

Collegians, Their Perceptions and Values: a Brazil and China Comparative Study

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Abstract

This is a quantitative sampling research held within the scope of the Brazil-China Agreement. It compares the Brazilian college youth with the Chinese, in the 17 to 24 year-old age bracket. The data was obtained in 2012, by means of a same questionnaire in both countries. The paper will privilege the data related to values and visions about the best and the worst aspects of being a youngster. It will analyze the differences between young men and women. There will also be some reflections about the research conduction process. With regard to the results, the peculiarities of each group are being identified. Notwithstanding the singularities observed between the youths of each society, it can be observed that there are some transverse points of contact that allow us to go ahead in drawing up the contemporary juvenile condition, incorporating the differences of genders as a fundamental aspect.

Keywords: College Youth – comparative study – China

1. Introduction

This article presents some results of a research carried out in 2012 with Brazilian and Chinese collegians. Its objective was to get to know who these students are and what their values are, in societies that are living through the consequences of the globalization process. At the same time, it sought to present contrasting historical and cultural realities that are diversely affected by these changes. Written by Brazilian researchers, this is a situated analysis and, therefore, has as its perspective the historical and cultural parameters that establish the bases determined by them. For these reasons, much care has been taken in interpreting data and, probably, new paths could be followed if the analyses would be carried out together with the Chinese researchers involved in this investigation¹.

Researches on youth in Brazil, resumed after the 1980's, tended to privilege qualitative focuses and permitted expanding empirical issues, revealing themes and ways of life that contributed to forming important images with regard to this youth. However, studies of a quantitative nature, more closely related to a moderate range survey, are still rare. Scarcer yet are those that present, from their very start, a comparative handling, whether of national or transnational realities.

In the same manner, taking a balance of the youth studies developed in China, we also recognize the need to broaden the scope of local researches by using approaches that incorporate the comparative perspective (Mong, 2014). In an attempt to answer these new demands, a group of researchers brought together by the Brazilian Sociological Society (SBS) with researchers of the CYCRC – *China Youth and Children Research Center* – sought to carry out a comparative investigation among Brazilian and Chinese collegians, while recognizing, at the same time, the innumerable challenges present in the attempt to establish dialogue with profoundly diverse socio-cultural realities.

¹ A joint analysis of the data of this research can be found in a text in development “*A study of Chinese and Brazilian college students: sociability and values*”, having as authors Marilia Sposito, Marilena Nakano and Chen Chen, which will be available shortly.

Besides recognizing the historical specificities and singularities, the perspective that was adopted sought to identify some *transversalities* that characterize the contemporary state of being young, in face of changes on a planetary scale and the development of information and communication technologies.

The first approaches began in 2004 and were consolidated in a cooperation agreement, which was signed in Brazil by IPEA – *Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas e Aplicadas* and by SBS – *Sociedade Brasileira de Sociologia*; and in China by the CYCRC – *China Youth and Children Research Center* and by CYCRA – *China Youth and Children Research Association*. The Brazilian researchers are professors at universities situated in São Paulo and Brasília, while the Chinese partners are from the CYRC, which is connected to the University of Beijing.

2. Methodological Challenges

The main tenet of comparison is “the other”: the act of recognizing the other and ourselves through the other. Comparison is a process of perception of the differences and similarities, a classic strategy within the Social Sciences, but which implies a permanent effort in keeping a certain epistemological vigilance, according to Bourdieu (2004). It means understanding the other based on “self” and, by exclusion, recognize “self” in the difference, in a permanent movement to transform into objective that which is subjective.

The following question could be proposed: why compare, why confront similarities and differences? We could answer that the motives lie in the need to get to know the other, our interlocutor, our neighbor, etc., and, with this action, not only deepen the knowledge of the other, but also to increase the self knowledge of who is investigating this social universe. However, this activity is not so simple and not always as clear as it seems at first sight. (FRANCO, 2000:200).

Albeit not being a simple task, in times of globalization, of an intense communication network and circulation of information, comparative studies are ever more necessary because the images indicate, at the same time, the impression of the existence of similarities and singularities among youth in each country as well as within the same country.

Notwithstanding the option for the first approach of a quantitative nature, the qualitative aspects of the investigation were present in a permanent manner since it was dealing, at all times, with a meeting of researchers that originated from different cultures. Some inconsistencies in the translations always occurred, even though the adoption of the use of the English language as a common intermediary was avoided. As the Italian language so aptly points out “*Traduttore e Traditore*” (in English, Translator and Traitor) are very similar and every translator establishes a kind of betrayal from the original text in order to re-write it in the desired language.

The confirmation of the apparently commonplace and reiterated use of colloquial terms of the researchers of Latin origin, the constant presence of metaphors in the forms of communication of our society demanded permanent special care, from the moment of elaborating the question until the interpretation of the answers. On the other hand, not all the questions that are a part of the issues that would interest the Brazilian researchers could be shared; an ample understanding of what could be the object of investigation was gradually established while working on consolidating the questionnaire. In this manner, a long learning process in how the questions should be made already occurred at this preliminary stage.

Some examples can demonstrate the challenges faced by the teams. In Brazil, when youth is asked whether they find *spaces* for participating there is no doubt as to the meaning: are there channels, ways of participating in the public sphere for youth? However, for the Chinese researchers, the meaning of the word “space” was literal. For them this meant asking if there were squares, streets, or in other words, places where youth could participate in the public sphere.

On the other hand, issues that are meaningful for one culture, are not necessarily so for others as a result of historical contingencies. In Brazil, today, changes within the religious field with the dissemination of new forms of religiosity within Christianity, especially with the new Pentecostal groups, have occupied anthropological and sociological investigations, while also reaching studies on youth. For the Chinese culture, however, the religious issue posed is only based on the great denominations such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Islamism while the problems derived from the proliferation of religious denominations, as is the Brazilian case, are not present. In the same manner, themes that today constitute public debate in Brazil, especially if we are dealing with youth, such as the issues of sexual orientation or racial relations, have not attained the same repercussion in other societies or are not issues that affect their social relations and, for this reason, are not contemplated.

The dissensuses that could be overcome in the elaboration of the questionnaire permitted a high level of confidence in analyzing the data, but, at any rate, there had to be some edge trimming when the analyses were made. For example, on soliciting information for the criteria in choosing friends one of the alternatives regarded the appearance, the *look* of this youth, the idea having been condensed in the expression in Portuguese “*visual*” of the youth. In the Chinese version “*visual*” was understood as “vision”, or the manner of thinking of the youth. The same occurred with the housing issue. The apparently simple question in Portuguese asked “With whom do you live?” appeared in the Chinese version as “Who lives in your house?” For Chinese youth your house is where your family is and, for this reason, they answered who lived in this house, even if they themselves were not, at that time, living there. Student housing or living with friends to study at a university in the large cities - Beijing or Shanghai - is not “his” house. A very complex vision of traditional cultures about the home is thus highlighted, which contrasts with the perception of the Brazilians. The dissensuses were only discovered when the results were debated, seen that student housing, away from parents, is common practice at Chinese universities, but these are not considered houses. For Brazilian youth there is no student housing, the place you are living at present is your house, even though it is not with your family. Because of this dissensus the answers to this question could not be considered, but, at any rate, the initial dialogues and permanent interaction among the researchers have contributed to a greater refinement in analyzing the results, with permanent care taken regarding possible interpretations.

The questionnaire was developed in each country's mother tongue, made up of 66 questions, organized in content blocs with closed questions (multiple choice, single choice), with options in a numerical scale. It was concomitantly applied in two metropolitan regions of each one of the countries, involving Beijing, Shanghai, Brasilia and São Paulo – respectively capitals and largest industrial poles of both countries.

The universe was made up of collegians up to 24 years of age, so as to make them comparable, since in China students older than 24 are much less frequent than in Brazil. In order to assure a greater representativeness of the population investigated, 3 institutes of higher learning, with distinct characteristics, were chosen in each one of the cities, (IPEA, 2012).

In the Brazilian case, given the diversity that characterizes the higher schooling system, institutions with different profiles were chosen in each one of the regions. In all, questionnaires were applied in two public universities of renowned prestige, two community/foundation type institutions, and two private ones. There are 2,429 students in the Brazilian sample group; of these, 1,389 are women and 1,037 are men. In China, there are 1,720 students; of these, 649 are men and 1,071 are women (Table 1). The study also included diversified institutions so as to assure certain heterogeneity in the sample group.

3. A brief Profile of young Chinese and Brazilian Collegians: Similarities and Dissimilarities

Within each age group researched (17-24 years old), the majority is close to 20 years old, in both countries, although the Brazilian collegians are usually found in the older age groups (Table 2).

In both countries the sample group had a majority of female students, as can be observed in Figure 1. Although there are more women in the Chinese sample it must be observed that in the totality of the population, Chinese women are not a majority, which contrasts with Brazil.

According to the Census held in both countries in 2010, China had 1.3 billion inhabitants, of which 51.3% were men and 48.7% were women, while in Brazil, there were 190 million inhabitants, and inversely, 48.9% were men and 51.1% were women (UNITED NATIONS, 2014). In Brazil, women constitute 55% of the university population (INEP, 2012). Studies about women in Chinese universities have started being carried out, indicating an increase of their presence at this level of schooling and highlighting that they are present not only as students, but also as teachers. Although women collegians are not as yet majority, there is a growing tendency of their presence at this level of schooling, making Chinese society approach the situation of other countries, as is the case with Brazil (LI, 2013).

In Brazil, as in China, the sample group is constituted of predominantly single collegians, both among men as among women: the single young Brazilian men represent 98.1% and in China, 97.0% of the male population investigated; in Brazil, 96.2% of the young women are single, while in China it is 98.0% (Table 3).

To be young, single, and with a majority of women does not say everything about the groups researched. The youth in both countries present some similar characteristics even though living in very diverse socio-cultural and historic realities. Among the variables selected that reveal these likenesses are: the schooling of the fathers and mothers, the existence of certain standards that, on the one hand likens the women of both countries and, on the other, the men.

If family data is considered, it can be observed, in a general manner, that there is an important concentration, within the higher schooling levels (full higher schooling and post graduate studies), of fathers and mothers, in both countries. (Figure 2).

