

Economic globalisation, youth expectations and social class: The case of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Whether economic globalisation is associated with a narrowing or a widening of the social class gap between the education and occupation expectations of Sri Lankan youth is examined through a test of four hypotheses. Methodologically, the study employs the estimated parameters from a system of seemingly unrelated equations for testing hypotheses. Youth expectations for education and occupation are higher than those of their parents when young. Social class effects vary among youth and fathers and mothers when young. The occupation expectations of youth show a widening gap between the middle and low social classes. In all other comparisons, the gaps are positive, indicating a widening, but none attains statistical significance. Causal explanations are explored and the implications for future investigations are identified.

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1. Introduction

Much has been written by economists about the impact of globalisation on income gaps between the richest and the poorest. The specific conditions of globalisation—economic liberalisation policies, openness to trade and technological advance—are asserted by some to lead to, or be accompanied by increased income inequality (e.g. Hirst and Thompson, 1996; Dicken, 1998; Mkandawire and Rodriguez, 2000; Wade, 2001; Milanovic, 2002) and by others to little or no impact (e.g. Ravallion and Chen, 1996). Wolf's (2004) synthesis suggests that while

global individual inequality and between-country inequality have declined, within-country inequalities have increased. In a recent assessment, the World Bank concludes that between 1980 and 1992 global and between-country inequality decreased while within-country inequality increased. Much of the apparent decline in global and between-country inequality is accounted for by the onset of rapid economic growth in China and India, countries with extremely large populations (World Bank, 2006, p. 7).

Many factors at the individual, household, community, national, regional and international level contribute to global, inter and intra-country inequality. Within-country these are, *inter alia*, social class, urban–rural location, ethnicity, parental educational and occupational background, educational achievement, gender, age, labour market

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conditions and economic growth characteristics. These may be considered as structural, social and economic factors. Alongside are the factors of human ‘agency’, in which aspirations and expectations will play a major part. Aspirations and expectations for education and occupations are developed by young people through interpersonal relations within families, communities, peer groups and education institutions. These aspirations and expectations will, *a priori*, influence the education and occupation opportunities sought by youth, the education and occupations they achieve and the immediate and longer term incomes, social status and prestige they gain.

This paper addresses the links between economic globalisation, social class and inequality through a study of the education and occupation expectations of youth, in the context of Sri Lanka. The general question posed is:

Is globalisation associated with a narrowing or a widening of the gap between the education and occupation expectations of different social classes?

Sri Lanka’s recent period of integration into the global economy dates from 1977. This creates the historical point for determining whether ‘youth’ were born in the period following or preceding globalisation. Comparisons will be made of the expectations of youth born after this date with the expectations of their mothers and fathers when young and born before this date.

In the following section, previous research on youth aspirations and expectations and on globalisation is reviewed briefly. Section 3 describes features of the Sri Lankan economic and education context salient to the general question posed above and reviews Sri Lankan research on youth aspirations and expectations. Section 4 sets out four specific hypotheses which derive from the general question and describes the samples and measures of the field study and the methods of estimation and hypothesis testing. Section 5 describes the results of the analysis. Section 6 offers a discussion and conclusion of the results.

2. Previous research

2.1. Youth aspirations and expectations

Sociological research on status attainment offers insights on the occupation and education aspirations and expectations of young people. Research

on status attainment flourished in the 1960s, especially in the USA and England. Researchers in England noted with ‘dismay’ the ‘realism’ of the rather modest expectations of secondary school leavers (Liversedge, 1962; Roberts, 1968; Timperley and Gregory, 1971). Many studies distinguished youth aspirations from youth expectations, the former being more ‘idealistic’ and ‘out of reach’ than the latter.

Studies in Ghana, Kenya and the Cote D’Ivoire in the 1960s indicated that secondary school students held very high levels of aspirations and expectations for both education and occupation (Foster, 1965; Clignet and Foster, 1966; Koff, 1966; Anderson, 1969, 1972). Evidence from school-going 14 years olds in Chile, India, Iran, Thailand, England, Japan and USA in 1970 indicated higher levels of education and occupation expectations in the ‘developing countries’ than in the ‘developed’ countries. These higher level expectations were traced to a range of institutional and structural factors, including income inequality, avenues for social mobility, societal definitions of the purposes of education, internal school structures, cultural attitudes to manual labour and educated unemployment (Little, 1980).

A number of studies in England and the United States have documented the impact of socio-economic status on aspirations and expectations regularly report a positive relationship between parental background and youth expectations and aspirations for education and jobs (Caro and Phillbald, 1965; Jahoda, 1957; Buchmann and Dalton, 2002). Cross-national studies carried out under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in the late 1960s/early 1970s demonstrated a positive relationship between father’s occupation and student’s *occupation expectations* in Chile, India, Iran, Thailand (Little, 1978). Versluis (1974) and Hansen (1977) reported similar findings for Peru and Brazil. However, a positive relationship between father’s occupation and *education expectations* was found only in England, Japan, USA and Iran. In Chile, India and Thailand, there was no relation (Little, 1978). Earlier, Foster (1965) had reported a only a very weak relationship between socio-economic background and occupational and education expectations among secondary school students in Ghana. In reporting similar findings for the Ivory Coast, Clignet and Foster (1966) surmise that

secondary school attendance has a homogenising effect on the attitudes of students, tending to

attenuate differences in socio-economic and cultural background.

Few studies of student aspirations and expectations have been reported in recent years. Buchmann and Dalton (2002) studied education aspirations of 13 years olds in the 1995 IEA-TIMMS study in 12 countries. So-called ‘aspirations’ were operationalised as ‘expectations’ and will be reported as such here. The highest levels of education expectations were reported from Korea, US, Norway, Spain, Hong Kong, Thailand and lower levels from Switzerland, Germany and Austria. The former group of countries have undifferentiated/comprehensive systems of secondary schooling, while the latter have strongly differentiated systems. Peer and parental expectations appeared to influence education expectation levels more in non-differentiated systems than in differentiated systems. In the differentiated systems of Switzerland, Germany and Austria, expectations were largely influenced by the type of school attended. Nunes and Roazzi (1999) report on the effects of socio-economic background on ‘ideal aspirations’ and ‘realistic aspirations’ among Brazilian urban youth in the 1990s. They show how ideal aspirations are higher than realistic aspirations and that socio-economic background is related to both.

