Young Women Rural Migrant Workers in China’s West: Benefits of Schooling?

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Abstract
This paper explores the association of rural schooling with empowerment of female rural migrant workers in remote Western China. It asks what school-related intrinsic and instrumental capabilities enhanced their urban lives and their role as “drivers for development” in urbanizing China. The analysis of a long-term observational study of the females of one cluster of villages shows that recently-arrived (2015) young rural new-migrant workers manifested enhanced capabilities associated with their schooling in four dimensions of social freedoms: protective security against early arranged marriage, enhanced occupational opportunity, constructive social arrangements founded in rural identity, and cognitive and aspirational capabilities. Lower educational attainment and achievement are associated with fewer and weaker empowerment capabilities across all dimensions. Political empowerment capabilities in the sense of civil rights and entitlements have no foundation in earlier education and are lacking in their urban lives. However, a sense of “voice” is beginning to take hold among young rural migrant women. Taking a female-centric capability perspective uncovers beneficial aspects of internal migration, contributing to a more holistically theorized understanding of associated social changes.

Keywords
capabilities, education, empowerment, rural migrant workers, women

Introduction
Internal migration in the form of urbanization is a major demographic transition...
taking place across the world. The mass migration of rural villagers to urban boomtowns in China may be the largest internal migration in human history (Chan, 2013). In 2015, 168.8 million rural migrant workers were counted in China’s cities, making up about 22 % of China’s total workforce (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Worldwide, an increasing number of women continue to join the migrant flow. In China in 2015, women accounted for 31.2 % or 55 million rural migrant workers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016), a number comparable to the entire population of countries like Italy, South Africa, or the Republic of Korea (United Nations, 2015, pp. 16–22). It has been suggested that the worldwide rise in female rural to urban migration is related to their rising educational attainment. In China, female educational attainment has been rising concurrently.

China’s fast development between 1979 and 2016 exerted economic push-pull factors that widen the gap between urban manufacturing centers and rural hinterlands (Teese, 2007). The explosive growth of the China’s urban manufacturing industry after its entry into the WTO in 2001, saw a doubling of its employment (Lardy, 2015). The urban/rural economic gap, educational and social inequalities, and enduring patterns of gender inequalities have transformed into modern configurations of employment disparities in urban areas. Worldwide internal migration has disproportionately subjected females to greater risks and harmful effects, exposing them to greater violence than in their pre-migration settings (UNIFEM, 2009).

On the other hand, in urban manufacturing centers, information technology and the flow of goods, ideas and images have flourished. Meanwhile, education has become the key to new opportunities for individual mobility against the backdrop of collective mobility in new economies (Blackmore, 2015). The urban experience broadens a migrant’s horizon and implants a new map of norms (Appadurai, 2004) that is strongly future-oriented, engendering new aspirations.

In Chinese villages as elsewhere, rural migrants had been subsistence farmers, embedded in tight family and clan networks and traditions. In the city, they were

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1 Other estimates put the number as high as 274 million or 20 % of the total population (B.-L.Zhong, T.-B. Liu, J.-X. Huang, H. H. Fung, S. S. M. ehan, Y. Conwell, & H.F.K. Chiu., 2016).

2 See Arnold and Piampiti, and Eviota and Smith who showed that “The rise in female migration to the cities and the convergence of male and female migration patterns in many Asian countries, such as South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia surely reflects the rise of female relative to male education, entailing both modernization and preparation for jobs in urban labor markets” (Khoo, Smith, & Fawcett, 1984, p. 1258).
"outsiders" (外地人, waidi ren), “peasants” with rural household identity cards (户籍, huiji or 户口, hukou)3 and collectively known as the “floating population” (流动人口, liudong renkou). The government officially counted them as rural migrant workers (农民工, nongmingong).4 If they stayed long in one destination, they could obtain a “temporary urban hukou” from the city government’s talent flow bureau (人才流动中心, rencai liudong zhongxin). However, in all but a few major provincial-level cities, this did not provide access to “urban hukou” welfare services such as medical insurance or public schools for their children.5

By 2015, China’s rapid demographic transition from a majority rural to majority urban population had taken place, from 74 % rural in 1990 to 44 %, not counting the hundreds of millions of rural migrant workers (National Bureau of...
The Problem

Not only the size of the rural migrant population, but also the fact of their second-class status elevates the need for continued investigation. International press coverage and Chinese scholars have often focused on the plight of young factory workers of the “floating population” as exploited cogs in the global manufacturing machine (Li, 2006; Robson & Ward, 2012; Wilhelm, 1994). The China Labour Bulletin (n.d.), an activist international trade unionist organization based in Hong Kong, confirms what much of the scholarly literature has shown: “Migrant workers have been the engine of China’s spectacular economic growth over the last three decades but they remain marginalized and subject to institutionalized discrimination” (n.p.; see also Kan, 2013, December 16; Fair Labor Association, 2011, September 23; Tian, 2011, January 13; Wong et al., 2008; Wong, Chang, & He, 2007; Li et al., 2007). Yet annually the rural migrant worker population grows, though at a slackening pace of a mere 3.5 million increase in 2015. Hidden in those figures are unknown numbers of children that parent migrants increasingly have been taking with them to the cities (authors’ observation; Xinhua, 2006). Beyond the manufacturing sector, millions toil in the informal service sector where work is unregulated, unstable, and small enterprises come and go without notice, subject to the vicissitudes of cut-throat markets.

The massive influx of rural migrant workers has also had destabilizing effects in cities. The migrants “are perceived as a threat to social stability and are often linked to the increase in crime rates in the cities. Since 2000, the increase in conflicts between employers and migrant workers and between local residents and migrant workers is of growing concern to both central and local governments” (Wong et al., 2007, p. 38). The general urban public has held the view that migrant workers are “backward” and “of low quality” and “should be blamed for their misfortunes” (Davin as cited in Wong et al., 2007, p. 36; see also Gaetano, 2015).