In the case of the fathers, among Brazilian collegians, about 39.7% present high schooling levels while in China this is 38.9%. However, the levels of fathers with less schooling (illiterate and incomplete basic education) show that the rates in Brazil are higher (9.8%) than in China (4.4%). Would this be an indication of greater dissemination of the offer for education in China for this generation of fathers? In Brazil, the expansion of the opportunities of access to schooling is still very recent and unequal. These diverse rhythms can also be observed with regard to fathers who have finished secondary school or have begun higher studies; these constitute the largest group in China, reaching 46.7% of the fathers and, in Brazil, these reach 36.4% (Table 4).

In the case of the mothers, in both countries, there is a significant percentage of those who are present in the higher levels of schooling, concentrated in complete higher schooling and post graduate studies. Some singular tendencies can be observed in their regard. In Brazil, mothers with a high schooling level make up 44.7% of the total, but in China this rate is slightly lower (32.6%). Inversely, in the population of mothers with lower schooling levels, rates are lower in China (5.9%) than in Brazil (9.3%). In the group with complete secondary school and incomplete higher schooling is where the great differences in schooling of the mothers are found in the two countries: in Brazil, 35.7% of the mothers are in this group, whereas in China, there is a significantly greater proportion (49.8%) (Table 4, Figure 2).

In spite of these differences, in both countries it appears to confirm what researches have shown regarding the strong connection between the schooling of the parents, especially the mothers, and the presence of youth at the higher schooling level.

If sociability among youth is considered, principally in the case of friendship, there is much similarity between the two groups. In this manner, for example, when they are asked “how did you meet your present friends”, the school appears as the most important space for establishing these relations. The majority of those interviewed got to know their present friends at the university and in secondary school. About one quarter of the youngsters also indicate basic education (Figure 3). Even though in the Brazilian case the limits of the schooling institution in socializing and its inadequacies due to changes that have resulted from its expansion, it is necessary to recognize how this space is important for the development of friendship relations, the latter understood not only as sociability, but also as an experience of equality and, therefore, uniting ethical and political virtues (Sposito, 2003).

There are slight differences between the two groups, which are not characterized as predominant, but could point to different social structures in both countries. In this manner, for example, 15.4% of Brazilians make friends in church while 18.2% of the Chinese, in organizations in which they participate such as sports clubs, political organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

Another characteristic that reveals likenesses between Brazilian and Chinese youth is in regard to carrying out activities that are markedly feminine or masculine (Figure 4). In both countries, when they are at home, the women, more than the men, talk to their parents or other family members during their leisure hours. In their turn, the young men, much more than the young women, play videogame or other electronic games.

With regard to the other activities that youth carries out at home during their leisure hours, different tendencies are not verified among men and women of the two countries (Table 5).

Other dissimilarities reveal the impacts of these very different societies on the youth studied:

- a) Many Brazilian youngsters combine work and study, while many of the Chinese only study;
- b) To work or not to work is one of the elements that define the schedules and time for study for each of the groups;
- c) The Brazilians seem to be more outgoing, seeking more face to face relations than the Chinese;

- d) The Chinese have a more intense associative life and political participation than do the Brazilians;
- e) The Brazilians are much more religious than the Chinese.

Among the differences between the two groups the most significant ones found were those that are related to the working world (Table 6, Figure 5). Only 27.5% of Brazilian collegians do not work or were not seeking remunerated work at the time the data was collected. In China, however, the rates are much higher, that is, more than 50% of Chinese collegians live only their student life. About 65% of the youngsters interviewed in Brazil were either employed or seeking employment, while in China, this kind of answer was significantly lower (about 36%).

As to the differences by sex within the universe of youngsters in relation to the working world it was observed that, in Brazil, the percentages of young women working is slightly inferior to that of the men; however, the young university women present slightly higher rates than the men in seeking employment. Among those who only study, women present slightly higher rates in Brazil. In China, young university women present rates of occupational insertion much higher (27.8%) than the young men (18.5%), which as a result, are more represented in the group of those who only study. The young women also present higher rates than the men in looking for employment. However, what calls attention is the number of Chinese collegians who declared they do unremunerated work (about 15,8%).

In the case of Brazil, studies reveal that the insertion of youngsters in the working world must be analyzed beyond the issue of survival needs or of helping the family. For many, part of the resources received by the youth can also be used for their own consumption, be it for purchasing clothing and shoes, be it for cultural and leisure activities, or be it also to make their studies possible (MADEIRA, 1986; MADEIRA, BERCOVICH, 1992).

Whatever the reason or reasons that move youth to work, this work ends up impacting on what shift and what time will be dedicated to study, revealing great differences between Brazilians and Chinese (Figure 6). A bit more than one fifth of the Brazilians study full time, while the Chinese surpass 90%.

As a result, the Brazilians who study mainly in the morning or evening, in general, have less class-hours than do the Chinese (Table 7). And, with regard to the hours that are dedicated to study, it is observed that there is a strong tendency in both countries to set aside from 6 to 10 hours for studying. The Brazilians of both sexes and the Chinese women show a tendency to study less hours out of the classroom while the Chinese men dedicate more hours (Figure 7). Possibly this generates significant differences in the formation of youth in both countries, and the Chinese man is the one who, for several reasons, is able to dedicate more time, both at school and outside school.

Another fact that should be considered is what the principal activities that youth in both countries carry out on weekends and vacations (Figure 8).

Brazilian youth tend to carry out activities away from home, such as traveling, going to parties, going out to chat; the Chinese, on the other hand, especially the men, tend to stay home and use the internet. These activities reveal how the former give preference to face to face contacts, away from home, while the latter, to contacts that are mediated by appliances at home.

Less significant differences between the two groups appear when they were asked what they do with their free time. The four activities that were most mentioned by the Brazilian collegians were going to the movies, to friends' homes, to bars and night clubs, and to shopping malls. Chinese youth declared more frequently going to shopping malls, staying at home, visiting friends, and hanging out in parks and squares. Going to shopping malls and visiting friends appear as relevant for both groups. (Figure 9).

Significant differences are found in the field of religion (Figure 10) and participation in associations.

The Brazilian collegians, in their majority, declared following some religious denomination. However, in relation to the total population of the country – men and women – they represent lower rates of adherence to some kind of religion. In Brazil, the youngsters that declared not having any religion, in 2010, represented 10.2% of the 15-24 year-old age group (IBGE, 2010).

If the data would be considered by sex we observe that in Brazil the young men are less religious than the young women; the same is observed in the universe of Chinese youth investigated.

Although Catholics constitute the predominant group among young collegians in Brazil, the presence of other groups indicated that about 45% of those who declared, follow some other religious denomination (Table 8). Among the Chinese collegians that declare some religion, Buddhism was prevalent (about 55%), followed by Christian denominations (about 30%) (Table 9).

With regard to participation in associations, as has already been observed, a greater degree of activity is verified among the Chinese collegians (Table 10). The greater contrasts are situated in the presence of these students in the associations connected to student life (about 36%) and political parties (about 17%); as compared to their Brazilian peers in this same kind of associativity (about 7% and about 1.5%, respectively). Even when previous experiences are considered, the incidence of young Brazilian collegians that have never participated in this type of collective organization connected to student life (about 70%) is significantly greater than that of the Chinese youth (about 32%) The same occurs with regard to political parties (about 95% and 75%, respectively). One of the reasons for the higher rate of participation in student life in their various modalities – sports or artistic associations – is a result of the intense valorization of this type of involvement of youth already during basic education in Chinese society. Following the pattern of North American universities, students that present some kind of talent in the practice of sports or the arts find better conditions for remaining in higher schooling. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider that, in Brazil, work impedes a greater degree of adhesion to associative life at the university. It can also be observed that, although significantly greater than in Brazil, adhesion to political party militancy does not reach 20% of Chinese university youth.

4. Between the “me” and “The Other”: Perceptions and Values of University Student Youth

Their viewpoint of this moment in their life history indicates some variations among the groups studied. For Chinese youth, among the worst things derived from the condition of being young (Figure 11 and Figure 12) is, in first place, the insecurity with regard to the future, which, as a consequence, is followed in second by the fear of not being able to achieve their independence. In third place, the negative fact that appears is that the condition of being young is considered a time when they are easily influenced. This type of choice could illustrate a singularity of Chinese culture, which situates the family as an important instance in the decisions that refer to the future of the youngster.

In common with their peers, Brazilian youth considers that the worst thing is not to achieve their independence and they also manifest insecurity with regard to the future. However, for Brazilian youth, the influence of the adult world does not appear as an issue, but the concomitance of work and study is situated as a life condition that is not seen as positive, while this does not appear as an issue among Chinese collegians.

It can be observed, as regards the women, both Brazilians and Chinese, the same choices are accentuated: for the Brazilian women, the fear of not being able to sustain themselves on their own is greater than for the men; for the young Chinese women, on the other hand, the influence of the adult generation is more negative than for the young men.

This scenario can be expanded when the answers about the best things about being young are considered. The four most chosen options by both university groups, with different modulations, were: “to be healthy and feel fit”; “to be able to take advantage of and enjoy life”; “to be able to dedicate more time to studies”; “to have dreams and objectives” (Figure 13).

Once again, the choices made by the young Chinese as to the best part of being young do not indicate great polarizations among the four most chosen alternatives. However, “to be healthy and feel fit” is the most outstanding choice. Like the Chinese, the young Brazilians also highlighted being healthy and fit, being able to take advantage of/enjoy life, as well as being able to dedicate more time to studies. However, the polarization of the Brazilians as to the most chosen alternative is noteworthy – “to have dreams and objectives” – and characterizes a double insertion: focus on the present and future perspectives. As a whole, the women presented similar answers, the frequency of the answers emphasizing their own personal goals (their dreams and objectives).

If there are negative aspects to being young, in both countries, it is to be expected that the contemporary concerns are compatible with them. The data on Table 11 permits us to gauge the stand that youngsters take in both countries as to what most afflicts them nowadays.

In Brazil, certainly violence, drugs, and unemployment obtain the highest rates. But it is important to highlight that immediately following these we find the feeling of an experience of inequality and insecurity.

If we consider these 5 (five) alternatives as a set, it is possible to verify that three of them refer to the difficulties in achieving compatible positions in their adult life. Saying this in another manner, the lack of working opportunities and the experience of inequality and insecurity in the future occupy significantly the daily horizon of the young Brazilian collegians, while the recurring problems connected to violence and drugs are also present.