2.2. Globalisation and social inequality

While the concerns of economists with income distribution and sociologists with status attainment converge through, *inter alia*, the phenomenon of ‘rising expectations’, we know little about whether the distribution of youth expectations *within countries*, especially between the richest and the poorest, is increasing, decreasing or staying broadly the same across generations. Social class background is likely to be related to both income equality/inequality and status attainment *directly* through its inter-generational transmission of effects on income assets and *indirectly* through its effects on education expectations, access to education, occupation expectations and access to occupations.

Whether these relationships are conditioned by the specific effects of globalisation is under-researched. Neo-liberal economic policies associated with global economic integration have had varying impacts on educational provision within countries. In some, cost recovery, school rationalisation, decentralisation and privatisation have been pro-

moted as part of the neo-liberal agenda, raising questions about the impact of globalisation on the distribution of educational access across socio-economic groups (e.g. Lewin and Sayed, 2005). In the Sri Lankan context, some have argued that the growth of private sector primary- and secondary-level schooling, as a result of liberalisation, is leading to a bifurcation of opportunity structures for young people and a widening of the gap between the level of education and occupation aspirations and expectations of youth from different social classes. The growth of cross-border student mobility and foreign education provision, especially at the post secondary level, is leading, in Sri Lanka to a further differentiation of educational opportunity and occupational structures (Little and Evans, 2005).

3. The Sri Lankan context

3.1. Economy and education

Sri Lanka is well known for her remarkable achievements on a range of human development indicators in spite of rather modest levels of economic growth (Isenman, 1980; Sen, 1981; Lakshman, 1997). At independence in 1948, the Sri Lankan population achieved a mean level of education second only to Japan in the Asia region. Economic growth was strong and the export-oriented plantation economy was well integrated within the global market for primary products. From 1956 the state pursued a populist and state-directed programme of social and economic change. The economy was oriented away from global integration to self-reliance based on import substitution. The language of the majority population, Sinhalese, became, from 1956, the official language of government administration.

A national system of fee-free education from kindergarten to university, based on two language media, Sinhala or Tamil, was introduced from 1945 and education expanded. In 1961 denominational schools were taken over by the state and the ‘aided’ and private sectors of education diminished. Between 1965 and 1977, educational opportunities in both the Sinhala and Tamil media continued to expand for most social groups, economic growth declined, income equality increased while unemployment levels grew.² Youth expectations for

²Educational opportunities for Tamil young people residing in the estate sector grew only after 1977, as a result of political

education and jobs were high. In 1971 a youth insurrection, led by disaffected, educated, unemployed, rural, mainly Sinhalese youth challenged a government unable to deliver in line with youth expectations.

In 1977 a major political swing from the left to the right heralded a re-integration into the global economy through far reaching policies of economic liberalisation. Economic growth rates increased rapidly in the years immediately following the 1977/1978 liberalisation but declined towards the end of the 1980s as a consequence of social unrest caused by the inequitable distribution of the benefits of the earlier growth. Economic growth fluctuated subsequently. Although unemployment declined from a high of 24.0% in 1973 to 11.5% by 1996/1997 rates began to rise during the 1980s prior to the second wave of liberalisation policies.

3.2. Trends in income inequality

Over the period 1953–2003, income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient of spending units remained remarkably stable at around 0.43 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2005). Compared with other countries, where Ginis range from 0.12 to 0.79, Sri Lanka's levels are moderate (WIDER World Income Inequality Database v 2.0a, June 2005). Indeed, compared to countries with similar (low) levels of per capita income, Sri Lanka was, for many years, regarded as a 'model' case of egalitarianism and income equality (Lakshman, 1997, p. 171).

However, national figures mask considerable sectoral variation. Over the period 1990/1991–2002 the incidence of poverty in urban areas halved from 16.3% to 7.9%, in rural areas declined from 29.4% to 24.7% and in the estate sector *increased* by 50%, from 20.5% to 30% (World Bank, 2004). This suggests that the income benefits of globalisation are being shared disproportionately in different areas of the country.

3.3. Trends in educational opportunity

Educational opportunities have grown significantly in the period since liberalisation. The

proportion of the population with no schooling declined from 22.9% in 1973 to 8.6% in 1996/1997. Over the same period, those with secondary education increased from 27.3% to 35.5%, and with post secondary education from 6.6% to 20.7%. An increase in the general education level of the population has been apparent since the 1880s and cannot be traced directly to globalisation. Traditionally, the Sri Lankan population accords high value to formal education and, throughout much of the twentieth century, formal education has been perceived as the main channel for social mobility by rural and urban students alike. In the 10 years prior to liberalisation and after, the majority of educational opportunities have been in the public sector. Since economic liberalisation successive governments have resisted calls from the World Bank to introduce privatisation measures in education.

Nonetheless, a degree of *de facto* privatisation has occurred at the margins of the public education system since the introduction of liberalisation. And these can more reasonably be traced to globalisation. Aspirations for proficiency in English, for mobile qualifications and for cross-border opportunities for education and occupations can all be linked with Sri Lanka's re-integration into the global economy. So-called 'international schools', employing English as the medium of instruction, have been established. Private tuition classes, run for many decades in parallel with the state system, began to grow very rapidly. At the post secondary level, there has been a growth in the number of fee-charging non-degree providers and foreign university degree providers (Little and Evans, 2005). Expansion of the private technical education and vocational training sector has been considerable. Total enrolment in tertiary-level education is estimated to have expanded 60% between 1997 and 2002 and accounted in 2002 for 11% of the relevant age group. Three per cent of tertiary-level enrolment is estimated to be enrolled in public universities, 2% in the advanced technical education institutions (assumed to be 50% public and 50% private) with the majority (6%) enrolled in a variety of private sector tertiary institutions offering professional courses and a range of degrees from foreign universities (World Bank, 2005). These changes have occurred largely as a result of the economic liberalisation policies that have encouraged the establishment of private companies, have relaxed regulations on foreign exchange and encouraged inward foreign investment. Access to

(footnote continued)

commitments made at the elections of 1970 and 1977. These youth are generally referred to as Indian Tamil as distinct from the Sri Lanka Tamils residing elsewhere in the country.

many of these new opportunities has depended on the ability to pay. While the state remains the main provider of education from primary to university level, the private sector now plays a considerable role, especially at the post secondary non-university level.