Life on the margins of urban society for rural migrants has meant limited prospects and a host of new types of problems. The disadvantages structured by
the non-local rural *hukou* have been amply documented in a substantial literature. Stress, stigma, and mental health issues were documented particularly among the younger, new-generation migrants caught in the transition (Qiu et al., 2012; Wang, Li, Stanton, & Fang, 2010; Li et al., 2007; Li et al., 2004). Numerous political science and population studies (e.g., Yang, 2013; Chan, 2012; Fan, 2004) and economic literature (Wen & Hanley, 2015; Yue, Li, & Feldman, 2015; Tuñón, 2006) have weighed in on the dislocations of rural-urban migrants' lives in the cities. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has pointed to and explained the rate of crime among youthful migrants by citing “discrimination, limited accessibility to occupational and educational opportunities, disparity in economy and politics, absence of social protection and welfare, and cultural and psychological shock when moving to the city” (People’s Network, 2011, n.p.).

**Women Rural Migrant Workers**

The lives of young rural girls on the edges of the urban scene are undeniably more precarious than those of young men, considering only reproductive health risks, which a substantial body of research shows (Guo, Pang, Zhang, & Zheng, 2015; He et al., 2012; Feng, Ren, Zhan, & Anan, 2005). Due to the recency and speed of social changes associated with both globalizing environments and migration, and due to the marginality of this population, the state of research on young female rural migrant workers regarding their well-being and social arrangements is rather weak. This study as part of a long-term observation about daughters from one set of villages in a remote area of Shaanxi province is well placed to explore some of the hidden associations between education, migration, and empowerment that turn them into “drivers for development” in the urban supply chain of globalization.

Before Leslie Chang’s bestseller *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China*, a few scholars focused on the special concerns and...
circumstances of female rural migrant workers (Yan, 2008, on migrant domestic workers; Zheng, 2009, on sex workers; Zhang, 2007; Jacka, 2006; Roulleau-Berger & Lu, 2005; Gaetano & Jacka 2004; Pun, 1999, 2005; Davin, 2000). Scholars who have taken a gender perspective have uncovered beneficial aspects of internal migration for women, for example, augmented opportunities, elevated status in their families and communities, and the postponement of early marriage, all of which showed that social norms were loosening up in the direction of greater freedoms (Yu, 2017, March; Lou, 2017; Chiang, Hannum, & Kao, 2015; Gaetano, 2015; Wallis, 2013; Seeberg, 2011, 2014b, 2015, March; Seeberg & Luo, 2012; Chang, 2012; Tuñón, 2006; Connerley & Pederson, 2005). However, a substantial literature on sexual health and sexual coercion of female rural migrant workers has continued to demonstrate the distinct negative impact of urban migration on women (Dai et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2007).

New in the Literature on Rural Migrants

Most of the studies reviewed above, some of which used large-scale survey data, others being qualitative inquiries, were conducted in major manufacturing regions around Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, where migrant communities have long been established, the industrial sector and labor better organized, and model service programs initiated. Few studies have focused on remoter regions of Central and Western China. Two exceptions are the Gansu survey work lead by Emily Hannum (Kong, 2016; Chiang, Hannum, & Kao, 2012; Cherng & Hannum, 2013) and the extensive survey studies conducted by Scott Rozelle and his collaborators at Stanford (see for recent examples Li, Wang, & Nie, 2017; Chang, Shi, Yi, & Johnson, 2016; Shi et al., 2016). In these less accessible regions, extreme poverty has persisted, push-pull factors of migration assumed greater magnitude, and migrant workers received few accommodations from public policy and practices. The present study adds to that sparse literature, and brings to it a close-up ethnographic perspective.

The literature on women rural migrants, particularly in remoter parts of China, has less often attended to the voices of participants and most of it is weakly theorized with a sociological approach. Few studies of migration from a human development perspective as do scholars using the human development capability approach proposed by Amartya Sen have concentrated on looking into migrants’
lives (Briones, 2009), but rather have evaluated international migration trends (see the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, 2010, thematic issue on human mobility). This is where the current study can make a contribution with a fresh perspective.

As this review of literature in realms relevant to this inquiry shows, there is little knowledge available to set a context for a participatory study of female rural migrant workers in the remote western region of China, and no work using the capability approach to explicate their lives, their choices, or not work connecting their empowerment by education in the migration process, the connection between education and migration of females—other than previous works by Seeberg (2011, 2014b, 2015), Seeberg and Luo (2012), Luo (2017), and Newton (2017).

### Purpose

The intent of this study is to find the mechanics of how rising female attainment in education is associated with rising rural to urban migration. This study uses the case of the Xiangcun Sisters (XS) of Anjinggou village (pseudonym), who are part and parcel of both the rise in education and the rise in migration. I have listened to the voices of these young women enumerate what matters to them intrinsically (Robeyns, 2005) about being educated over the past 15 years. This present study follows them into the city and focuses newly on how education matters to them in their new lives as rural migrants.

The study does not seek to evaluate the relative availability or lack of socioeconomic resources and opportunities, economic benefits, private or social returns on their education. The objectively poor conditions of their rural schooling is uncontested, including the propensity of schooling to perpetuate gender injustices that stifle “‘girls’ agency, opportunities, and self-esteem” (Jones, 2015, p. 127) as scholars of girls schooling have amply identified.7

What the present study does explore is what a group of young women rural migrant workers identify as the expansion through post-primary education of their capabilities “to lead the kind of lives they value—and have reason to value,” which Amartya Sen formulated as the core concept of his capability

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approach (Sen, 1999, p. 18). The approach is “deliberatively incomplete. It does not specify a list of valuable capabilities nor set relative weights among them…. Because these are value judgements, people have to be involved in both the identification of capabilities and the setting of priorities” (Frediani, 2006, para. 1). However, Sen continues, “greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development” (Sen, 1999, p. 18), that is, social change.