The Chinese collegians present a greater sensibility towards the theme of inequality, possibly marked by the process observed in their country over the last years (CHEN, 2013). They also find distressing the moral decline in the society in which they live, certainly one more expression of the profound changes that affect Chinese society over the last decades. But unemployment and insecurity are also present in the horizon of their afflictions (MONG, 2014).

Within the field of individual values, a series of affirmations was presented to the youngsters who could agree or disagree on a 0 to 10 scale.

The theme of equality in the working world was answered in a different way by the group of those investigated. In this manner, the reaction to the affirmation “Men must have priority in the working world because they are heads of family”, 81.7% of Brazilian female youngsters positioned themselves against it while only 49,1% of the Chinese young women took this same stand (Table 12). The symbolic universes probably have different connotations to the expression “heads of family” since the masculine status and their responsibilities of providing for the family group are significantly different in China as compared to the present Brazilian situation that admits modulations of the traditional masculine responsibilities (MONG, 2014).

In an attempt to widen the field and broaden the understanding of the values held, among the questions made to the Chinese and Brazilian collegians, one of these was in regard to how they saw themselves and how they saw other youngsters – youth – with regard to values. In this case, youth being understood as “the other”, their coeval, not as an individual, but collectively.

As to their individual values, the Chinese and the Brazilians brought out singularities that deserve a deeper analysis (Figures 14 and 15, Table 13).

The young Brazilian collegians – both men and women – mention more frequently three common values: ethics/honesty, solidarity and family. But within these values the difference attributed to the family by the women collegians must be highlighted: they consider it much more important than the Brazilian young men.

Both male and female Chinese collegians present some similitude with regard to the values most indicated: the young men point out liberty, equality and justice; the young women point out ethics/honesty, equality and liberty.

Although the family is equally valued by the youngsters of both countries, albeit with less frequency in the answers given by the Chinese collegians, the meaning of this valuing of the family can be diverse. For the young Brazilian, the family functions as an important support in their processes of individuation and transition to adult life, due to the absence of specific public policies for this group (housing, insertion in the labor market, among others). The weight of tradition and of the family hierarchy on their lives is not as strongly felt as it is for the young Chinese, seen that, in the Brazilian case, social ties have been characterized by more horizontal forms in the relations between parents and their children. However, the supports obtained in the family as youngsters do not signify necessarily, for the Brazilian students, an obligatory retribution in caring for their parents in their old age.

It is also noteworthy how young women in Brazil situate the family as much more important for them than their male compeers. These differences are probably also meaningful, insofar as young women still consider that to care for their parents and see to their well-being is one of the values on their horizons. This occurs with more intensity than with the young men, thus expressing also gender differences in family relations.

For the young Chinese, according to tradition, children are responsible for the well-being of their parents in their old age; they are the support that will assure that their parents age honorably. The family exercises an important role on the life of the youngsters; the roles are well defined. Since we are dealing with generations affected by social change, the access to university is greatly valorized, and for this reason the family interferes on the decisions of the choice of higher learning, especially that of the women. Some researchers, on studying the adopted policy of “an only child”, demonstrate how it is difficult for these youngsters to undertake the obligation of caring for their parents, in-laws and, eventually, their grandparents, when considered the aging of the Chinese population.

Noteworthy, in both countries, is the low rate of valorization of traditions in the universes investigated, demonstrating, once again, the very rapid processes of social change, which affect especially the young population.

Chinese youngsters emphasize, more than the Brazilians, the generic values of “liberty, equality, and justice”, which are related to the classic demands of structuring the democratic state, presenting more sensibility to the issues regarding inequality and liberty than do the Brazilians.

Considering the sex variable, the Chinese and Brazilian young men valorize a little more “liberty” and “competitiveness” than do the women. On the other hand, it is the women in both countries that, in a more emphatic manner, valorize solidarity, respect for racial diversity, respect for sexual diversity, respect for elders, ethics and honesty, as well as the importance of the family.

The valorization that some of the Brazilian youngsters demonstrate, more than the Chinese, with regard to the themes of “respect of racial diversity”, seem to indicate how the general principles of “justice” and “equality” are made concrete. In Brazil, the theme of racial diversity is anchored in the history of the country, since black people were and are discriminated since colonial times and until today. The presence of the black movement on the public scene, defending reparatory policies as a manner of combating historical inequalities lived by them, as well as the pursuit of equality marks the position of Brazilian youngsters towards a racial democracy.

The choice of another theme, “respect of sexual diversity”, defended by some Brazilian youngsters more than by the Chinese, is the expression of how Brazilian society is traversed by mobilizations with causes that specific groups are embracing over the last ten years with reference to sexual option “liberty”, known as – lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals, travesties, transsexuals, and transgenders. This choice seems to reveal Brazilian youngsters that associate the value of equality with that of liberty, liberty of the subject in citizen equality, as defined in Balibar’s concept in the word “*egaliberté*”(BALIBAR, 2010). Both the sensibility revealed for racial issues in Brazil as well as those related to sexual orientations point out the search for recognition and for affirming plural identities (FRASER, 2006; HONNETH, 2003). But it is also necessary to point out that public debate in Brazil has not totally eliminated the presence of violence against women, racial and homophobic behavior, which is revealed in both police violence as well as among civil society groups or in affective relationships, especially in the large urban centers. It is necessary to point out that, according to the point of view of Chinese society and its conjunctures, other issues could be occupying public debate and youth sensibilities within the conjuncture in which the investigation was carried out.

As Dubet (2001) analyzes, more than a demand for the values that express the forms of integration marked by ideas of “equality of individuals in spite of and beyond real social inequalities”, Brazilian youth tend to make their values concrete having as their basis the action of collective players from diverse segments.

Figures 16 permit us to verify that Brazilian youngsters look at the “other”, youth, as an inverted image that they present about themselves. They consider that youth’s most important values (the other youth) are “competitiveness” and “liberty”. It could be said that the youngsters investigated have a generous opinion about themselves and are more critical when dealing with the “other”, the more abstract collective “youth”, as if there were a clear frontier between these universes. Apparently, the “other”, an anonymity, someone who is situated in a field opposite to theirs (ARAUJO & MARTUCCELLI, 2012): solidary, ethical, and honest youngsters, on the one hand, while on the other, competitive youth. However, as Danilo Martuccelli (2012) affirms, it is necessary to look at the results obtained based on the idea that a same individual can experience plural situations to which he can react in contradictory ways, as we were able to observe in this item. The adherence to values cannot avoid considering contingencies. The values of young Brazilian collegians can be, at the same time, solidarity, ethics, and honesty, as well as competitiveness, according to the situations they encounter. At any rate, this dissociation between the individual “me” and the collective universe should be highlighted as expressing few modalities of belonging to a group, in this case, their youth peers.

About the vision that Brazilian youth has concerning the “other”, no significant differences between men and women have been verified. It must be emphasized that, from the point of view of those who were interviewed, the only times their self-image and the image they have of Brazilian youth came close was in their valorizing sexual and racial diversity. In this aspect, the “me”, the youngster, and the “other”, youth, are close to each other.

At any rate, this is an issue that demands going into a deeper study, because in several researches about youth in Brazil, the “other youth” is always more vulnerable, more fragile, his choices are worse than those of the individual who is being researched. These perceptions are very frequent when inquired about consuming legal and illegal drugs or about practices that involve values that are typical of mass society such as consumerism, individualism, competition or transgressions. In this manner, this distrust seems to predominate with regard to the “other” that shares with him the same phase in life. (Table 14).

The young Chinese collegians (Figure 17), in their turn, clearly see their own values as being close to those of youth, and no great differences appear between the “me” (individual) and the “other” (collective), which is different from the Brazilian situation, since their identification with the collective of their equals seems to be more evident.

But, ensuring the differences, in both countries, “competitiveness” is a value that is only considered important by a small percentage of the youngsters, but mentioned as most valorized by youth in general. The same phenomenon is repeated with regard to valorizing the family; seen as more important for those researched and less important for youth.

5. Final Considerations

The data presented permits us to set up a general framework that evokes the importance of new investigations. They reveal a profile of generations of collegians who have been affected by the intensity of social changes observed in both countries, although the previous trajectories, the rhythm and the nature of these processes have been different.

They are youngsters that today have access to a schooling system and they enjoy different conditions to constitute this passage in preparation for their professional life. We must highlight, within this set of facts, the singularity of young Brazilian collegians in their relations to the working world. This is a condition that affects not only the manner in which youth situates itself in living in the student world and academic life. It also affects the very experience of being young, setting itself, for the Brazilians, as a negative attribute: to study and to work at the same time.

It can also be verified that the set of concerns about the condition of being young in both countries presents some likenesses. The family is strongly valorized, constituting itself as a support to enjoying the condition of being young, in the Brazilian case, or as normative reference for making choices in the Chinese case.

The demands for greater equality among the sexes appears more clearly among the women, especially the Brazilians, but it cannot be ignored and is pointed out in the other groups, even though the Chinese young men, in general, are the least affected by this desire for change.

The distrust regarding the set of institutions that constitute the framework of the modern state affects in a clearer manner the Brazilian collegians, who still reserve a certain degree of trustworthiness for the armed forces and churches. The young Chinese, more than the Brazilians, still present a greater degree of trust in government and the governing elites.

In view of the insecurities felt at this moment of their lives and of the more general parameters that outline the contemporary condition of adulthood in today’s western modernity, defined by independence and autonomy, the analyses of the young collegians of countries that constitute dissimilar processes of development, present differences and some transversal conditions.

François de Singly points out suggestive distinctions between autonomy and independence (Singly, 2004). Autonomy signifies the capacity of an individual to give himself his own law, to construct his own worldview. On the other hand, independence would involve the processes that would permit an individual to not be obliged to be accountable to another person. In general, characterized as economical, independence would permit the individual to evolve in such a manner so as not to depend on others. For this author, the structural changes that have affected western societies over the last 50 years established a dissociation between autonomy and independence. In this manner, youth in western countries of the northern hemisphere, experienced autonomy as a gradual process, still within an economic dependence in regard to their parents, but would have some support in this process as a result of public policies focused on them (housing, income programs, support in mobility, among others).