3.4. *Social class and educational opportunity*

Niles (1981) demonstrated social class influences on educational attainment for Grade 10 urban school students in the late 1970s. More recently, Ranasinghe and Hartog (2002) analysed the 1993 labour force survey and demonstrated that mothers' education and parents' income had a particularly strong influence on length of schooling achieved. These effects need to be seen in the context of overall participation from primary to tertiary level. Based on evidence from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 1995/1996, the poor and non-poor participate equally in Grades 1–5 and almost equally in lower secondary. Discrepancies arise in Grades 10–13 and at the tertiary level (World Bank, 2005).

3.5. *Trends in employment opportunity*

Labour force participation and rates of employment have increased since liberalisation, for both males and females. Over the period 1953–1977, labour force participation rates averaged 35.7% and over 1977–2000, they averaged 46.0%. Over the same periods, the unemployment rates declined from an average of 17.5% to 12.8%. The national figures conceal gender differences. Labour force participation rates for women have fluctuated and female unemployment rates have been double those of males since the end of the 1960s. Employment opportunities have shifted from agriculture to manufacturing and services. The proportion of those employed in agriculture decreased from 54.5% to 37.7% between 1973 and 1996/1997. Over the same period, the proportions in industry increased from 11.7% to 25.6%; and in services from 33.8% to 41.7% in 1996/1997. Youth unemployment rates declined from a high of 47.8% for youth aged 19–25 in 1973 to 28.6% among the same age group in 1996/1997 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2005). Foreign employment opportunities expanded markedly after liberalisation, especially for women migrants to the Middle East.

Economic liberalisation has led to a growth in private sector employment. Employment categories used in surveys over the period 1953–1996/1997 have changed over time rendering strict comparisons unreliable. However, in 1977, while over one million persons were employed in state sector institutions, only 283,457 persons were employed in medium to large-scale enterprises in the private corporate sector. In 1990, 21.5% of those in employment were public sector employees and 33.7% private sector employees, increasing by 2000 to 13.6% and 43.2%, respectively (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Reports, various years).

Lakshman (1997), Jayaweera (2000, 2003) and Hettige (1998, 2000a, b) explain how liberalisation has systematically included and excluded certain social groups in employment. Lakshman highlights the positive bias in the liberalisation model towards female, low-skilled and urban labour (Lakshman, 1997). Jayaweera (2000, 2003) also focussed on the implications of liberalisation for female labour but highlighted some of the 'negatives' for women as well as the 'positives'. Liberalisation reduced the opportunities for women in rural families for off-farm employment. While young women entered the low-skill labour force in great numbers in the export processing zones their work has been confined largely to repetitive assembly-line jobs with few opportunities for upward occupational mobility and job security and, in some cases, questionable working and living conditions. The volume of female migrant workers has been marked and women's share of foreign employment increased from 0.4% in the mid 1970s to 80% in the mid 1990s. Female migrant workers have been vulnerable to exploitation and have suffered sexual abuse, violence and family disruption (Jayaweera, 1994).

Hettige (1998, 2000a, b) underlines the social class character of unemployment. The expansion of private enterprise during the liberalisation period increased earnings differentials. The gradual decline in government sector jobs meant that the avenue for employment which the educated, but poor, rural youth had come to expect narrowed (Hettige, 1992). Youth were exposed to the competition of the global economy where before they had sheltered within a 'nation-state which protects them from competition' (Hettige, 1998, p. 85). The liberalised economy polarised society pushing 'nationally oriented youth from the centre stage to the margins of society' (Hettige, 1998, p. 100) and drawing them into political resistance movements. In general, educated rural youth do not

desire the types of jobs that have been created in the private sector (e.g. self-employment in the informal sector, manual work in the construction industry) and prefer higher level private sector jobs. However, these often place a premium on English and favour the urban English-speaking middle classes (Hettige, 1995; Gunawardene, 2002).

3.6. *Sri Lankan studies of youth aspirations and expectations*

In the early 1970s, Srivastava and Selvaratnam (1972) synthesised the results of a number of studies of youth unemployment conducted during the pre-liberalisation period. Unemployed youth with GCE O level stated an over-riding preference for government sector clerical or teaching employment over any other form of employment. Ninety-four per cent of unemployed graduates expressed a preference for a job in a government department. A similar finding was reported in an ILO (1971) survey of undergraduates, in which 87% of respondents preferred a job in the public sector, 10% in the private sector and 3% in self-employment. A preference for public sector employment was based mainly on the perception of ‘security’ of the job. Research conducted in 1975, 2 years prior to the introduction of the first wave of liberalisation policies, confirmed an overwhelming preference for non-manual public sector employment (NIE/IDS, 1978) among GCE O and A level secondary school students in rural and urban schools. With low economic growth, qualification levels for jobs spiralled and the expectation for ever-higher levels of education increased (Deraniyagala et al., 1978).