Using Seeberg’s (2014b) “educational empowerment capability” framework, which is an extension of Sen’s framework to education, this study analyzes the functionings that the XS attribute to their educational background and how they constitute empowering capabilities. Did their education empower young rural women migrant workers? Did the young rural women migrant workers exert their agency, make and act on choices in the urban setting and achieve valued outcomes, which, were they not or less educated, would have been denied to them? To answer, we developed two research questions: Research question one asks, what constraints that are associated with their rural post-primary education did the XS experience in their urban work and life? Research question two asks, what capabilities that are associated with their rural post-primary education mattered to the XS intrinsically and instrumentally for improving their lives as new rural migrant workers? What empowering capabilities were salient in the city?

Approach: Capability and Empowerment

“The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 93). The capability approach is based on the normative stance that persons strive to acquire capabilities needed for exercising choices and living decent lives, free from poverty and exploitation (Sen, 1999). “To counter the problems that we face, we have to see individual freedom as a social commitment” (Sen, 1999, xii). Given the purposes of this work, to explore and name the association of education with greater freedoms in their lives valued by young female rural
migrants, the capability approach is fitting.

The capability approach has been criticized for not pointing out that some so-called choices are externally imposed and may simply express adaptive preferences rather than freedoms. The capability approach is not an argument for free will. “Horizons in choices made and choices voiced… are inevitably tied up with more general norms, presumptions, and axioms about the good life” (Appadurai, 2004, p. 68). To this researcher, choices made express externalized values and constitute data that describe the processes of acting with intention, and describe the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). For Sen (1999), data trends, such as vectors of choices made, indicate possible individual futures and collective social progress. This normative grounding opens up the opportunity for the researcher to witness social change in the direction of greater freedom.

To clarify the concept of how capabilities are empowering, Naila Kabeer’s (1999) proposition is useful. “In as much as our notion of empowerment is about change, it refers to the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (p. 437).

**Significance of the Study**

Coming to understand the function of education in the lives and futures of women rural migrant workers, located as they are within major structural constraints and received constitutive norms, gives concrete meaning to abstract analytical components of the capability approach. The approach allows us to develop some insights into the claimed association between rising female education and rising female migration/urbanization claimed by Khoo, Smith and Fawcott (1984).

**Why Focus on Young Female Migrants?**

Some may ask why the focus on women when male rural migrant workers share much of the conditions of structural inequality and educational background. The global discourse associated with the Millennium Development Goals between the years of 2000 and 2015 has documented a multitude of intergenerational benefits of girls’ education, such as enhanced well-being of children, reduced fertility in the midterm (Save the Children, 2005; Haller, 2002), which accrue particularly
through education of girls. UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children Report 2004: Girls, Education and Development*, calls girls’ education the “most effective means of combating many of the most profound challenges to human development” (2003, p. 17). Education helps women marry later, have fewer children, reduces infant mortality rates, increases their earning power, and their daughters’ chances of enrolling in school by 40 percent or more (Yamarak & Ghosh as cited in Abu-Ghaida & Klasen, 2004). As evidence from around the world demonstrates that girls and women are drivers of development (Iversen, 2016), then it is important to understand how rural girls’ education contributes to social development in the migration transition and massive urbanization in China and elsewhere.

But more importantly, since it has been suggested that there is an association between rising educational attainment and female rural to urban migration (Khoo, Smith, & Fawcett, 1984), it is valuable to attempt to understand the mechanics of that association.

In China, female educational attainment has been rising since the mid-1980s (Social Progress Index and United Nations Development Programme; National Bureau of Statistics annual reports) with of course great regional variation (Li & Tsang, 2002; Hannum, 2003). In Anjinggou, education levels among girls started rising later. In 2010, the average attainment of 9-year compulsory schooling completion stood at 20 percent for the XS (representative of the village). By 2016, 73 percent had completed 9-year compulsory schooling, and 24 percent had even gone on to tertiary education. In 2010, a small group of girls had migrated to the city while in 2016, all the girls had done so (Seeberg, XS records, available upon request). Anjinggou started late but the association between rising educational attainment and migration or urbanization is strong. What remains unclear is what the association between education and migration may mean for young female rural migrant workers.

Better defining empowerment through this education can provide prompts to advance research conducted in various cultural settings. Advancing understanding of educational empowerment advances understanding of social progress, as Sen (2008) proposes, “understanding of the social role and importance of different capabilities” (p. 3). Hence, this research has implications for governmental and non-governmental agencies to review their approach to enhancing the urbanization experience for female migrants and urban residents,
to alleviate gendered problems in the massive demographic transition from a majority rural to a majority urban population of China.

It is in the interest of the Chinese government to enable the development of female rural migrant workers to their highest potential based on the compelling evidence of the intergenerational social benefits of women’s education, and their growing numbers in the global supply chain. The Chinese government may be persuaded to invest in female rural migrant workers’ by the recent report by the United Nations Foundation and the Bank of New York Mellon Corporation (BNY Mellon), which found that “gender-lens” investing, aimed at advancing gender equality around the globe, could help create nearly $300 billion in market impact by 2025.9

Research Design and Setting

This study draws on a long-term project using multi-modal and longitudinal methods over a 15-year period to explore the complex and changing challenges and achievements of 91 village girls, the XS10 whose home, Anjinggou village, is located in the Qinling mountains of Shaanxi province. Field work was conducted in 2004, 2010, and 2014, at which times only a few XS had migrated. The present study is based in addition on fieldwork carried out in 2015 in the two migration destinations, the provincial capital Xi’an and a prefecture-level city, Qingshanqu. Qingshanqu is three hours away on foot and by bus from the village of Anjinggou, while Xi’an is a further two hours away by bus. In addition, frequent contacts have been made since 2000 and during the research year through correspondence, email, cell-phones, and instant messages. The project’s long-term local field work assistant, Pan Jian, who also hails from Anjinggou, provided contextual information regarding their living and working conditions.

9 The report Return on Equality: Investment Opportunities to Help Close the Global Gender Gap, found that, in addition to the social impact, investing in Sustainable Development Goal 5—achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls—would create significant global consumer and market impacts for investors in five sectors: child care ($140 billion), water ($80 billion), energy ($40 billion), telecommunications ($20 billion), and contraception ($5 billion). Currently, 290 million children under the age of three do not have access to child care; 663 million people lack access to clean water; 1.2 billion people lack electricity at home; 200 million fewer women than men own mobile phones; and 225 million women have an unmet need for contraception.

