement rates of about 60 percent. Third, youth with advanced diplomas received programs of initiation into work life for youth – *stages d’initiation à la vie professionnelle pour les cadres* (SIVP 1) – that between 1987 and 1994 had an overall placement rate of 73 percent. About two-thirds of the *stages* took place in private enterprises where placement rates reached 80 percent. These *stages* provide knowledge about the work world and facilitate a personal approach to entering the labor market in a framework of an occupational project (Bedoui and Ridha 1996).

There are examples of successful youth training and job experience programs from elsewhere in the

*Middle Eastern countries have very few employment services to assist young people in finding a job. Consequently, youth fall back on informal local and family networks with restricted opportunities.*

global south. “Chile Joven” is a program for disadvantaged low-income youth – both school leavers and graduates who were long-term unemployed – that offers short-term traineeships in job preparation and basic work skills. The program is intended to overcome the lack of a social network and work record that causes employers to exclude these youth. Private intermediary firms engage in competitive bidding to train, place, and oversee youth, acting as brokers to overcome hiring firms’ biases. Evaluations of Chile Joven found job placement and income rose compared with a control group of non-participating disadvantaged youth. Women also did better than men. Finally, Chile Joven costs less than long-term programs like the U.S. Job Corps (Mazza 2004).

#### **YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: INFORMATION AND JOB SEARCH**

Sometimes all that youth need is information about available jobs. Living in isolated areas with high joblessness, they are poorly connected to employment services or networks. Public employment services were intended to facilitate matching between unemployed youth and employers. European public employment services often developed in connection with unemployment insurance funds, which unions sometimes operate. Until recently, unemployed youth had little access to the services because they had never worked and were ineligible for unemployment insurance. During the 1980s, European public employment services were criticized for their passive delivery of unemployment benefits,

leaving it up to the worker to find a job. In response to the push toward more active labor market policies and flexible employment, many European countries recently have reformed their public employment services or promoted private job placement enterprises. For example, the French *Agence Nationale pour l’Emploi* (ANPE) lost its monopoly on employment services and the German federal *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* was opened to competition from private sector job placement and temporary employment agencies. In Austria and Hungary, the public employment services have initiated programs targeted at early school leavers and graduates.

Today, the unemployed are assigned a case worker or counselor who works with them over the long term on a personal action plan so they actively and rapidly seek work. “One-stops” – coordinated job search services, resume writing, and career guidance all in one place – have become a popular tool. Increasingly, private sector intermediaries have created a market for temporary employment services (Schmid 2001). With deregulation, temporary work is beginning to take off in Europe. In theory, temporary employees have an opportunity to learn on the job and try potential employers while firms can screen workers and externalize much of their search and other transaction costs to the temp agency. Another important new job search tool is the Internet. It helps to overcome the many geographic and skill mismatches that keep unemployment higher than necessary.

Middle Eastern countries have very few employment services to assist young people in finding a

job. Consequently, youth fall back on informal local and family networks with restricted opportunities. For example, one study examined how women in Egypt searched for jobs. It discovered that many women simply walked in and inquired about work in response to signs in local shop windows. This method was less successful than using personal networks and often resulted in low wages (El-Tayeb El-Kobali and Hassan Al-Bassusi 2001). The underdeveloped employment services and job search assistance in the Middle East suggests one area of institutional innovation that should help reduce youth unemployment there.

Some countries provide relocation assistance to match the unemployed to suitable jobs. For youth in particular, internships or short-term employment abroad during or after schooling may relieve long stretches of idleness. In Europe, youth have the opportunity to work or study in other member states. In the Middle East, the Gulf states absorbed some foreign labor, although many eventually were sent home. Currently, there is much pressure for young people to emigrate to Europe where there is stronger labor demand, causing men to set out on treacherous sea journeys. Young men continue to enter Europe clandestinely despite the discontinuation of temporary guest worker programs. International cooperation in labor market policies may be in the interest of both sending and receiving countries.

#### **GENDER INCLUSION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS**

An exclusion framework is especially useful for studying the disadvantages of particular social groups. In Middle Eastern countries, the exclusion of women is the most common illustration. During the 1990s period of structural adjustment, poverty increased and wages fell in Egypt, Iran, Syria, and other Middle Eastern countries, even as the economy and exports grew. This was partly because women were hired in manufacturing at much lower wages than men earned. When school user fees were introduced, there was a decline in school enrollments and an increase in dropping out among girls in Egypt and Morocco (Moghadam 2002, 246).