More recent studies confirm high levels of youth aspirations and expectations. Gunawardene (2002) reported that 70% of youth (aged 15–29) wished to continue their education. For some, the pursuit of ever higher levels of education provides a substitute to unemployment. Several studies highlight a continuing mismatch between job aspirations and expectations and the jobs available in the economy (Gunawardene, 2002; Jayaweera and Sanmugam, 2002). Jayaweera and Rupasinghe (2007) review studies of aspirations and expectations over the period 1952–1998. A 1998 study of 951 students in GCE O level classes found that the majority of girls (60.3%) and boys (54.6%) aspired to a university degree (Jayaweera and Rupasinghe, 2007). In a 1990 study, these percentages were even higher—86.6% for girls and 85.5% for boys. Jayaweera and

Rupasinghe (2007) attribute this downward shift to the narrow bottleneck for entry to university, lengthy delays in admission after acceptance, disruption in university studies and graduate unemployment. Comparable studies of girls from the 1970s indicate that in 1973 only 33.7% of girls aspired to a university education while these figures had increased to 58.5% by 1976. This surprising result in the 1970s over such a short period of time is attributed *post hoc* to changes in the secondary school examination system which increased the ease of access from secondary to higher secondary education and the hopes for further access to university (Jayaweera and Rupasinghe, 2007).

4. Hypotheses, sample and methods

4.1. *Hypotheses*

In order to address the general question posed above, we develop four sets of hypothesis. In order to explore changes in patterns of youth expectations that may have occurred because of a greater integration with the global economy we compare expectations of youth schooled in the pre-liberalisation period with those schooled in the post-liberalisation period. Our hypotheses explore changes in expectations over time and between social classes. We distinguish the effects of long run economic and education growth on expectations from the effects of economic liberalisation.

With a general expansion of education opportunity and shifts in occupational structure and opportunities from agriculture towards manufacturing and services, we predict that today’s youth will display higher levels of education and occupation expectations than their fathers and mothers when they were youth. We would also expect that social class background would have an effect on the level of expectations both among the youth of today and among their parents when youth.

However, with the general growth of domestic and foreign private sector opportunities in education, especially at the post secondary level, and the growth of the private corporate sector since liberalisation, we also predict that the gap between the social classes will have widened. Youth from higher social classes, with the ability to pay for education, with a greater proficiency in English and with social connections and networks in the private sector of employment, will be able to take advantage of these new opportunities more readily than youth from

lower social classes. This will be reflected in the levels of occupation expectation. The gaps between the expectations of youth from the higher and lower social classes today will be greater than that between youth of higher and lower social classes in the previous generation.

More specifically, we predict that:

Cross-generation shifts in expectations

1. The education and occupation expectations of youth will be higher than those of their mothers and fathers (when young).

Social class effects on expectations

2. The level of education and occupation expectations of youth of a higher social class will be higher than those of youth of a lower social class.
3. The education and occupation expectations of mothers and fathers (when young) of higher social class will be higher than those of mothers and fathers (when young) of a lower social class.

Cross-generation shifts in social class effects

4. The social class effects on expectations of today's youth will be stronger than the social class effects on expectations among mothers and fathers when young. In other words, the social class gap in expectations (predicted in Hypotheses 2 and 3 above) will widen over time.

These four hypotheses are presented schematically in Fig. 1. The cross-generational shift in expectations is measured by the distance between the expectation of youth and that of their parents when young (point 1). Hypothesis 2 and 3 are measured by the distance between individuals' expectations from high class with respect to individuals' expectations from low class (points 2 and 3 for youth and parents when young, respectively). Finally, Hypothesis 4 is represented by the relative differential in expectations between high class youth and high class parents when young versus low class youth and low class parents when young (points 4).

4.2. Sample

Evidence for the study was collected through a cross sectional interview survey of youth aged 15–29 between 2001 and 2003 and of their parents. The

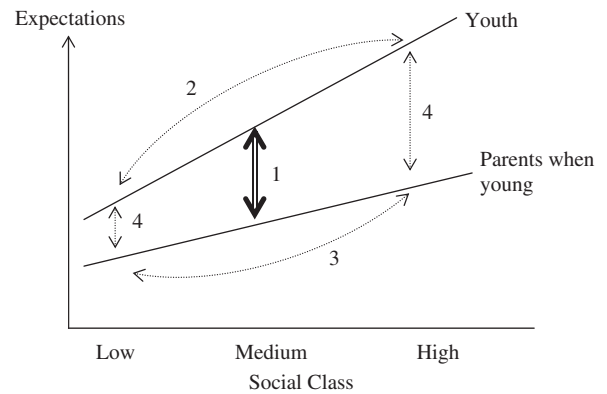


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the tests of four hypotheses.

definition of youth follows Sri Lankan convention: unmarried persons aged 15–29 (Hettige, 1998). A purposive household sample was drawn from nine areas across the country, selected from all three sectors of Sri Lankan society—urban, rural and estate.³ The sampling of households within communities followed a two-stage procedure. In the first stage socio-economic strata based on land, occupation and income were designed for each community. In the urban area, the strata were described as lower (L), lower-middle (LM), middle (M), upper-middle (UM) and 'upper-upper' (UU). In the rural and estate areas, the strata were described as L, LM and M socio-economic groups. In the second stage, the local administrative officer (the Grama Niladhari) provided a household list with information about each of the socio-economic criteria. Households were then selected randomly from within each social group.⁴ Fathers, mothers and youth in 482 households were interviewed.

³The first of the nine areas, Thimbirigasyaya, in Colombo, is urban and ethnically heterogeneous. Four Sinhalese rural areas were selected from four districts. Padeniya (in Kurunagala district) and Neluwa (in Galle district) are developing small towns and may be regarded as semi-rural. Madugalle (in Kandy district) and Hambegamuwa (in Moneragala district) remain rural and isolated, though some household members earn an occupation outside each village. One Muslim rural area, Nachchaduwa, was selected from Anuradhapura district. One Tamil rural community, Udappuwa, was selected from Puttalam district. Two estates were selected from the low country tea-estate areas (Vogan, Kalutara district) and the up country tea-estate areas (Park, Nuwara-Eliya district).

⁴As we only have information from UU and UM strata in urban areas, our empirical analysis will condition out for this impact by the use of an interaction between area and class.

4.3. Measures of expectations

The two key dependent variables are educational and occupation expectations. These were operationalised through open-ended interview questions in Sinhala and Tamil, the approximate English translations of which were:

For today's youth

What is your expectation regarding education?

What is your expectation regarding livelihood?