10 All personal and place names, other than Xi’an, are pseudonyms.
Pan Jian and the researcher arranged interviews with the 13 key XS, young female rural migrants, visited and observed some of the sites of work and residences of participants.

The capability approach leaves the specification of valuable capabilities to people who are participants in the process in question. Since these are value judgements, people must be involved in both the identification of capabilities and the setting of priorities. But how?

Participatory methods have been proposed as one way to operationalize the Capability Approach by asking individuals to identify their value judgements in their context. Participatory methods strive to let the participant name the unnamed, capture complexities and underlying dynamics of the situation (Human Development and Capability Association, 2013, p. 1). The interview questions were patterned on the outline of the educational empowerment capability theoretical frame and very open-ended.

Interview procedures followed previous research procedures (Seeberg, 2014b). The interview protocol was translated by the interviewer from English to Chinese. The audio recordings of interviews were transcribed in Chinese and translated by the interviewer. Debriefing between two researchers was continuous. Comparison with previous interviews, records, letters, telephone conversations to double check accuracy of personal histories provided internal consistency and credibility of findings.

Participants

The present study is located on the margins of life in the cities where young women rural migrants from Anjinggou village, the XS, work and live. By 2016 all the children, able-bodied and able-minded young women, their parents, with younger siblings in tow, had resettled in a nearby prefecture level city, Qingshanqu (population 157,000 in 2010), or Xi’an, the capital of the province (population 5.2 million in 2010), a few hours away by bus. The village of Anjinggou, the home of the XS lay high up in the Qinling Mountains of Shaanxi province, stood empty with but a few elderly people left behind.

In 2015, 13 XS migrant workers were interviewed. They ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old, in educational attainment from junior secondary school (three incompleters, a.k.a. less than 9-year compulsory schooling, and three graduates),
vocational senior secondary school (three incompleters and three graduates), to college (one graduate). They had been working in the city from one month to six years. Only the four senior secondary school and college graduates held semi-professional positions of some stability, whereas the nine participants with less education and one senior secondary school graduate held unskilled labor jobs (see Table 1).

Table 1 2015 Women Rural Migrant Worker Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Attainment</th>
<th>Time Working</th>
<th>Labor Sector (from oldest to recent)</th>
<th>Current Location</th>
<th>Position (from oldest to recent)</th>
<th>Position Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pang Jin</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>college grad</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Government official training school</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Assistant teacher</td>
<td>Semi-professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Junjun</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>VH grad</td>
<td>&gt; 2.5 years</td>
<td>Construction firm</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
<td>Semi-professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Xuxu</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>VH grad</td>
<td>&gt; 2.5 years</td>
<td>Kindergarten &amp; after-school NGO, music school</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Mingming</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>VH grad</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>Food stalls, Small diner</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Linsha</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M incompl</td>
<td>&gt; 5.5 years</td>
<td>Food stalls, Small diner, Supermarket, or massage center</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Shishi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M incompl</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
<td>Food stalls, small diner, electronics stall, packing plant</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Server, assembly line worker</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Xinxin</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M grad</td>
<td>&gt; 2 years</td>
<td>Food stalls, small diner, sales, hair salon, retail</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Ranran</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>VH incompl</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
<td>Food stalls, Small diner</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Server, Assembly line, Sales assistant</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Ranting</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>VH incompl</td>
<td>&gt; 2 years</td>
<td>Book store, clothing retail</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luo Mengmeng</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M incompl</td>
<td>&gt; 5 months</td>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Stocker</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duan Ranqing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>VH incompl</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>Food stalls, Small diner</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Ranfei</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M grad</td>
<td>&gt; 6 months</td>
<td>Beauty salon</td>
<td>Qing Shanqu</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dang Mei</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M grad</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>Brick factory, restaurant, security</td>
<td>Xi’an</td>
<td>Assembly line worker, server, Security</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = junior secondary or middle school, grades 7–9; VH = vocational senior secondary school, grades 10–12; grad = graduated; incompl = incomplete; Qing Shanqu = a prefecture level city.

In addition, as necessary, the relevant data provided by rural migrant workers Xiangcun Sisters (XS) who were interviewed in 2010, 2015, and 2016 will also be included. Across the three interviews, 26 unique participants were interviewed;
In 2010, 10 XS working as rural migrants were interviewed, while 80 percent did not complete 9-year compulsory schooling. Another 16 XS were still in school; In 2015, of the 13 XS rural migrant workers interviewed, 10\% did not complete 9-year compulsory schooling, 50\% completed junior secondary, 30\% completed senior secondary, and one XS had completed college education; In 2016, 21 XS migrant workers were interviewed. Among them, only 27\% did not complete 9-year compulsory schooling. Seven XS were interviewed in 2010, 2015, and 2016, providing longitudinal data that is part of the data bank consulted in the present study.

The analysis process involved three main stages: firstly, reading for overall understanding; secondly, coding based on main concepts in the research questions including emergent themes not in the pre-set codes; thirdly, ordering of codes into the capability dimensions in relation to the research questions. NVivo software was used for the two episodes of the coding processes; each time the interviews were read and processed again. As is mentioned, the capability dimensions are cyclical and overlapping, hence the analysis process is recursive.

**Findings**

The identification of capabilities associated with education and evaluating them in terms of priorities if possible is the goal of this capability approach study. Using the research questions to organize the major themes raised by the XS and the categories of the educational empowerment capability framework we will grasp a better understanding of how the XS saw their educational empowerment.

In the previous studies on the XS when the majority were still anchored to their village homes, gains accumulated with rising attainment neatly sliced the group into two clusters, those with less than the compulsory 9-year schooling and those with more, which headed for distinct life paths. Clearly, educational attainment had important effect on capabilities that empowered young women.