This dissociation, which is a result of profound economic changes, can lead to a paradoxical achievement of autonomy without having achieved a minimum level of economic independence, which has been made more difficult by the crisis in the labor market and the emergence of precarious forms of insertion or of unemployment.

However, it should be asked if these same processes occur in countries whose historical roots are not the same and that present, at this time, diverse modalities of economic development, as is the case of the BRICs, especially Brazil and China.

Although the data must be carefully analyzed it is possible to perceive the singularities and tensions lived by these youngsters at this time.

In Brazil, collegian students fear that they will not achieve economic independence, although they realize that they can enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy at this moment of their life trajectory. The family does not constitute itself as an obstacle and precocious work, even though it doesn't afford total independence, can facilitate this autonomy. However, this process of becoming an adult individual is carried out without the necessary support of the public system. Youngsters count on their families, and, above all, on themselves and, for this reason, they experience a permanent feeling of insecurity in face of the future.

In China, there would be other forms of characterizing adult life, diverse from what has been considered as a model in western modernity. But it is very intriguing how Chinese youngsters emit their signs of tensions with the adult world and their strength to interfere in their destinies: the fear of being influenced appeared clearly in the answers. On the other hand, the collegians obtain support that permits them the enjoyment of the condition going to the university that is not present in Brazilian society: availability of student housing and no urgency for insertion in the labor market. However, they also manifest insecurity with regard to the future, fearing that they will not be able assert themselves as independent adults in a society that is suffering an intense process of social change.

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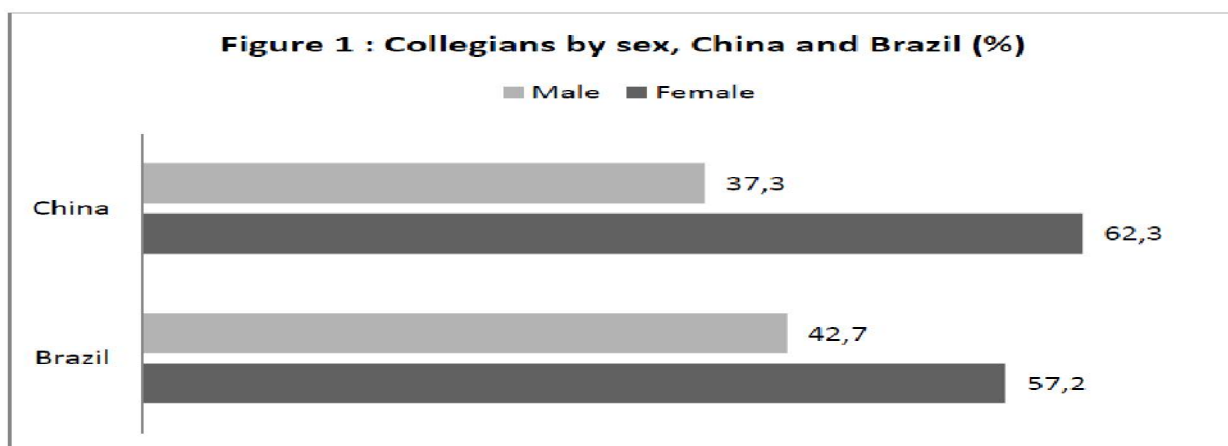
Annex

Sex	Brazil		China	
	Absolute nº	(%)	Absolute nº	(%)
Female	1389	57.2	1071	62.3
Male	1037	42.7	649	37.7
Total	2429	100.0	1720	100.0

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Age	Brazil		China	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
17	4.0	2.5	0.9	1.2
18	17.2	14.8	10.8	10.8
19	22.2	18.2	30.6	20.8
20	20.3	18.1	33.3	27
21	16.3	18.4	15.9	22
22	9.4	12.0	6.3	12.2
23	6.2	9.7	1.2	3.1
24	4.5	6.3	0.3	1.7

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

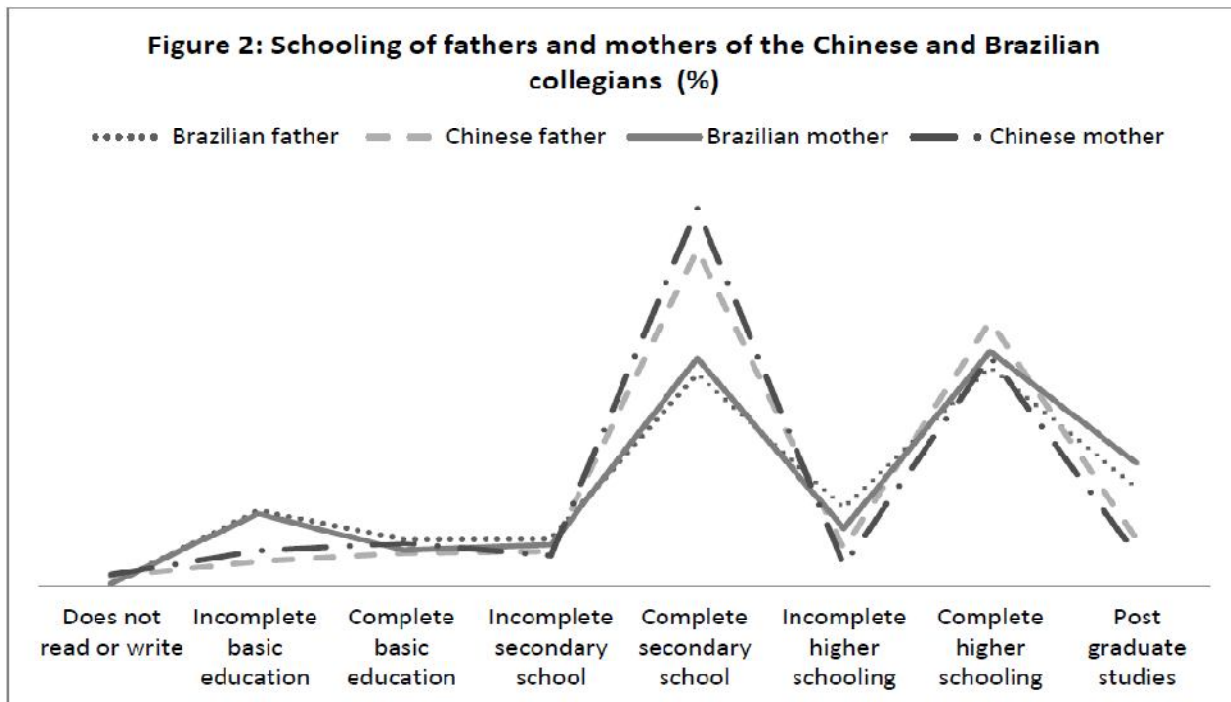


Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 3: Collegians according to marital status, China and Brazil (%)

Marital Status	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Single	96.2	98.1	98.0	97.0
Married	2.7	1.0	1.0	1.0
Separated	0.1	0.0	1.0	1.0
Widow/widower	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Lives with companion	1.0	0.8	0.0	0.0

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

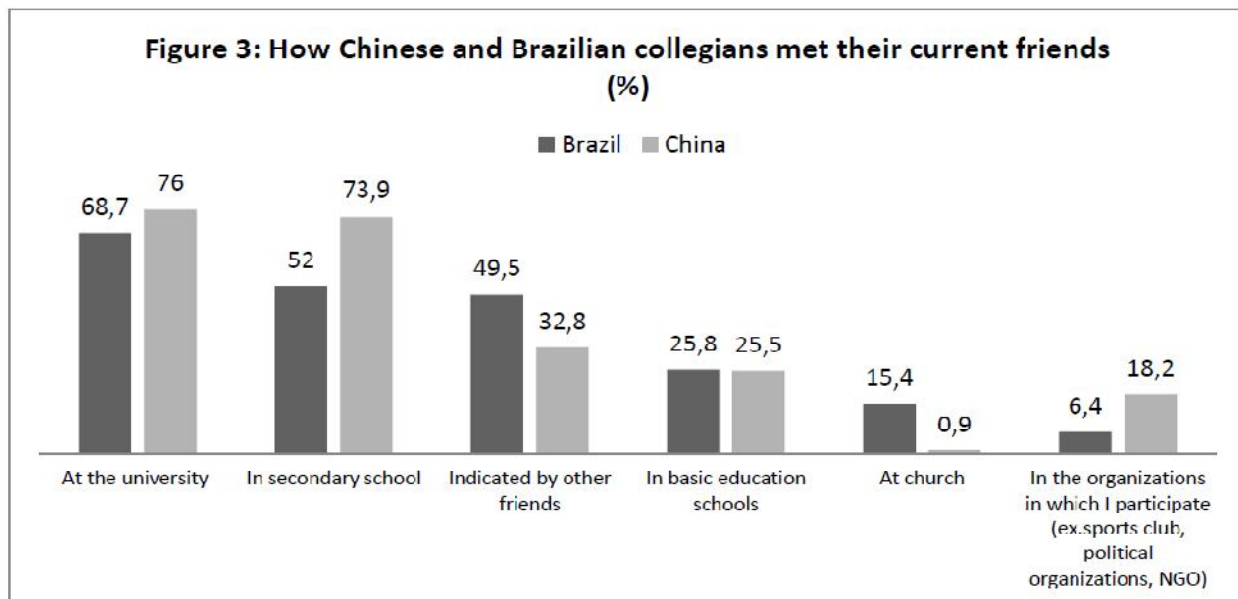


Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

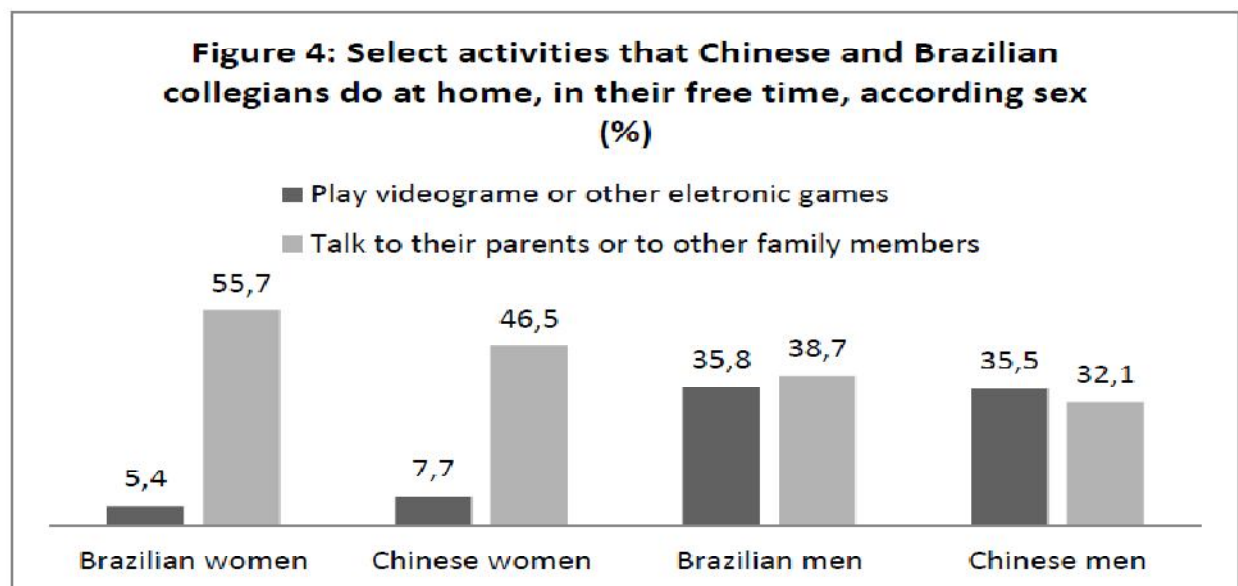
Table 4: Schooling: fathers and mothers, Brazil and China (%)