For mothers and fathers

What was your expectation regarding education when you were a youth?

What was your expectation regarding livelihood when you were a youth?

Youth and their parents were invited to provide a description of expectations in their own terms. Education expectations were coded using a five-point scale (0 = no expectations; 1 = primary; 2 = O-level; 3 = A-level; and 4 = higher education). Occupation expectations were coded on a nine-point scale, derived from an adapted version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (1 = elementary occupations; 2 = plant and machine operators and assemblers; 3 = craft and related trades workers; 4 = skilled agricultural and fishery workers; 5 = service workers and shop and market sales workers; 6 = clerks; 7 = technicians and associate professionals; 8 = professionals; and 9 = legislators and senior officials).

Asking parents to recall their expectations when they were younger is subject to the criticism that

retrospective accounts have lower construct validity than contemporary accounts, and may mirror education levels finally achieved rather than recollections about expectations to be achieved. The construct validity of the questions about expectations was established through a parallel set of questions about aspirations. As we saw in the literature review, youth consistently report expectations that are lower than aspirations. Aspirations represent hopes, ambitions and dreams while expectations are more 'realistic'. If recollected expectations are invalid because of the passage of time and a regression over time to the levels of education and livelihood achieved, then we would expect recollected aspirations to be subject to the same challenge and to a convergence of expectations and aspirations. Table 1 shows that fathers and mothers report, retrospectively, levels of expectations that are lower than their aspirations. This is consistent with studies that address youth expectations and aspirations in the present and offers some evidence for the construct validity of the retrospective measure.

Another possible problem with the question posed about expectations is that it was not anchored to a specific age-range (e.g. what were your education expectations when you were 15 years old). This might be considered to be a particular problem for youth, as the sample of youth include individuals aged 15–29 and many readers will assume that since older youth will already have completed education at the time of the survey that their expectations and aspirations will be more closely aligned than those of younger youth. Table 1

Table 1
Education and occupation aspirations and expectations for youth, mothers and fathers

	Aspirations	Expectations	Difference	Wald	Observations
Education					
Youth (15–19)	3.34	2.68	0.66	15.43***	194
Youth (20–24)	3.45	2.66	0.79	11.83***	200
Youth (25–29)	3.37	2.58	0.79	9.74**	100
Mothers	2.71	1.57	1.14	48.15***	338
Fathers	2.88	1.63	1.25	34.81***	262
Occupation					
Youth (15–19)	6.05	4.71	1.34	4.84**	194
Youth (20–24)	6.68	4.18	2.50	12.34***	200
Youth (25–29)	6.48	4.39	2.09	4.30**	100
Mothers	3.50	1.68	1.82	6.95***	378
Fathers	4.22	2.06	2.16	8.74***	294

Source: Sri Lanka Primary data. Notes: Asterisks indicate statistical significance at (*) 10%, (**) 5% and (***) 1% level. Conditional average estimate based on SURE regression with inclusion of social class, age, ethnicity and sector as confounding variables.

shows that for older and younger youth there are significant differences between their average level of expectations and aspirations, with aspirations being higher than expectations. We will address this issue further by controlling for age within the two cohorts.

4.4. Measures of social class

Although a social class criterion had been used to sample and select households (as above), detailed information about the education and occupations backgrounds of youth and their parents was collected subsequently during interview. The social background of youth was re-assessed through information provided by parents about their current education and occupation. The social background of mothers and fathers, when they were young, was assessed through information provided by parents about *their* parents' education and occupations when they were youth.⁵ A composite score for social background was created with equal weight given to the information about education and occupation.

For statistical analyses, the class variable was grouped into three categories (L, LM and M). The middle class included small numbers of upper-middle and 'upper-upper' classes. Since only the urban sample contains upper-middle and 'upper-upper' classes, an interaction term is included in the empirical analysis in order to condition out for this impact. The cut-off points were determined by the proportion of households in each class defined by the sampling criterion: thirty-six per cent youth with the lowest scores in the composite measure of social class were assigned to the lowest social class group L, 32% to the LM and 32% to the M.⁶ The same proportions were used as cut-off points for the composite measure of class for mothers and fathers

⁵Information on education was coded on a six-point scale (1 = no qualifications; 2 = primary; 3 = post primary; 4 = O-level; 5 = A-level; and 6 = higher education). Occupations were coded on a nine-point scale, derived from an adapted version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (1 = elementary occupations; 2 = plant and machine operators and assemblers; 3 = craft and related trades workers; 4 = skilled agricultural and fishery workers; 5 = service workers and shop and market sales workers; 6 = clerks; 7 = technicians and associate professionals; 8 = professionals; and 9 = legislators and senior officials). Persons unemployed or housewives were treated as missing.

⁶The correlation between the sampling criterion class and our composite measure of class is 0.40.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for sample characteristics

Variable	youth		parents	
	Description	Frequency	Description	Frequency
Age	15–19	39.6	31–45	27.7
	20–24	40.2	46–55	49.7
	25–29	20.1	56+	22.6
Gender	Boys	50.7	Fathers	43.3
	Girls	49.3	Mothers	56.6
Ethnicity	Sinhala	52.7	Sinhala	51.9
	Tamil	30.1	Tamil	30.6
	Moor	17.2	Moor	17.5
Sector	Urban	35.5	Urban	33.8
	Rural	50.1	Rural	51.4
	Estate	14.3	Estate	14.8

No. of observations: 455 youth, 385 mothers, 299 fathers.

when young. The final sample of youth with information on the composite measure of class is 455. The final sample for mothers with information on class is 385 and the final sample of fathers with information on class is 299.

4.5. Age, gender, ethnicity and sector

Other variables included age, gender, ethnicity and sector and the interaction between urban area and upper social classes.⁷ Age is divided into three categories for youth (15–19, 20–24 and 25–29), and three categories for their parents (31–45, 46–55 and older than 55). Gender for youth is divided into boys and girls, whereas gender for parents is indicated by mothers and fathers. There is a higher proportion of mothers as they were more likely to be at home during the interview. Ethnicity indicates the three main communities in Sri Lanka (Sinhala, Tamil and Moor) and sector is introduced to control for urban, rural and estate. Table 2 contains descriptive statistics for these variables.