Since the 2008 consolidation of rural schools, most of the XS had studied in the junior secondary boarding school located in a market town, where the metaphorical and practical bridge to urban life began. To village girls like the XS, schooling represented an extremely narrow channel of escape rigidified over the millennia by academic examination-driven credentialism (Dore, 2000), a single pathway signifying the social mobility. The starting gate was the local, barely
functional primary school with its haphazard instruction, located an hour and a half down mountain goat paths. Once in, the XS were subjected to dreary rote book learning that was fundamentally alienated from the village life of manual labor that they led (see Wang, 2013; Seeberg, 2008a, 2011; Seeberg, Ross, Liu, & Tan, 2007). Yet the schools provided the path out of the village and its traditions. Between 2010 and 2015, only two of 38 XS interviewed agreed or submitted to a rural marriage arrangement.

In the context of the importance of schooling to young women with migration and urban dreams, we present the findings on the capabilities and they were able to enhance as rural migrant workers.

**Severity of Constraints**

The focus in this study is on empowerment capabilities gained in post-primary education; however, the severity of the macro- and mezzo-level constraints deserves separate attention. Research question one asked the XS to identify the limits associated with their post-primary education, and the un-freedoms they experienced as a result in their urban work and life. Their answers turned out to be more complex.

In many societies, a host of disadvantages are expected for rural migrants in urban environments (Gaetano, 2015; Wong et al., 2007; Jacka, 2006). For the XS, similar objective conditions existed at the mezzo-level: primarily economic privation due to extreme poverty in family background (Seeberg, 2014a), low-paid work in the rural migrant worker labor market segment, social exclusion associated with residential isolation to “urban villages,” restriction to rural migrant social networks, and vulnerabilities of their sex encountered on the urban streets, prevalence of sex work and premarital pregnancy and abortion risks.

In general, the economic privations, social exclusions and urban sexual risks encountered by the XS were structurally linked with their rural hukou as well as their lower educational achievement and attainment than common in the city. However, at the micro-level, the story complicates.

**Economic Facilities and Educational Attainment**

The nine XS with less than a 9-year compulsory schooling were the most
restricted in economic resources and opportunities, and functionings; they
changed jobs on average twice a year and after five years were still struggling in
the same low-skilled sector with few prospects and models of escape into less
arduous, stable work (Table 1). Most of them worked as wait personnel, cashiers,
beauty parlor assistants, sales in market stalls, for at least eight hours a day,
seven days a week, alternating morning/night shifts, earning between 800 and
2,100 RMB per month. Time off would cost deductions from any attendance
bonus. The lower end of that range of earnings was not self-sustaining. Pang
Linsha shared,

It is difficult to find a job here. Even if I find a job, the pay is very low… I need to earn
2,500–3,000 RMB monthly so as not to have economic stress. But I can only find a job
for 2,000 RMB (personal communication, July 2015).

Pang Shishi shared, “I have financial burdens. My wage is 1,600 RMB
monthly. I want to learn some occupational skills. My mom is in hospital, I gave
her 2,000 RMB for her medical bill” (personal communication, July 2015). Lin
Xiaowei was equally stressed, “I felt very stressful and burdensome to support
my parents and siblings during my first six years working in the city” (personal
communication, July 2015). Pang Linsha,

[I] mostly worked in supermarket as a cashier. Then I left because I felt there was no
promising future. I switched to work in beauty salon for six months. At the beginning, I
felt good, but later I was not satisfied with what I was earning (personal communication,
July 2015).

This relative deprivation felt about the low salaries is directly related to their
educational disadvantage. Although all the XS held rural hukou status, it was
their educational attainment and achievement that either enabled or
disadvantaged them in developing empowering capabilities related to work.
Among the four XS with vocational senior secondary school education and
higher (2015), three found entry-level professional jobs, two teachers, one
construction accountant. Vocational senior secondary and college graduates by
comparison might start at 800 RMB but would increase to 1,700 RMB in the
human service sector and RMB 3,000 in construction accounting. They could
count on four to eight days off per month and some bonuses, but none mentioned
Among the XS who did not complete senior secondary school, two expressed regrets that their education had not prepared them for decent work in the city. “I was majoring in computer technology [in a vocational senior secondary school]. I couldn’t learn anything useful there, so I quit” (Duan Ranqing, personal communication, July 2015). Pang Mingming who graduated in the same major from a different vocational senior secondary school explained, “I did not learn a solid foundation of computer science, it was hard to find a technical job after graduation...Later I became a cashier in a supermarket” (personal communication, July 2015).

Though both clusters were still working in the segmented labor market, educational achievement and attainment functioned as a more significant resource for enhancing capabilities. Those in the higher educational achievement cluster, though marked by their hukou, could convert their educational resources into better prospects and a more secure future.

**Gender Vulnerabilities and Safety**

The gender vulnerabilities that the XS faced were inscribed on their identities by long-standing norms of patriarchy. Staying as single young women in poor, unsafe inner-city villages, they relied on their village friends and relatives to achieve protective safety, for example, to find safer accommodation.

Village life had been permeated by a Confucian world view on strict role obligations that confined and dismissed females, of which the XS were painfully aware. The risk factors of sexual exploitation common in their “urban village” surroundings, did not fit into their rural identities, in part due to low awareness of such risks or naïveté, and due to their rural Catholic upbringing. The villagers in Anjinggou had for generations practiced Catholicism, hence these norms permeated the lives of the XS. Pang Ranran said, “I will not have premarital sex because it’s not allowed by our Catholic religion” (personal communication, July 2015). Liu Xinxin said, “I am a Catholic, I am very conservative in this aspect” (personal communication, July 2015). Both Pang Ranting and Dang Mei said, “I don’t think premarital pregnancy is a solution, it kills one life” (personal communication, July 2015). Pang Linsha, who desperately needed a job at one point and took a job as a cashier in a massage parlor, said:
Recently, they assigned me to be a receptionist... I quit... you know, it’s very “tricky” to be a receptionist in foot massage center, at first I do not know, then... I know that receptionists introduce “the service” to customers [prostitution service]. It is not appropriate... as a Catholic. So I quit. (personal communication, July 2015)

Their Catholicism and being bound into a Catholic community provided them with more protective security.