Thinking multidimensionally, it becomes clear that women's rights have traditionally been curtailed in

the region, giving rise to additional forms of exclusion. But there are indications of improvement. In Egypt, for example, women can complain of gender based discrimination – whether domestic violence or sexual harassment at work – to the National Women's Complaints Office, part of the National Council for Women. Pro bono lawyers trained by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in women's human rights support them. Building on the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UNIFEM has pushed to reform discriminatory personal status and family laws in the Middle East, helping to draft laws that can be compatible with sharia. In Egypt, the law now gives women the right to unilateral divorce, to confer citizenship on children of third country fathers, and to enforce alimony payments through the Family Insurance System Fund. Women also can develop leadership roles through the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (UNIFEM Annual Report 2006-07). In Morocco, women even have gone on strike over sexual harassment.

Young women's development may differ from that of men. Studies of fertility and reproductive health, for example, are just the beginning. It is difficult to follow the extent to which women are overcoming their exclusion since statistics on women are not even collected in many Middle Eastern countries. Although vital statistics are usually public information, literacy and education by sex are available for Egypt and Iran but not for Syria and Morocco (United Nations 2005). The Millennium Development Goal #2 of achieving universal primary education for boys and girls and Goal #3 of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education has produced some important statistics at the regional level.

From 1990 to 2000, the youth literacy rate rose from 67 percent to 84 percent and the gender parity index in literacy rose 14 percentage points in North Africa. Smaller gains were found in western Asia. Primary completion rates also have risen in the two areas from 1985 to 1994 to 1995-2004. From 1991 to 2005, the gender parity index<sup>4</sup> for primary school enrollment has risen in North Africa from .82 to .93 and in western Asia from .83 to .91, while Europe's index is 1. As for secondary education, the gender

parity index, which is again 1 or more in the developed countries, rose from .79 to .97 in North Africa and from .81 to .84 in western Asia. Finally, at the tertiary or higher education level, North Africa, especially Egypt and Algeria, made great progress in enrolling more women, with the GPI rising from .69 to 1.02 from 1999 to 2005. Western Asia made small gains (.82 to .89) (UNESCO 2007).

Female labor force participation, low by international standards, varies across the region. Where the economy is open and less dependent on oil, women are more economically active (Moghadam 2002, 242). Private employers tend to see women as unreliable because of their family responsibilities and evade the law that requires crèches and nursing breaks by hiring below the statutory 100 women (Moghadam 2002, 258).

Another major impediment to women's employment is the lack of national policies or firm-level procedures, except in the public sector, to reconcile family and work life, such as child care, maternity leave, or flexible schedules. In recent years, temporary low-wage employment has increased, but this also has contributed to rising poverty. Economic need fuels female entry to the labor force and raises female unemployment. Female youth labor force participation is twenty-nine percentage points lower than that of male youth, and female youth unemployment is eight percentage points lower than that of male youth. As mentioned, family and personal law also make it difficult for women to work, requiring male permission to do so. The very high unemployment rates among Middle Eastern women, even those with higher education, shows that supply increases are inadequate to fight social exclusion; demand-side obstacles persist.

Occupational segregation is a blatant form of social exclusion, although Middle Eastern women are underrepresented in nearly all occupation groups. They are concentrated in public professional jobs because women with higher education are more likely to work, gender discrimination in wages is low, and the job security and social insurance benefits are attractive. Few women are employed in private sales and services in the hotel, restaurant, and retail trade industries where they may have face-to-

face contact with male customers. In Morocco and Tunisia, textile manufacturing has feminized. Where women were prohibited from pursuing businesses in public, as in post-revolution Iran, they often turned to home-based work, such as hairdressing.

Women in Cairo work in small-scale retailing and services, and women-owned businesses have grown in Egypt. But female self-employment is limited by the absence of bank credit, leaving microcredit one of the few sources of capital. One study of Egypt suggested that the gender gap in self-employment reflects women's limited credit and control over their earnings in the family and that formal equality in the labor market is not enforced in the private sector (El-Tayeb El-Kogali and Al-Bassusi 2001). Although Middle Eastern women are widely underrepresented in administrative and managerial jobs, countries such as Morocco have been more open to women's mobility. Very few women serve in Middle Eastern governments. There are a few token women in appointed offices in Iran and Morocco, but they are exceptional.

What can be done to promote the social inclusion of women? Numerous proposals exist: in the private sector, tax incentives to hire women and monitoring labor law that calls for maternity leave and child care; sexual harassment laws, as exist in Morocco and Egypt; family and personal law reforms to allow equal inheritance and free right to contract; mainstreamed gender issues in all ministries of the government; collection of statistics by gender; government recognition and consultation of women's NGOs; support for women-owned businesses through lending, credit and training programs; and encouraging information technologies and telecommuting. Since fertility declines with women's education, contraceptives should be available to married women. Indeed, Egypt has successfully and continuously pursued a population control policy that bore results (Fargues 1997).