4.6. Estimation method and hypothesis testing

We estimate the following two systems of equations: (i) one for youth expectations linked to mother expectations when young and (ii) one for

⁷We have information on youth and parents current educational attainments. This variable is not included in the analysis since it is endogenous to the process of social class effects on expectations. Direction of causality should run from social class to the formation of expectations and attainment of education.

youth expectations linked to father expectations when young. Each set of two equations includes our measures of social class, age, gender, ethnicity and sector and allows for the possibility that these equations may be correlated. This approach removes possible biases induced by the inclusion of observable confounding factors. The analysis of relative change between levels of expectations within cohorts and comparisons of the relative changes between cohorts remove biases induced by changes over time.

As each of the equations has its own set of parameters, the model is known as Seemingly Unrelated Regression Equations (SURE) and estimated using Generalised Least Squares (GLS) (see Greene, 1997). This system of equations is first estimated for education expectations and then for occupation expectations. Therefore, we estimate a total of four separate systems of equations. Appendix describes the equation and estimation of parameters.

For the statistical analysis, samples of youth and mothers and youth and fathers with complete information are paired. Therefore, the number of observations for each sample is different. For each of the tests performed, we report the total number of observations utilised.

4.6.1. *Cross-generation shifts in expectations*

The cohort shift in the average level of expectations can be empirically tested using the difference between the estimated intercept from the youth equation and the estimated intercept from the respective mothers' and fathers' equations. This difference measures the conditional cohort shift in expectations between youth and their mothers and fathers when young. A positive and significant estimated value of this difference means that youth expectations are higher than the expectations their parents had when they were young. The opposite is true if the difference is negative. If the difference equals zero then the conditional average level of expectations between youth and mothers and fathers remained unchanged. A Wald statistic is used to test for this difference.

4.6.2. *The effects of social class on expectations*

The effect of social class on expectations is tested from the significance of the estimated parameters of our empirical model. The social class parameters measure the difference in the average level of expectations of youth from the lower-middle and

middle social class compared with youth from low social class. A positive and significant parameter indicates that youth from the middle or lower-middle class have higher average level of expectations than youth from the low social class (Hypothesis 2). A similar test is used for the impact of social class on expectation for fathers and mothers (Hypothesis 3).

4.6.3. *Cross-generation shifts in social class effects*

The social class gap in the level of expectations across cohorts is tested using the difference in the estimated slopes from the social class variable for youth compared with the difference in the estimated slopes from the social class variable for mothers (and fathers). In other words, it uses the relative difference in level of expectations between high and low class for youth and parents when young. Equality among this relative difference would mean that the gap has remained unchanged, whereas a positive value will mean that there has been a widening gap and a negative value a decreasing gap. A Wald statistic is also employed to test for this difference.

5. Results

5.1. *Mean levels of education and occupation expectations*

Figs. 2 and 3 present a graphical overview of unconditional mean levels of expectations based on the unpaired sample of youth, mothers and fathers. These means are based on raw data. Conditional means, based on estimates taking other variables into account, are presented later.

Fig. 2 presents the education and occupation expectations of mothers and youth. Education and occupation expectations of mothers (when young) appear to be lower than those of youth. There appear to be social class effects on the expectations of youth and mothers when young. The middle class has higher expectations than the lower class. There is also some indication that the gap between the social classes has widened in the case of education and occupation expectations. The statistical significance of these patterns will be tested below.

Fig. 3 presents the education and occupation expectations of fathers and youth. Similar to results obtained for mothers, expectations of fathers (when young) appear to be lower than those of youth.

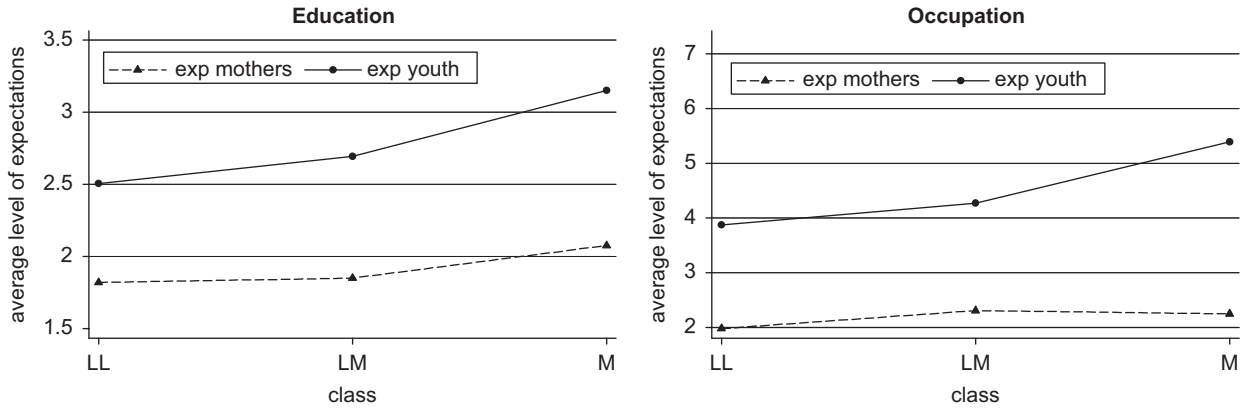


Fig. 2. Expectations of mothers and youth.