**Deprivation and Adaptive Preference**

The mezzo-level constraints were understood by the XS as associated with their background and primary social affiliation, only tacitly acknowledged as a *hukou* limitation at the macro-level. To them, except at the extremes, the limitations played the role of adaptive preferences rather than deprivations. There were challenges and negotiations to be undertaken. Despite knowing their “outsider” status and the negative stereotypes found in the media, the XS actively maintained their rural identity and affiliations. They chose to return often to their village of origin, e.g., visiting for holidays, harvest, special needs, and they chose to maintain their rural *hukou* status. Pang Jin, though she knew more about the benefits associated with *hukou* than the less educated XS, and as a college student in the city had a better chance of getting an urban *hukou*, reasoned:

> I planned to transfer my *hukou* to Xi’an but rethought it. My uncles suggested me not to do so because... it can make things complicated. Besides, there are some benefits related to rural *hukou*. My grandma said people with rural *hukou* would be assigned some land by the government (personal communication, August 2015).

This was a common phenomenon among the “floating population” of migrant workers (Zhu & Lin, 2014) to preserve their rural *hukou*. The XS did not aspire in the long term to move farther away from their home village or leave their home province to see the world, and if so, as two XS did, they would move briefly to work in the coastal manufacturing centers and come back, seeking connection and marriageable partners near their home. Some of the earlier migrant XS interviewed in 2016, who had been in the city for a few years were looking to their parents to arrange a marriage in or near their home village.
Pang Shishi had gone off to the coastal South China manufacturing hub for two years, and voluntarily returned when her family had arranged a marriage for her. Pang Mingming went to work in Beijing and returned shortly because she was not used to restaurant work and could not understand the dialect. Others held brief internships out of the province during vocational secondary school or went on mission trips with their church, but returned for good to Xi’an and Qingshanqu. Their preference was to maintain their rural identity and adapt to the associated conditions. Over time, the external conditions had become less debilitating.

At the mezzo-level, the need to seek work far away from home decreased markedly after 2010. The Qingshanqu area had transformed from a sleepy county town into a city sprouting and spreading high rise commercial and apartment developments, many quarters of markets and shops to find work. Hence the XS’ adaptive preference to remain rurally identified was a resource that was convertible into fertile capabilities, those that promoted further capabilities (more on that below).

**Intrinsic and Instrumental Capabilities, Agency and Achievement Associated with Education**

In this section, findings that enumerate what capabilities mattered to the XS intrinsically about being educated, and what capabilities were instrumental in improving their lives as new rural migrant workers will be presented. Sen’s (1999) dimensions of well-being, agency and achievements provide a basic structure of analysis, but it becomes obvious that the process of enhancing capabilities is cyclical, recursive, and overlapping in certain aspects. Constitutive capabilities are integrally related to instrumental capabilities, which in turn engender agency, that can bring about the achievement of a valued outcome. Embedded in this process are external opportunities and constraints which compose the field, as Bourdieu would call it, within which capabilities arise and can be enacted. According to Sen (1999), this is where persons make choices based on what they value, and that is how valued achievements are reached.

To distinguish the contribution of post primary education to urban migrant life, a little background in the valued capabilities the XS achieved in the village school setting will be given.
Salient Capabilities Associated with Schooling

A primary salient finding in previous and current research of an instrumental capability associated with post-primary schooling is its provision of protective security to all XS against early arranged marriage. By the year 2010, the longer the XS stayed in school, the longer the protection lasted. In the earlier years before 2010, many XS reported pressure from their parents to quit school and marry. After 2010, only one father insisted on disrupting his daughter’s schooling for an arranged marriage, though she baulked at his plan and returned to school. The parental insistence was most often based on absolute economic privation rather than simply cultural tradition.

The second most salient finding is an instrumental capability associated with post-primary schooling and educational attainment that sliced the XS neatly into two clusters. For those XS, four of 13 of the 2015 participants, who graduated from senior secondary or college, it served as a gateway to much improved work opportunities and a complex opportunity field. Those XS who terminated before 9-year compulsory schooling had lacked the primarily economic resources to achieve in the exam-driven schools and to finance costly senior secondary school (Seeberg, 2008b, 2014b; Seeberg, et al., 2007). For these XS, the instrumental capability they developed in their schooling provided them with limited opportunities in the lowest un-skilled levels of the severely segregated rural migrant worker labor markets in cities.

A third salient constitutive capability gained in post primary schooling was a modicum of well-being. This the XS reaffirmed after migration in 2015. The XS before they migrated had experienced schools as incubators of capabilities that had been absent from their village lives. They had enjoyed cognitive and artistic learning, to broadening their world view through literature, extending their social world, and had developed aspirations to live a modern, urban life. They “liked the city and planned to settle down. It is prosperous” (Pang Shishi, personal communication, July 2015). “I have the normal life in the city and am satisfied with it” (Pang Ranran, personal communication, July 2015), or “I enjoy city life because it is very simple and comfortable” (Pang Xuxu, personal communication, July 2015). After migration, their lives as migrant workers did not provide them with many resources or leisure time to simply enjoy arts or enrichment education, outside of activities organized by their church. Dang Mei shared, “I used to read
books a lot when I was in school. But after I left school, I did not read much, just occasionally” (personal communication, July 2015). However, they wished and some pursued further instrumental learning for occupational advancement. Pang Shishi said, “I want to learn hair-styling and cosmetic skills, so I searched lots of videos and websites regarding this on the internet” (personal communication, July 2015).

Social Arrangements and Support (关系, Guanxi) and Association with Education

A fourth salient capability, both constitutive of well-being and instrumental in the lives of the XS is the functioning within social arrangements that XS rural migrants enacted. The village school was the location where they first learned skills to get along with a variety of people; in the city exposure to diversity multiplied exponentially. The village bond enveloped them in a close web of kinship before migration; after migration these regional bonds (同乡, tongxiang) assumed new importance. Extended and close family members arranged housing, showed them around the city and found them jobs. “I turned to family for financial help when needed, asked relatives for temporary housing in the transition of switching jobs, and hung out with old friends from my hometown and colleagues to get familiar with the city and city life,” said Pang Xuxu (personal communication, July 2015). Many migrant communities across China mobilized their own networks and developed a collective consciousness (Yu, March 2017). In the long term the XS chose these social bonds over the likely but riskier economic advancement in manufacturing centers further away, outside of the province. Only two tried this at all. Chan and Pun (2010) found “workers networks” were built on kinship, ethnicity, interests, and built social capital as a crucial resource to migrant workers.