	Father		Mother	
	Brazil	China	Brazil	China
Does not read or write	0.3	1.3	0.3	1.5
Incomplete basic education	9.4	3.1	9.0	4.4
Complete basic education	5.8	4.1	4.4	5.3
Incomplete secondary school	5.9	4.3	5.1	3.8
Complete secondary school	26.5	42	28.5	47.2
Incomplete higher schooling	9.8	4.7	7.2	2.6
Complete higher schooling	27.3	33.1	29.3	28.7
Post graduate studies	12.3	5.8	15.3	3.9

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

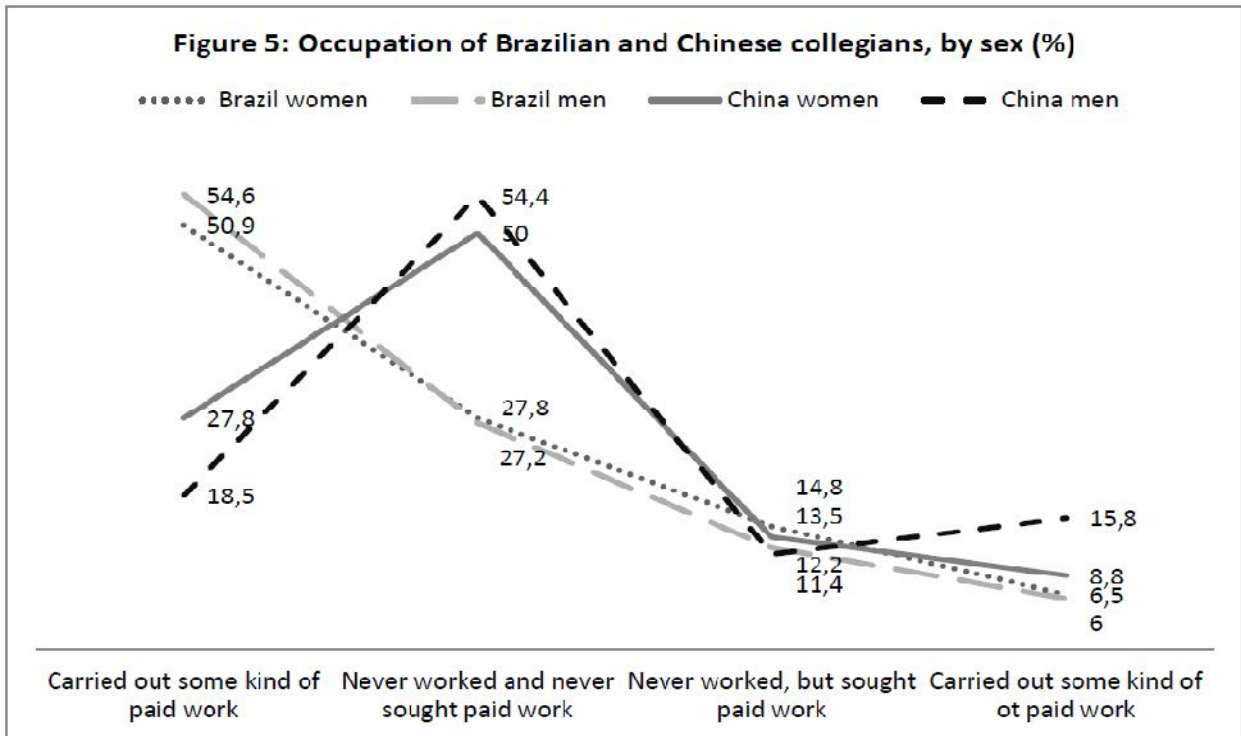


Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 5: Activities that youth does at home, in their free hours, by sex, China and Brazil (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Chat with siblings or friends	20.7	16.4	14.5	13.6
Watch TV	34.2	31.1	36.2	23.0
Watch movies	34.9	35.4	35.0	29.3
Play cards, chess, draughts, other games	2.0	1.8	2.6	7.8
Read newspapers and magazines	4.7	7.9	12.0	11,9
Read books (not those obligatory for their course)	30.2	23.6	27.7	28.3
Rest	39.3	34.5	26.0	20.8
Access Internet	60.0	63.9	53.8	41.2

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

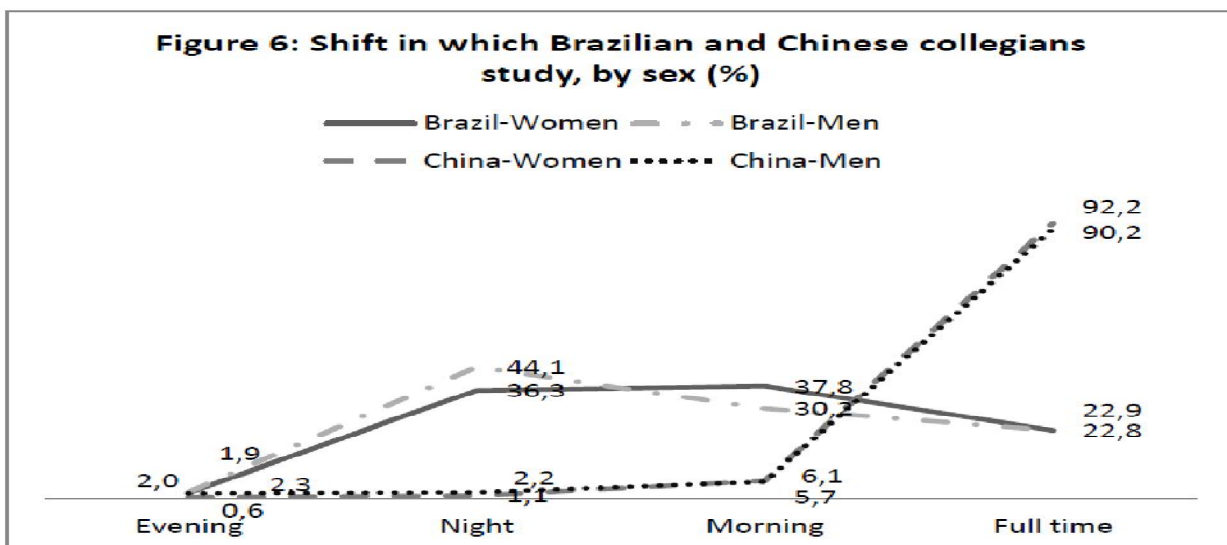


Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 6: Occupation of collegians by sex, China and Brazil (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Carried out some kind of paid work	50.6	54.6	27.8	18.5
Never worked and never sought paid work	27.8	27.2	50.0	54.4
Never worked, but sought paid work	14.8	12.2	13.5	11.3
Carried out some kind of not paid work	6.5	6.0	8.8	15.8
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