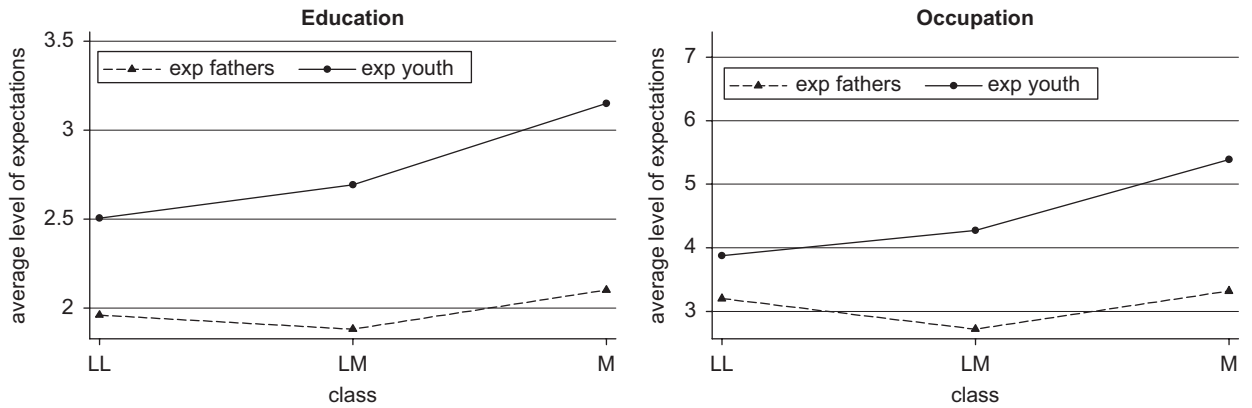


Fig. 3. Expectations of fathers and youth.

There appear to be social class effects for the expectations. The middle class have higher expectations than the lower class. There is also some indication that the gap between the social classes has widened. The statistical significance of these patterns will be tested below.

5.2. *Tests of hypotheses*

Tables 3–6 test the hypotheses. For each, we report the number of observations, the estimated parameters, and the results from the *t*-statistic or Wald test, as appropriate.

Hypothesis 1. Cross-generation shifts in expectations

This hypothesis is based on inter-individual comparisons and hence utilises paired samples of youth-mother and youth-father. Table 3 presents

the conditional average levels of education and occupation expectations for paired samples of youth-mother and youth-father. The first column shows the conditional average level of expectations for youth, and the second and third columns show the conditional average level of expectations for mothers and fathers, respectively. Two values appear under the youth column. The first is the comparison of youth paired with respective mothers; the second is youth paired with respective fathers. The fourth column estimates the difference between youth and mothers and youth with fathers, and the fifth column reports the Wald statistic. The sixth indicates the sample size included in the analysis.

Table 3 indicates a positive difference in the conditional average level of both education and occupation expectations between youth and mothers and between youth and fathers. This confirms Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2. Social class effects on expectations for youths

Hypothesis 3. Social class effects on expectations for parents when young

Table 4 presents the test for the effects of social class on the expectations of youth, mothers and fathers using the estimated parameters from the SURE regression model on the restricted (paired) samples. The estimated parameter for social class measures the difference in the conditional average level of expectations for the middle (M) vs lower (L) class and the lower-middle (LM) vs lower class (L). A positive and significant estimate indicates that the conditional average level of expectations for a higher social class is higher than for a lower social class.

The first column in Table 4 reports the social class difference between youth from the middle class and youth from the lowest class. As in Table 3, results

are paired between youth and fathers and youth and mothers. Hence two values for youth appear in column 1, one for youth when paired with fathers and the other for youth when paired with mothers. The second and third columns report the social class gap between middle class and low class mothers and fathers, respectively. The fourth column reports the difference between lower-middle class youth and low class youth whereas the fifth and sixth columns report this difference for mothers and fathers, respectively.

Table 4 indicates a positive difference for middle class youth compared to low class youth in education and occupation expectations. Table 4 also indicates a positive difference for the education expectations of middle social class fathers and mothers compared with those of low social class, but not for occupation expectations. Comparisons between the lower-middle and low class do not yield any statistically significant differences for expectations among youth, mothers or fathers.

Hypothesis 4. Cross-generation shifts in social class effects

Hypothesis 4 is based on differences-between-differences, that is, the difference between the social class gap in expectations of youth versus the social class gap in expectations of fathers and mothers. The first and second columns of Table 5 estimate the Wald statistic for the relative social class gap between youth paired with fathers (in row 1) and paired with mothers (in row 2). Columns 3 and 4 provide estimates for occupation expectations. Results indicate an increase in the relative social class gap in occupation expectations between the middle and low social class. In all other comparisons, the relative social class gap is positive, but

Table 3
Wald statistic (χ^2) for the difference in the conditional average level of expectations between youth and mothers and youth and fathers

Youth	Father	Mother	Difference	Wald	Sample
<i>Education expectations</i>					
2.86	1.62		1.24	16.64***	264
2.74		1.60	1.14	18.65***	339
<i>Occupation expectations</i>					
5.47	1.98		3.49	14.54***	296
4.87		1.88	2.99	10.50***	379

Source: Sri Lanka Primary data. Notes: Asterisks indicate statistical significance at (*) 10%, (**) 5% and (***) 1% level. Conditional average estimate based on SURE regression with inclusion of social class, age, ethnicity, sector and interaction between urban area and high social class as variables.

Table 4
Statistical test (*t*-statistic) for the effects of social class on the expectations of youth, mothers and fathers

	Middle versus low class			Lower-middle versus low class			Observations
	Youth	Fathers	Mothers	Youth	Fathers	Mothers	
Education expectations	0.45***	0.25**		0.07	-0.04		264
	0.49***		0.21**	0.11		0.06	339
Occupation expectations	1.55***	0.34		0.31	-0.06		379
	1.48***		0.07	0.33		0.29	296

Source: Sri Lanka Primary data. Notes: Asterisks indicate statistical significance at (*) 10%, (**) 5% and (***) 1% level. Conditional average estimate based on SURE regression with inclusion of social class, age, ethnicity, sector and interaction urban high social class as control variables.