Affective Skills Associated with Education

The village school had been identified in prior research (Seeberg & Luo, 2012) as a place where XS could enhance their affective skills and build confidence and independence. Education and the space of schooling provided the basis for further social learning, further development of capabilities in the much more
complex environment of the city and workplaces.

The XS who attended senior secondary and higher education had gained more independence, confidence, and social skills by living in the school dorms than their classmates who had been living at home. The XS with less schooling did not have the confidence to socialize outside of their immediate circle nor the necessary interpersonal and communication skills. Quite a few of the XS reported being “too shy,” “only feeling comfortable to talk to people they know,” “too blunt,” “hurting others’ feelings” or “not knowing how to communicate with customers from urban middle class.” Pang Linsha said, “I am good at chatting with friends casually, but in formal situation, I do not know what to say” (personal communication, July 2015). Luo Mengmeng said, “I do not know how to talk to my colleagues. Sometimes if I say something wrong, they may get angry... I am very blunt, so I may hurt people unintentionally” (personal communication, July 2015). Duan Ranqing shared similar concerns.

Dong Miao, who was a college student in 2010, reflected,

In middle school, I... would say anything that came to my mind. In high school, I learned to consider the consequence of my words and think more deeply. In college, I made considerable progress when I met students from different provinces (personal communication, June 2010).

Three college students, like the high school students, mentioned being more able to deal with stress and keep an inner balance and added that they were more able to deal with loneliness and adjusted better to college life than some of their college mates who had not gone to boarding schools since middle school.

A softer skill, a functioning that permeated all capability enhancements, was that of decision-making, problem-solving, which the XS also had started developing in their village schooling. They had learned to make conscious choices, exercising cognitive and psychological control, and had achieved greater confidence that helped them make decisions.

I am more psychologically able to deal with problems or stress. Many young college students don’t adapt easily to college life because their parents were not around. I boarded in high school and became very independent (Qin Ting, personal communication, June 2010).
In the city, the need to solve problems and make decision or choices multiplied exponentially. The XS were constantly weighing large decisions, such as job opportunities, cost-benefit calculations related to payment, weighing long-term aspirations and the needs of their families (Luo, 2017). Opportunities and responsibilities such as these had not been open to them in the traditional village environment.

The less educated XS were more frequently faced with urgent decisions than the higher educated XS. They faced greater risks and fewer opportunities to “get ahead,” but kept their aspirations for a better life in mind, “I mostly worked in supermarket as a cashier. Then I left because I felt there was no promising future” (Pang Linshi, personal communication, July 2015).

**Cognitive Skills Associated with Education**

A rarely mentioned capability, but one that in the analysis rose to the level of great salience, is that of the cognitive and aspirational capabilities gained through schooling. Rarely did one of the XS mention that their education had prepared them for city work or life. Rarely did XS in 2015 claim to have developed any functionings valuable in the city based on their subject learning or specific skills such as geography, math, etc. One of the older XS interviewed in 2010 after eight years’ migrant work lamented her lack of math and language skills due to her poor rural schooling. One of the youngest XS interviewed in 2010 and 2015 attributed her interest in cosmetics to the art work she had enjoyed in the village primary school. It is possible that the XS took capabilities gained in basic education for granted and did not compare themselves to their mothers who lacked them.

Yet almost every one of the XS in 2015 wished for and a number pursued continuing education to, firstly, access opportunities to desirable work and, secondly, improve their lives. It is reasonable to connect this drive and agency to their sense of the power of being educated. Several XS regretted their lack of urban mannerisms, and social graces; they tried to improve their social skills, pouring over self-help books and magazines and imitating urban customers at work.

The aspiration and agency to be more educated is a highly salient finding for the XS rural migrant workers, which corroborates the work of Gaetano (2015),
Zhu and Lin (2014), and Zhu (2002) whose research was conducted in more developed manufacturing hubs of China.

**Aspirations for Enhanced Vocational Skills**

To fulfill their aspirations for better economic status, over half of the XS with lower educational attainment negotiated and engaged in apprenticeships, some requiring substantial fees, to enhance their vocational skills. Though many non-formal/informal occupational training programs existed in Xi’an and Qingshanqu, few affordable occupational skill training programs were accessible to the XS. For example, Pang Ranfei was so dedicated to learning hair-styling, she “paid the salon RMB 1,200… cleaning and everything the boss asks me to do” for no pay and long hours for five months just to have the opportunity to observe the stylists. “My plan is to stay there for another six months and then apply for jobs in other stores where they have shorter work hours” (personal communication, July 2015).

Those with a vocational senior secondary degree, if not admitted by colleges through the college entrance exam, could take advantage of opportunities in the formal adult education system, pre-service and in-service higher education in short term technical colleges, self-taught examination system for academic certificates, non-diploma-oriented adult education, including continuing education, job training system and vocational certificate programs, delivered in a variety of formats from distance to evening sessions. Several of the better educated XS were about to grasp such opportunities. Pang Junjun signed up for an adult education degree program to get a promotion. Pang Xuxu felt that if she did not keep on learning, she could not “survive” in the city. She had interned in a kindergarten where “all the teachers have an associate degree (大专文凭, dazhuan wenping). I want to advance my education and get an associate degree” (personal communication, July 2015). In-service training was more available in the better positions, and some of the XS with lower educational attainment could obtain such jobs after some years.

The pursuit of these educational opportunities on the part of the XS is a clear demonstration of the capability-achievement cycle. XS’ past education lead to their taking agency to attain a higher degree or informal knowledge. External opportunities and constraints did set limitations on their capabilities as rural
migrant workers, but the XS were empowered to make choices in the city which was previously denied to them.