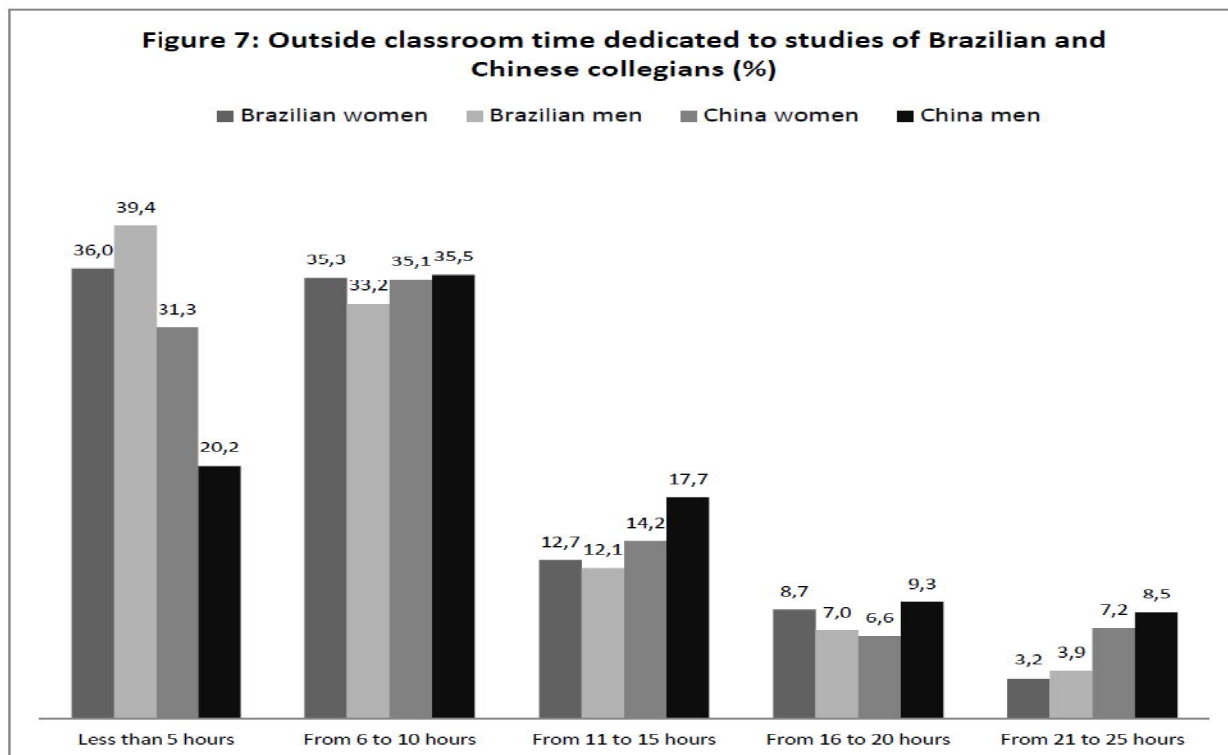


Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

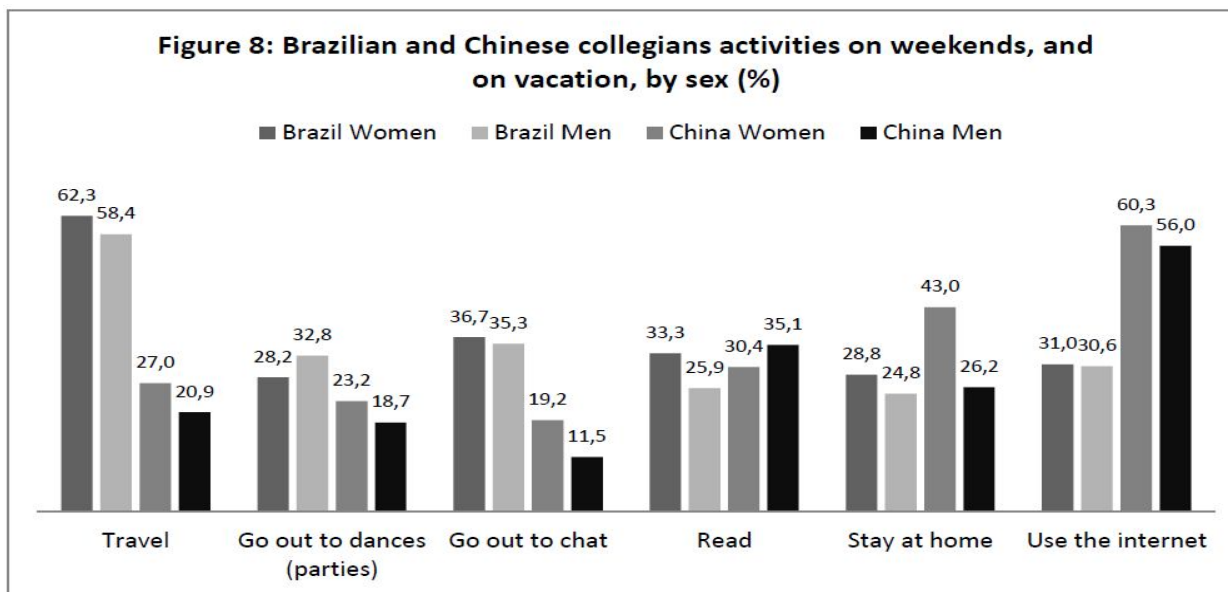
Table 7: Average of class hours of Chinese and Brazilian students. by sex (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Up to 8 hours	4.4	3.9	6.8	7.9
From 9 to 16 hours	25.2	24.2	15.8	16.2
From 17 to 24 hours	42.3	47.2	28.9	26.0
From 25 to 32 hours	18.9	19.4	29.3	31.3
More than 33 hours	7.6	3.9	19.3	18.6

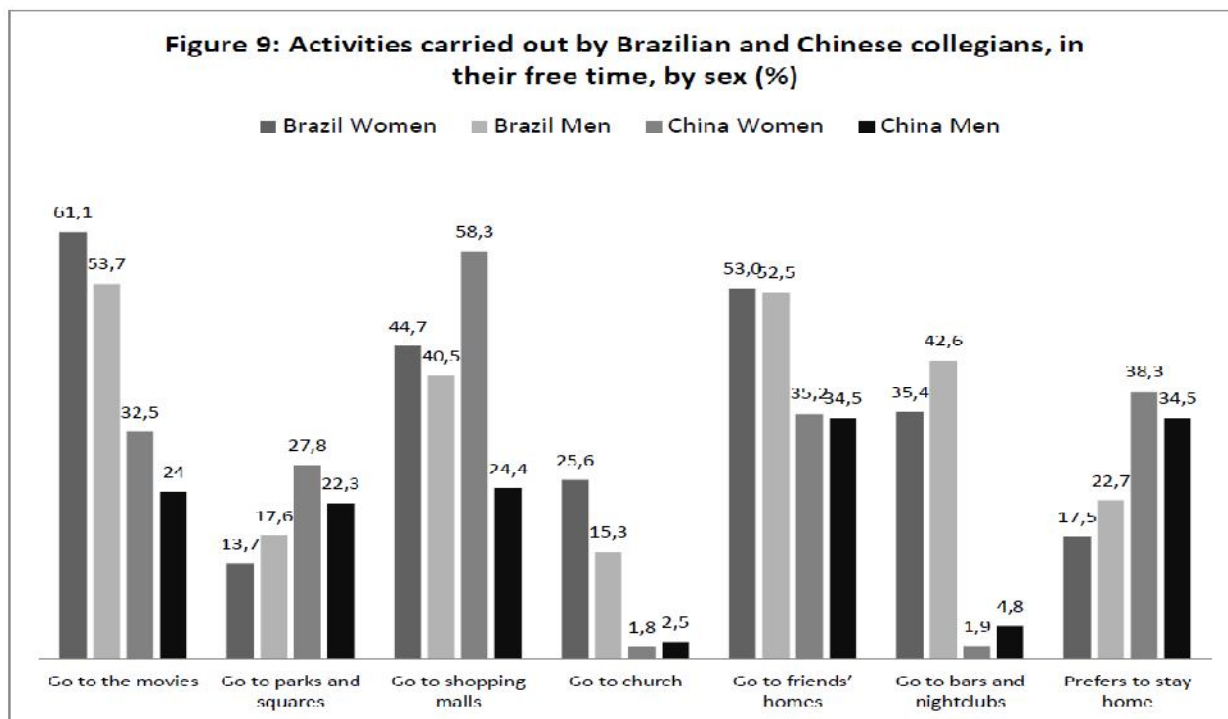
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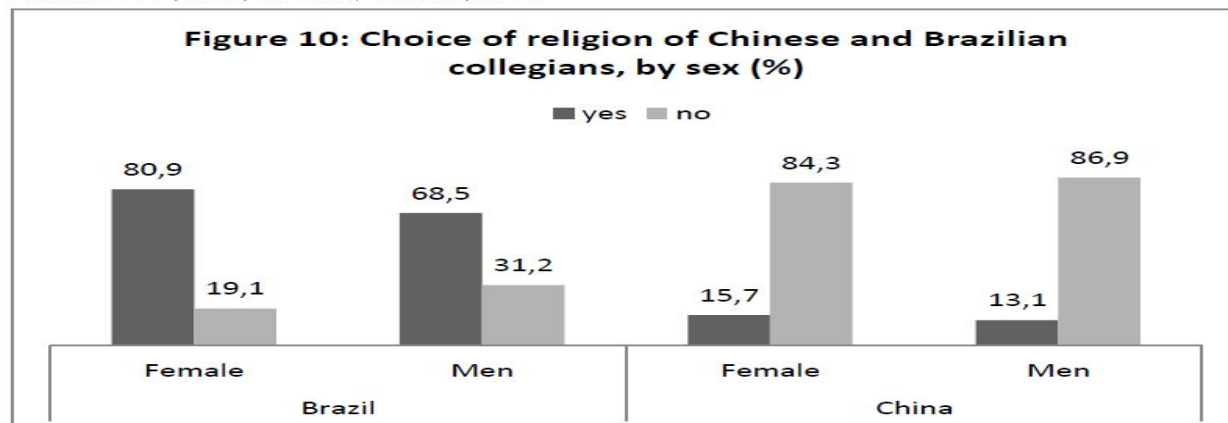
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Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 8: Religion of Brazilian collegians, by sex (%)

	Women	Men
Roman Catholic	55.3	57.6
Protestant or Evangelical, not Pentecostal	18.0	15.5
Pentecostal Evangelical	10.1	8.6
Kardecist or Spiritualist	10.0	9.1
Orthodox	0.5	0.4
Candomble, Umbanda or another of African origin	1.8	1.9
Jewish	0.3	0.3
Muslim	0.2	0.0
Buddhist	0.3	0.6
Other	3.7	6.0

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 9: Religion of Chinese collegians, by sex (%)

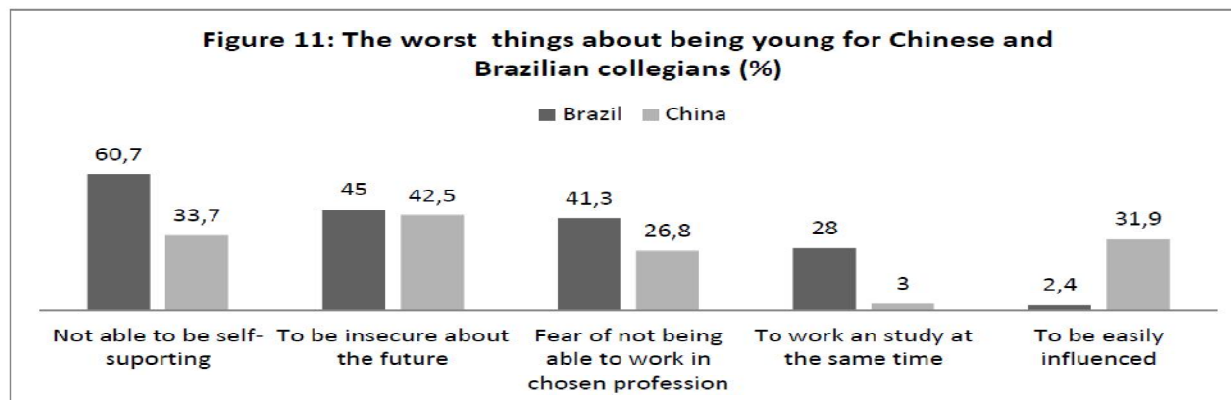
	Women	Men
Christian	27.2	32.9
Islamism	6.2	7.3
Buddhism	61.1	50.0
Taoism	1.2	6.1
Other	4.4	3.6