Table 5

Wald statistic (χ^2) test for relative social class gap between youth and mothers (fathers) when young

	Education expectations		Occupation expectations	
	Social class M-L	Social class LM-L	Social class M-L	Social class LM-L
Youth paired with fathers	0.95 ($p = 0.32$)	0.30 ($p = 0.58$)	4.52 ($p = 0.03$)**	0.40 ($p = 0.53$)
Youth paired with mothers	2.34 ($p = 0.12$)	0.08 ($p = 0.78$)	5.95 ($p = 0.01$)**	0.01 ($p = 0.93$)

Source: Sri Lanka GQL project primary data collected. *Notes:* p -value in parenthesis. Asterisks indicate statistical significance at (*) 10%, (**) 5% and (***) 1% level. Conditional average estimate based on SURE regression with inclusion of social class, age, ethnicity, sector and interaction between region and high social class as control variables.

none attains statistical significance. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is confirmed partially.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The general research question addressed in this paper is whether economic globalisation is associated with a narrowing or a widening of the gap between the education and occupation expectations of youth of different social classes. The predicted association was linked to the conjecture that economic liberalisation leads, on the one hand, to increased opportunities in education for those with the ability to pay, and, on the other, to increased opportunities in the private corporate sector for those with proficiency in English and social networks in that sector on the other.

The general question was addressed through the testing of four hypotheses. The hypothesis of a cross-generational shift in education and occupation expectations is confirmed. While youth expect to achieve a mean level between the GCE O level (11 years) and GCE A level (13 years), both fathers and mothers reported mean levels between primary and GCE O level. This is consistent with the structure of education in the 1960s and 1970s when a selection examination at Grade 8 (representing 9 years of education, including a first 'kindergarten' year) marked the end of the open-access span of education, after which there was selection to subsequent stages of education. It was only between 1972–1977 that the open-access span was extended to 10 years of free, non-selective basic education, and from 1977, extended to 11 years.

Youth reported mean occupation expectations at around 5 on a nine-point scale of occupations compared with the parents of around 2. This reflects the general upward movement in the structure of the economy, from the elementary occupations of agriculture to the semi-skilled and skilled occupations of manufacturing and services.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 on the effects of social class on expectations show different patterns for youth, fathers and mothers. Middle class youth report higher levels of education expectations and occupation expectations than low class youth, irrespective of whether the sample of youth is paired with fathers or mothers. This confirms our prediction. Middle class fathers and mothers report education expectations (when young) that are higher than those reported by low class mothers and fathers. This also confirms our prediction. However, there were no social class differences in the occupation expectations reported by middle and low class fathers and mothers. Comparisons between the lower-middle and low class showed no differences in either education or occupation expectations for youth, fathers or mothers.

This last set of findings will have influenced the test of the final hypothesis that predicted an increasing social class gap in education and occupation expectations over time. The hypothesis is confirmed for occupation expectations when the middle class are compared with the low class, irrespective of whether youth are compared with fathers or mothers. In all other cases, the gaps are positive, indicating a widening rather than a narrowing of the gap, but none attains statistical significance. The finding on a widening of the gap in occupation expectations confirms our hypothesis but a detailed understanding of how and why this arises deserves further attention in the future. It is possible that the gap is due to the pull of the expanding private corporate sector and that middle class youth are able to find jobs in this sector more frequently than the lower-middle and lower classes. The reasons for this are likely to be because of qualifications sought by employers, proficiency in English and social networks. It is also possible that the gap would have been even wider if the expanding private sector had not simultaneously

afforded many new opportunities for low-skill jobs in manufacturing, especially for females from rural areas.

Our empirical investigation focussed on *levels* of expectation. We did not examine the sectors of employment expected (whether public, private, corporate private, small-scale private). Nor did we explore the type of educational institution (whether public or private) expected. These deserve investigation in the future. Further investigation is also required of young person's perceptions of the criteria required for the occupations they expect, their proficiency in English, their ability to pay for specific types of educational qualification and their social networks for recruitment to jobs in the different sectors of employment.

For reasons of sample size, this study has been unable to explore explicitly the effects of gender, age, ethnicity and sector. These variables were included in the equations as control variables. We have also been unable to investigate differences in the levels of expectations between daughters and mothers, sons and fathers, daughters and fathers and sons and mothers. These also deserve investigation in the future.

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Appendix. Equations and estimated parameters

In the paper, we paired each young person with his/her mother (and father) and then estimated their education and occupation expectations separately. Therefore, we estimated four separate systems of two equations. The general equation for each system of equations can be defined by:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Exp}_{yp} &= \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{SC}_{yp,middle} + \alpha_2 \text{SC}_{yp,high} + \alpha_3 X_{yp} + \varepsilon_{yp}, \\ \text{Exp}_{par} &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SC}_{par,middle} + \beta_2 \text{SC}_{par,high} \\ &\quad + \beta_3 X_{par} + \varepsilon_{par}, \\ \varepsilon_{yp}, \varepsilon_{par} &\sim N(0, \sigma_{yp}, \sigma_{par}, \sigma_{yp \times par}), \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A.1})$$

where Exp stands for expectations of young people (yp) and their parents when young (par). The variable SC measures the social class gradient for youth and their parents when young. We include middle and high social classes and low class as reference category. Therefore, each of the parameters associated with social class measures the difference in the average level of expectations between middle class and low class (α_1, β_1) and between high class and low class (α_2, β_2). The matrix \mathbf{X} contains age, gender, ethnicity and sector. Estimated parameters in these equations are α and β . In these equations ε_{yp} and ε_{par} are the error terms for each equation, which are assumed to be distributed following a bivariate normal distribution mean at zero, standard errors σ_{yp} and σ_{par} and correlation $\sigma_{yp,par}$. This means youth and parents expectations are likely to share similar unobservable factors.

The estimated parameters from this model are used to test the hypothesis of the paper. The cohort generation shift in the average level of expectations is empirically tested using the difference between α_0 and β_0 . A Wald statistic is employed to test for this difference. The effect of social class on expectations is tested from the statistical significance of each of the parameters associated with social class ($\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \beta_1, \beta_2$). Finally, the social class gap in the level of expectations across cohorts is tested using the difference in the estimated slopes from the social class variable for youth compared with the difference in the estimated slopes from the social class variable for parents ($\alpha_1 = \beta_1$ and $\alpha_2 = \beta_2$). A Wald statistic is also employed to test for this difference.

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