Antidiscrimination laws need to be enforced, but sometimes treating women equally as men does not result in gender equality. In some instances, positive or affirmative action is called for to include women in new fields. Child care and other family friendly policies can equalize the playing field at work.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This paper has argued that a social exclusion framework is particularly valuable in guiding and synthesizing research into the multiple problems of youth in the Middle East. Because very little is known about them, the exclusion framework can easily accommodate exploratory research, quantitative and qualitative findings, cross-sectional, longitudinal, and comparative institutional analyses, and multidisciplinary perspectives. The Middle Eastern countries have nationally specific conceptions of what it means to belong to society and thus may have to adapt the notion of social exclusion to particular contexts. In all societies we can observe multidimensional processes and institutional mechanisms that rupture and reconnect social relationships and groups.

The theoretical perspective of social exclusion can incorporate but improve upon the human capital and life course approaches in the literature on Middle Eastern youth disadvantages. The social exclusion framework encompasses the human capital approach calling for investments in schooling, health, and family, but transcends this largely supply-side theory. Social exclusion calls for considering the demand side of the labor market. It considers other assets, such as access to credit, that can be invested in businesses. It considers institutional impediments to the free working of labor markets. It calls for job creation strategies.

Life course research has produced important information about the timing of some transitions to adult roles. However, school leaving, marriage, and first birth have been studied more than transitions to work, citizenship, or household headship (Lloyd 2005). Migration is another process that influences such transitions. A social exclusion approach embraces the dynamic perspective of life course research but has a wider view of the dimensions of social inclusion, especially the inclusion of social groups as well as individuals. The relational nature of social exclusion reorients attention from individual trajectories, even those that are institutionally and nationally structured, to the conflicts and cooperation between groups. This paper has indicated a number of ways in which insider-outsider problems exacerbate the problems of youth in the Middle East.

Cross-sectional household surveys have provided the vast bulk of the information currently available on Middle Eastern youth (Lloyd 2005). This makes it difficult to untangle causation, to discover the long-term effects of transitions during youth, and to examine contextual effects, including those of national setting. Future research in an exclusion framework should build in a temporal component, making it possible to identify sequences, mechanisms, and causal processes. If panel surveys are not feasible, life narratives may be instructive. For example, El-Kogali and Al-Bassusi (2001) supplemented their quantitative analyses with in-depth interviews with young women, asking them how they found their jobs, how they react to sexual harassment, and the like.

In addition to representative sample surveys, ethnography and qualitative methods can reveal important salient dimensions of youth exclusion. Given how many youth may have temporary or unsuccessful transitions to work and other adult roles, research must consider potential feedback effects or mutually reinforcing causation among various dimensions of exclusion. Poverty, depression, and poor health usually are seen as outcomes of unemployment, especially in the long term, but they may also induce unemployment, especially if financial constraints or reduced self-esteem impede the job search. If possible, cohort panels with prospective data should be collected. In sum, multidisciplinary multimethod panel research designs appear to hold the most promise for studies of the multifaceted transitions of youth.

Indeed, individual investments and trajectories are only the beginning for understanding the multidimensional process of youth exclusion. First, the causal inter-relations among youth transitions can give rise to cumulative exclusions and social isolation. To uncover these, research must examine long-term trajectories and consider how they are embedded in contexts of various levels. Second, youth exclusion mechanisms may differ by age – gender, and ethnic, racial, caste, tribe, language, religion, sect, and other social group. There is not much research on the impact of family friendly labor policies such as maternity leave that would make it easier for Middle Eastern women to com-

bine paid work and childrearing. There are even fewer studies of minorities in the Middle East. Third, since social exclusion is a relationship, more attention should be devoted to the causes of exclusion and to individual and institutional excluders. For example, discrimination studies are extremely rare in the Middle East compared with Europe and the United States. Because of their legal implications, it is unclear whether audit or random assignment procedures can be implemented in this region. Finally, if new youth inclusion policies are implemented, it would be wise to include evaluation research that not only measures quantitative and qualitative outcomes, but also inputs and other costs. Control groups and baseline data are among the important considerations, and both short-term and long-term results need to be assessed.