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

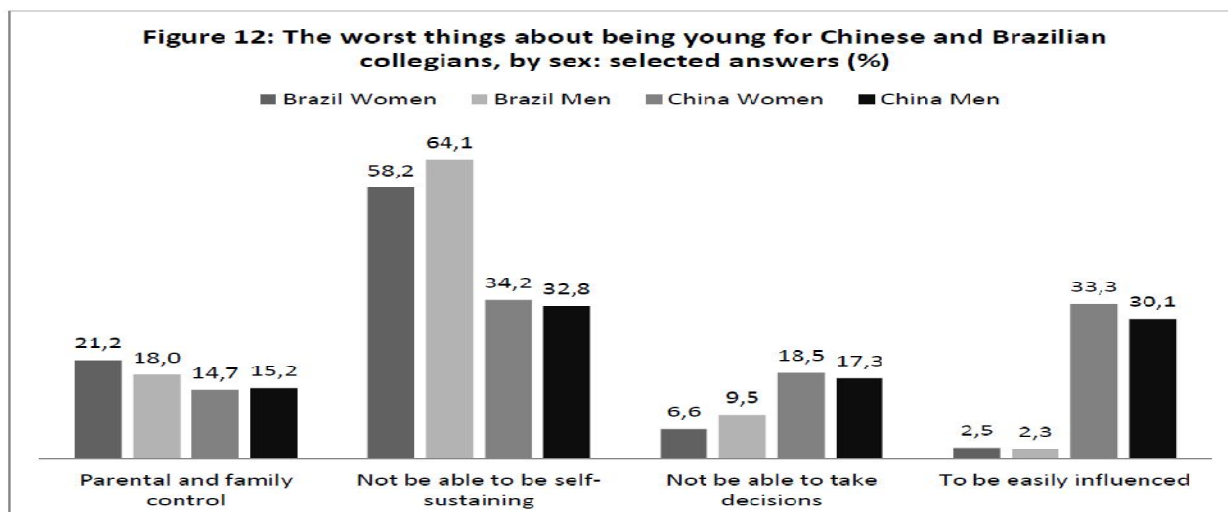
Table 10: Student participation in associations, movements, political parties – by sex – China and Brazil (%)

		Brazil		China	
		Women	Men	Women	Men
Student associations	Is participating at present	6.0	8.9	34.3	37.5
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	23.1	21.8	34.2	30.4
	Never participated	70.9	69.3	31.5	32.1
Group that defends the environment or ecological	Is participating at present	3.5	2.8	9.9	9.1
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	9.8	8.6	26.5	27.8
	Never participated	86.7	88.6	63.7	63.1
Feminist movement/ Sexual orientation freedom	Is participating at present	2.9	2.2	3.7	5
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	3.1	2.6	7.7	8.1
	Never participated	94.0	95.2	88.6	86.8
Popular movements (health, education, housing, etc.)	Is participating at present	3.8	3.9	7.6	9.1
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	13.7	13.3	16.6	20.2
	Never participated	82.4	82.8	75.8	70.7
Humanitarian organizations or charities	Is participating at present	11.5	9.4	16.3	14.1
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	29.0	22.7	25.0	24.7
	Never participated	59.5	67.9	58.7	61.2
Political party	Is participating at present	1.2	2.5	15.0	19.0
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	2.5	3.4	6.9	9.7
	Never participated	96.3	94.1	78.2	71.3
Workers' Unions Professional Association	Is participating at present	3.2	4.8	4.3	5.7
	Has participated and does not participate any longer	3.0	3.8	7.9	10.3
	Never participated	93.8	91.4	87.9	84.0

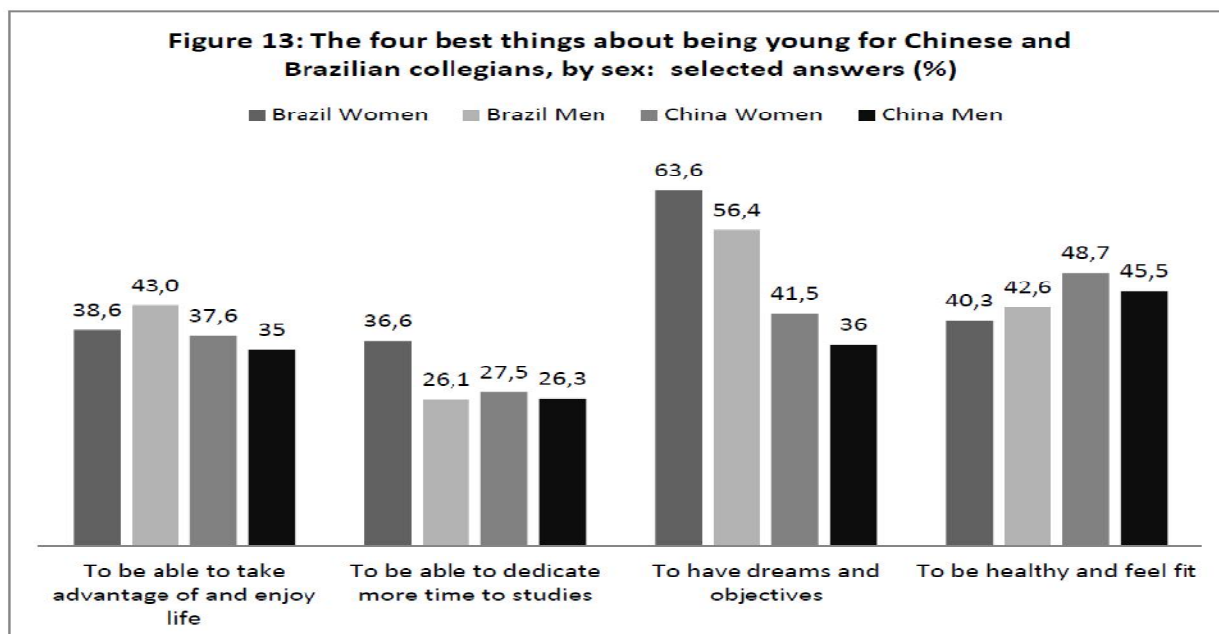
Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 11: What afflicts youth mostly today, Brazil and China (%)

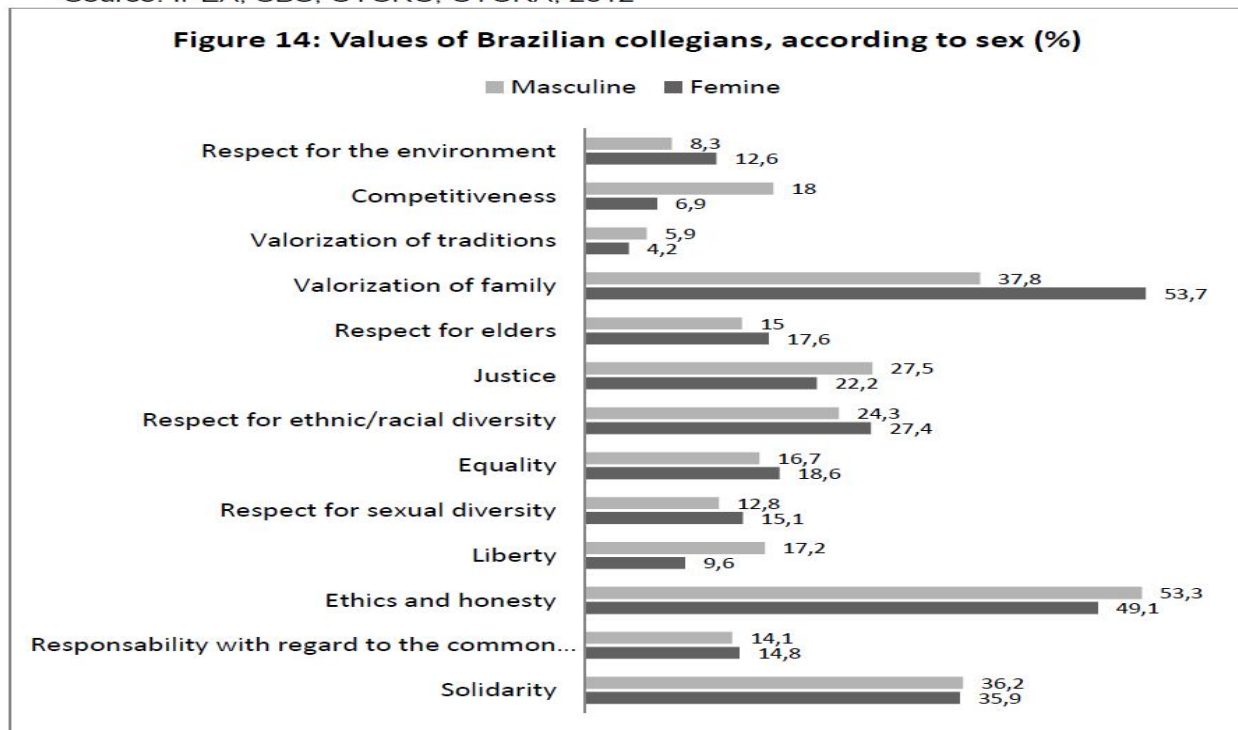
	Brazil	China
Violence	52.9	10.5
Drugs	40.1	8.5
Unemployment	29.3	23.3
To live in an unequal world	28.2	46.3
To live in an insecure world	26.3	20.4
Poverty	15.3	10.1
Corruption	15.2	14.2
Moral decline	14.9	34.5
To be discredited	14.9	2.0
Solitude	12.8	21.1
DST/AIDS	10.9	5.2
Environmental degradation	7.3	17.2
Violation of human rights	5.5	9.0
Nothing	0.9	5.7