**Political Empowerment**

Political empowerment of a kind constituted a continual theme in the stories of the XS. They had been the first girls in their village to complete primary schooling and beyond, which had changed their self-ascribed gender identity from insignificant to “little intellectuals”. Their status had elevated the value of schooling for younger village daughters in general (Pan Jian, local field work assistant, personal communication, February 2012). This stronger, more independent identity empowered the girls and allowed their parents to support their migration to the city. The higher the attainment, the more power the XS had accrued in the family (Seeberg & Luo, 2012).

Sen (1999) argued for the necessity of gaining political freedoms in the sense of civil rights and entitlements as well as freedom of speech in the public domain (p. 38) for social progress to occur. Civic guarantees, equality of guarantees, were not extended to young women in patriarchal Chinese tradition nor to migrant workers with a rural hukou. These rights and entitlements were not part of the curriculum or made available to students or families in rural schools. Yet sometimes when encountering egregious discrimination or unfair treatment on the job, such as loss of earnings, bad landlords or fellow residents, some of the XS, regardless of level of educational attainment, exerted agency and spoke up and acted on their own behalf. College-educated XS may not have claimed rights or entitlements; they did, however, have greater resources to negotiate for better opportunities and take greater chances.

**Summary**

The constraints, economic privations, social exclusion, and urban sexual risks, though they constituted unfreedoms, also hung in the balance against personal capabilities, well-being and protective security. Their adaptive preferences for things rural were limiting yet provided social status, locus of control, belonging, and, above all, resources.

XS rural migrant workers manifested enhanced capabilities associated with
their schooling in mainly four dimensions, (1) protective security against early arranged marriage and greater choice in relationships, (2) advanced educational attainment or degrees, (3) rural identity and social arrangements, and (4) cognitive and aspirational capabilities. The fifth capability, political empowerment, through a continual theme, when considered from Sen’s (1999) perspective of civil rights and entitlements, remained largely unrealized and beyond the realm of what schooling in China could provide. Yet when encountering egregious treatment, regardless of level of educational attainment, the XS did exert agency and spoke up on their own behalf. Altogether, they acted as agents “who act and bring about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of their own values and objectives” (Sen, p.19). Their achievements were embodied in the capabilities enumerated above.

The capability that held primary position in all of the XS’ value schemas was continuing education to enhance their capabilities further to, firstly, access opportunities to desirable work and, secondly, improve their lives. This research finding corroborates what other scholars, e.g., Gaetano (2015), Zhu and Lin (2014), and Zhu (2002), also found for migrant workers in more developed manufacturing hubs of China.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused solely on what matters to the young women rural new-migrant workers intrinsically and instrumentally about being educated in post-primary, rural schools. Though much of the literature on migrant women has depicted them as exploited and vulnerable figures dissatisfied with their status and in poor mental health (Tian, 2011, January 13; Mou, Griffiths, Fong, & Dawes, 2013; Lin et al, 2011), the present study focused on rural migrant workers’ own voices, their being, doings, and aspirations in the urban migrant worker social context structured by the segmented labor market, its laws, rules, and profit motives.

The XS felt relative deprivation about the un-sustaining low salaries which were directly related to their relative educational disadvantage as rural hukou holders. Disproportionately affected by gender and sexual vulnerability, they relied on their village friends and relatives and their Catholic value system, to achieve protective safety. These specific and general constraints at the
mezzo-level were understood by the XS as associated with their rural background and primary social affiliation. They only tacitly acknowledged the macro-level *hukou* limitation. To them, except at the extremes, the limitations played the role of adaptive preferences rather than unjust deprivations. The more egregious infringements on their freedoms they saw as challenges and negotiations to be undertaken.

The XS with higher educational attainment succeeded more sustainably “to lead longer, freer and more fruitful lives, in addition to the role they have in promoting productivity and economic growth or individual incomes” (Sen, 1999, p. 18). Those who had terminated their schooling early and were jobbing in the city had achieved an empowerment capability set that puts them in positions with much more promise than their un-educated mothers. The expanded opportunities in the city allowed the XS to reframe a vision of a possible future, and to realize the opportunities in the city as a *place to change* deep cultural preferences, like early marriage, opening “pathways between aspirations and reality” (Appadurai, 2004, p. 83).

These were the capabilities that mattered to them intrinsically about being educated and that were instrumental in improving their lives as new rural migrant workers, as research question two asked. Gaetano (2015) documented a similarly complex dynamic between stigmatizing stresses and inadequacies regarding urban lifestyles and civility and the migrant women’s active engagement with enhancing their “personal quality” (个人素质, *geren suzhi*).

Among the migrated and higher educated village girls, the author (2014b) found a direct relationship between increased educational attainment and political power and independence in the family. This study found that village educated girls who became rural migrant workers held strong aspirations for better or more education. Similarly, Newton (2017) found that among women factory workers, not all of whom were rural migrants, pursuit of mostly non-formal education increased their agency capabilities, a core element of empowerment (p. 160). Rucai (as cited in Newton, 2017) reported that in 2006, Peking University (*Bejing Daxue*) created their Common School to provide continuing education classes and had no trouble enrolling approximately 3,000 of its community of migrant workers. Wong et al. (2008), found among female rural migrant workers that “education level showed a positive association with vitality and mental health” (p. 489), that is, well-being.
Extreme poverty among Anjinggou villagers acted as a strong push factor and the segregated migrant labor market as a pull factor. The one intervening element that could affect the pull from the labor market was education; it could change life paths. The inherited village bonds provided the XS with an empowering place in a social arrangement, a resource second to education they converted into capabilities. XS depending on their level of attainment, were in position to make choices to develop their potential, in proportion to their level of educational attainment. In an empowerment process, the externalities around un-freedoms change (Batliwala, 2013; March, Levinson & Holland, 1996), and social re-arrangements occur. For the XS rural migrant worker women, the change was toward enhanced freedoms and showed how they drove social change.

References