To be sure, economic growth may be the best panacea for youth unemployment, provided that it is labor-intensive. Eliminating the bias toward public sector work, encouraging the formal private sector by reducing regulatory and other barriers to investment, integrating into global markets, and diversifying from oil and agriculture are just some of the macroeconomic reforms that might raise regional growth rates (Yousef 2004). There are opportunities for institutional innovations that will strengthen the business climate, promote entrepreneurship, improve infrastructure and legal predictability, and enhance governance and accountability. Most importantly in this context, there is a need to reform the “rigid, exclusionary, and inefficient aspects of the social contract” so it does not only serve the security of a minority of workers, but protects the vulnerable and redistributes income, in line with tradition of *Zakat*.

Social exclusion, it was argued, is a rupture of social relationships, and policies to address it aim to reunite those bonds. As Durkheim argued, interpersonal social ties and bonds to the larger society promote social interdependence and moral integration while breaking an individual’s social bonds may result in deviance and anomie. Programs to fight social exclusion are not synonymous with policies to reduce unemployment. For youth’s transition to adulthood, the bonds of school, army, peer group, and family as well as work are impor-

tant age-graded institutions that promote social integration.

Nevertheless, lessons from European youth inclusion policies presented here may help guide the development of programs in Middle Eastern countries aimed at reducing youth disadvantage. Since exclusion is a multi-dimensional, relational, context-specific process, most European policies promoting social inclusion emphasize:

- Multipronged comprehensive interventions crossing traditional bureaucratic domains and tailored to addressing at once the multidimensional problems of excluded individuals and groups.
- A long-term process of insertion and integration moving through transitional stages.
- Localized intervention sensitive to national institutional and cultural contexts.
- Participation of the excluded in their own inclusion into economic and social life.

The latter is especially important. We have seen that targeted and means-tested programs unintentionally may stigmatize their intended beneficiaries, and youth should have a say in how programs to help them are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Based upon this review of European policies to promote the inclusion of youth, several policy implications follow for the Middle Eastern countries. First, as human capital and neoliberal policies advocate, basic literacy and high quality education remain important goals for the region, especially in rural areas and among women and disadvantaged groups. As for training, European experience shows the benefits of expanding the private sector role in training. Youth do better when they have an opportunity to learn on the job and employers can screen these potential employees. The schools should not neglect specific skills needed for later life such as financial and business literacy, job search techniques, and how to use the Internet.

Indeed, job creation policies should not be neglected. One important avenue is to expand aid to youth entrepreneurship and formal sector self-employ-

ment, preferably in partnership with the corporate and banking sectors. Barriers to credit, especially of women, should be dismantled, and training in business planning, marketing, and accounting extensively offered. Developing credit markets and financial literacy means more than small business loans. Middle Eastern countries need more access to consumer loans – for example, for marriage ceremonies – and mortgages. There are excellent opportunities in the private housing market to accomplish many goals at once. Low-interest credit can release pent up demand for household formation, construction is labor-intensive and thus a source of new jobs that also allows for skill development and urban renewal. Rental housing often pays for itself over time, encouraging entrepreneurship.

Third, matching policies need development. Middle Eastern countries have an opportunity to establish or expand public or private employment and job search services. This is related to improving access to the Internet, which can be used for job searches. The Internet also can open global business opportunities to make up for the loss of remittances from abroad. Policies to reconcile work and

family responsibilities should be universalized in such a way that no sector is favored. Potential avenues for this are the tax system or family allowances that support the family while allowing caregivers to work. Indeed, child and elder care are important labor-intensive sectors that could also absorb young workers.

Finally, fighting social exclusion is more than a matter of the labor market. Although youth unemployment is the main focus of the Middle East exclusion project, there are other important dimensions that need to be addressed. The Middle Eastern countries need to offer youth a diverse range of positive outlets for their energy and aspirations that go beyond work and marriage. Religious and military activities are not the only ones that can occupy young people constructively. As discussed, there are myriad community based projects in the arts, new technologies, infrastructure, sports, environment, and the like that keep young people out of trouble and benefit them and their neighbors. Including the younger generation in the effort to improve its own societies may prove the most valuable development strategy there is.

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## ENDNOTES

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1. Five-year random assignment evaluations report that MTO families offered housing vouchers lived in safer, lower-poverty neighborhoods than the control group not offered vouchers and enjoyed significant mental health benefits. But there were no significant overall effects on adult employment, earnings, or public assistance receipt. Similarly, improvements in test scores and school environments were minimal.
2. One anecdote refers to two dozen young male Moroccan volunteers for al-Qaeda in Iraq who “were well-educated—many took classes at local community colleges—but struggled to make ends meet.” Craig Whitlock, “Terrorist Networks Lure Young Men from Morocco.” *Wall Street Journal* (21 February 2007): 9.
3. Initially, the Social Exclusion Unit was in Prime Minister Blair’s Office. It later moved to the deputy prime minister’s office and, since 2006, is situated in the Department of Work and Pensions.
4. The gender parity index is the ratio of female to male gross enrollment rates by level of education.

## ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST YOUTH INITIATIVE

### Our Mission

*To develop and implement a regional action plan for promoting the economic and social inclusion of young people in the Middle East.*

### Creating Alliances for Maximum Progress

The Middle East Youth Initiative's objective is to accelerate the international community's ability to better understand and respond to the changing needs of young people in the Middle East. By creating an international alliance of academics, policymakers, youth leaders and leading thinkers from the private sector and civil society, we aim to develop and promote a progressive agenda of youth inclusion.

The Middle East Youth Initiative was launched in July 2006 by the Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution in partnership with the Dubai School of Government.

### Connecting Ideas with Action

The initiative blends activities in an attempt to bridge the divide between thinkers and practitioners and utilizes robust research as a foundation for effective policy and programs. The initiative has three complementary pillars:

#### Research and Policy: Pathways to Inclusion

With this initiative, cutting-edge research advances the understanding of economic and social issues affecting young people. The main target group is youth 15 to 29 years old, with a special focus on young men and women who live in urban areas and have secondary or post-secondary education. In addition to addressing needs of older youth, the initiative will also focus on strategies for promoting development of youth 15 years and under in areas such as primary education, skills development and community participation.

The research framework focuses on youth making two major transitions to adulthood: i) the transition from education to employment; and ii) the transition to household formation (marriage and family). Research will concentrate on strategies to achieve inclusion in:

- Quality education
- Quality employment

- Marriage
- Housing
- Civic participation

Our goal is to examine the relationship between economic and social policies and generate new recommendations that promote inclusion.

### Advocacy and Networking: Creating Vital Connections

The initiative aspires to be a hub for knowledge and ideas, open to all stakeholders who can make change happen. Strong partnerships with policymakers, government officials, representatives from the private sector and civil society organizations, donors and the media will pioneer forms of dialogue that bridge the divide between ideas and action. By bringing in the voice and new perspectives of young people, the initiative will revitalize debate on development in the Middle East.

### Practical Action: Life-Changing Impact

Outcomes matter. With a focus on areas with the greatest potential for innovation and impact, the initiative will mobilize partners for practical action that can improve young people's lives. The initiative will help develop policies and program interventions which provide youth with skills, expand opportunities for employment and facilitate access to credit, housing and civic participation.

## ABOUT THE WOLFENSOHN CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution was founded in July 2006 by James D. Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank and member of the Brookings Board of Trustees.

The Wolfensohn Center for Development analyzes how resources, knowledge and implementation capabilities can be combined toward broad-based economic and social change in a four-tier world.

The following principles guide the center's work:

- A focus on **impact, scaling-up and sustainability** of development interventions
- Bridging the gap between **development theory and practice** to bring about action
- Giving **voice** to developing countries, with high-level policy engagement and
- broad networking
- A **rigorous, independent research** approach that draws from multiple disciplines
- Working in **partnership** with others

## ABOUT THE DUBAI SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

The Dubai School of Government is a research and teaching institution focusing on public policy in the Arab world. Established in 2004 under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, the school aims to promote good governance by enhancing the region's capacity for effective public policy.

Toward this goal, the Dubai School of Government collaborates with international institutions such as Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in its research and training programs. In addition, the school organizes policy forums and international conferences to facilitate the exchange of ideas and promote critical debate on public policy in the Arab world.

The school is committed to the creation of knowledge, the dissemination of best practice and the training of policy makers in the Arab world. To achieve this mission, the school is developing strong capabilities to support research and teaching programs including:

- Applied research in public policy and management
- Masters degrees in public policy and public administration
- Executive education for senior officials and executives
- Knowledge forums for scholars and policy makers



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WOLFENSOHN  
CENTER FOR  
DEVELOPMENT

AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Wolfensohn Center for Development  
1775 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: 202-797-6000  
[wolfensohncenter@brookings.edu](mailto:wolfensohncenter@brookings.edu)  
[www.brookings.edu/wolfensohncenter](http://www.brookings.edu/wolfensohncenter)



كلية دبي للإدارة الحكومية  
DUBAI SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Dubai School of Government  
Convention Tower, Level 13  
P.O. Box 72229  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
Tel: 9714-329-3290  
[info@dsg.ae](mailto:info@dsg.ae) [www.dsg.ae](http://www.dsg.ae)

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