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

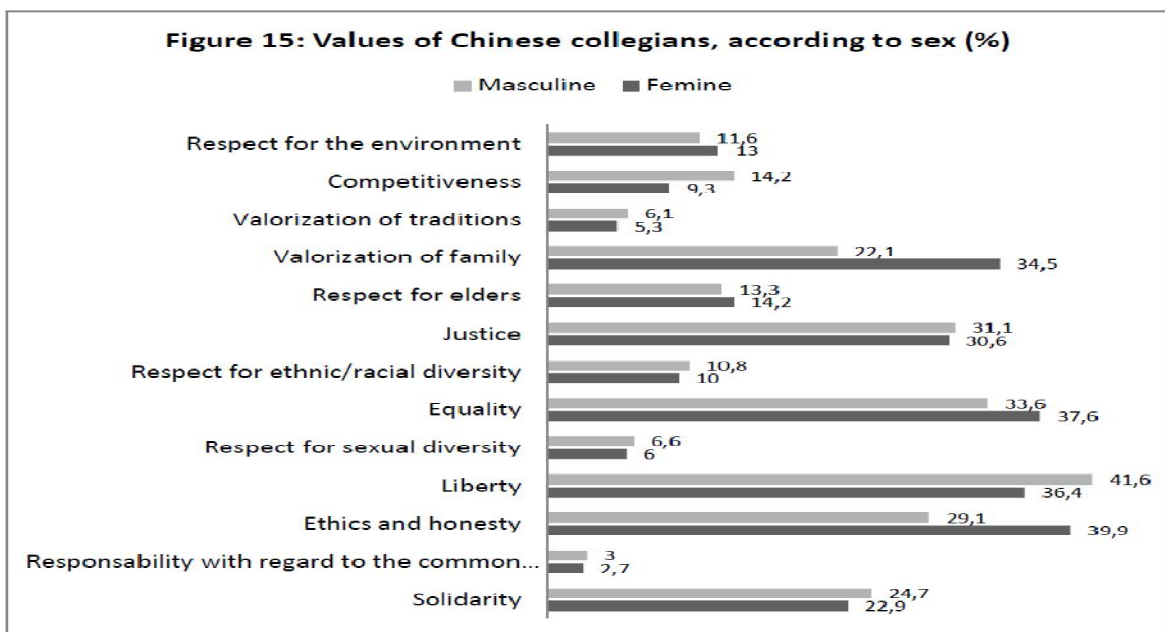
Table 12: Men should have priority in the working world because they are heads of family. Position of Chinese and Brazilian collegians, according to sex (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
1 against	81.7	59.8	49.1	25.4
2	5.5	5.2	7.5	7.7
3	4.2	6.8	8.2	7.2
4	1.9	3.3	5.4	5.5
5	3.6	12.4	12.6	16.4
6	0.9	4.4	5.1	10.2
7	1.0	3.4	3.4	8.6
8	0.6	1.9	3.1	4.9
9	0.1	0.3	1	2.5
10 favorable	0.1	1.8	3.8	10.6

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012



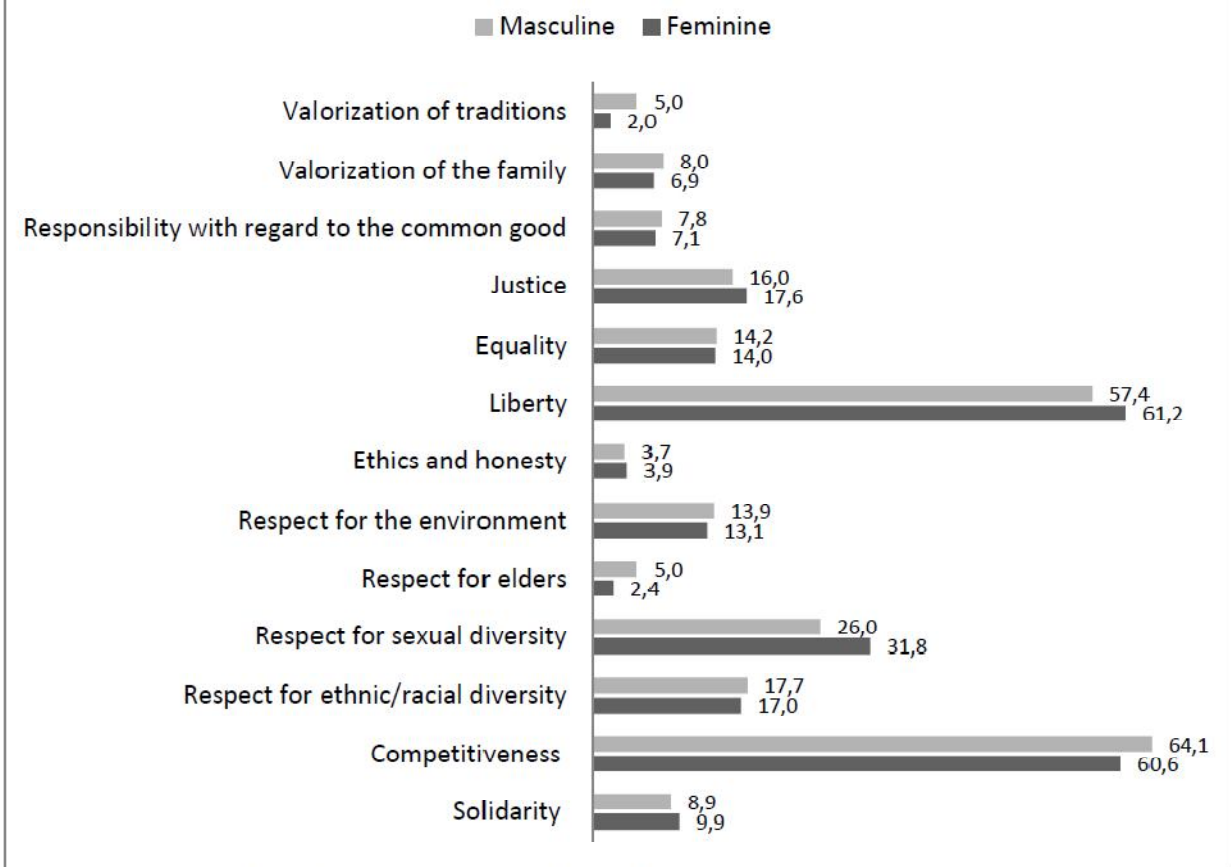
Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 13: Values of young who answered, by sex, China and Brazil (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Solidarity	35.9	36.2	22.9	24.7
Responsibility with regard to the common good	14.7	14.1	2.7	3.0
Ethics and honesty	49.1	53.3	39.9	29.1
Liberty	9.6	17.2	36.4	41.6
Respect for sexual diversity	15.1	12.8	6.0	6.6
Equality	18.6	16.7	37.6	33.6
Respect for ethnic/racial diversity	27.4	19.3	10.3	10.8
Justice	22.2	27.5	30.6	31.1
Respect for elders	17.6	15.0	14.2	13.3
Valorize the family	53.7	37.8	34.5	22.1
Valorize traditions	4.2	5.9	5.3	6.1
Competiveness	6.9	18.0	9.3	14.2
Respect for the environment	12.6	8.3	13.0	11.6

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Figure 16: Values of Brazilian youth according to the collegians interviewed, by sex (%)



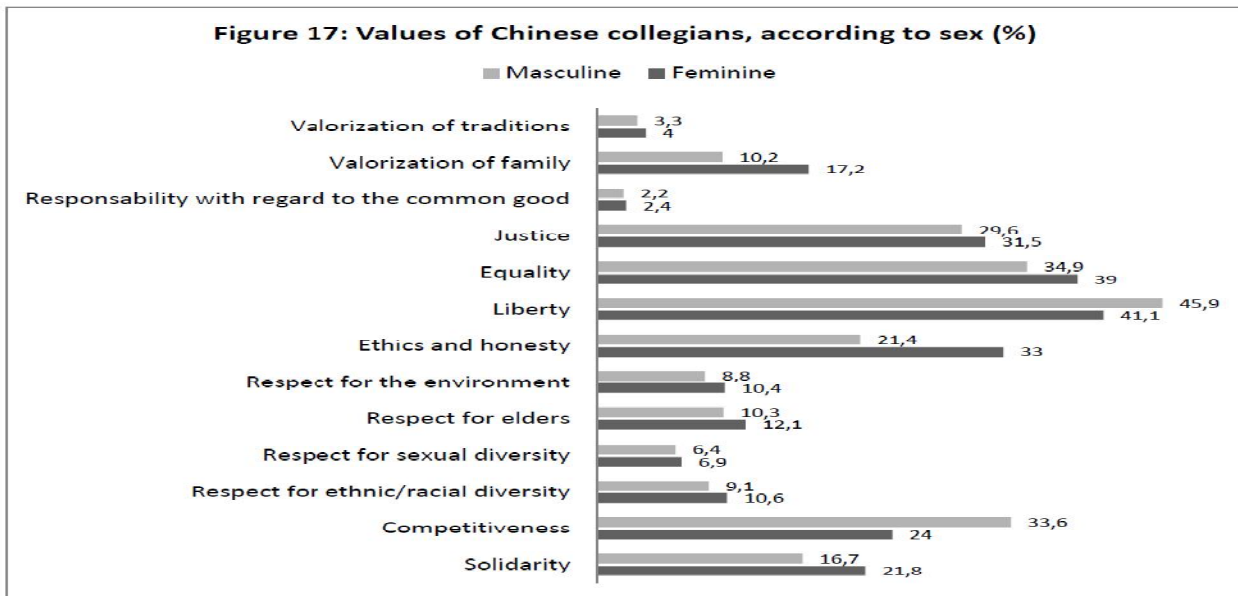
Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Table 14 – Values of Youth, according to the Chinese and Brazilian collegians who were interviewed (%)

	Brazil		China	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Solidarity	9.9	8.9	21.8	16.7
Competiveness	60.6	64.1	24.0	33.6
Respect for ethnic/racial diversity	17.0	17.7	10.6	9.1
Respect for sexual diversity	31.8	26.0	6.9	6.4
Respect for elders	2.4	5.0	12.1	10.3
Respect for the environment	13.1	13.9	10.4	8.8
Ethics and honesty	3.9	3.7	33.0	21.4
Liberty	61.2	57.4	41.1	45.9
Equality	14.0	14.2	39.0	34.9
Justice	17.6	16.0	31.5	29.6
Responsibility with regard to the common good	7.1	7.8	2.4	2.2
Valorize the family	6.9	8.0	17.2	10.2
Valorize traditions	2.0	5.0	4.0	3.3

Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012

Figure 17: Values of Chinese collegians, according to sex (%)



Source: IPEA, SBS, CYCRC, CYCRA, 2012