



## MEDIA IMAGES OF THE MIDDLE CLASS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JAPAN AND CHINA IN THE HIGH ECONOMY GROWTH PERIOD

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### Abstract

Previous studies on social classes and social strata have not taken media-constructed images as objects of research. Meanwhile, existing media studies have paid limited attention to media-constructed images of the middle class. This study aims to fill this research gap and establish a fundamental understanding of the abovementioned issue. First, an original model for understanding the middle class on the basis of objective attributes, subjective characteristics, and media images is presented. Second, the perspective of media studies is integrated with this model. Finally, a practical analysis of middle-class images constructed by the media is conducted.

In particular, this study focuses on Japanese and Chinese newspapers during their respective periods of high economic growth (Japan: 1955–1973, China: 2001 to 2012). By quantitatively and qualitatively analyzing reports or articles on the middle class in these newspapers, the paper resolves the media-created images of the middle class.

Results revealed that the construction of images of the middle class in Japanese and Chinese newspapers has been influenced by government and academe. Similarities were observed between Japan and China: (1) strong policy orientation, (2) the use of local language to classify the middle class, (3) bias toward a “new middle class,” (4) value for consumption of goods, (5) gender divisions, (6) a Western orientation, and (7) hegemony during the construction process. Meanwhile, several differences were likewise observed, such as those in use of educational background, portrayal of housewives, and usage of such adjectives as “average” (Japan) and “affluent” (China).

**Keywords:** Middle Class, Media Image, Japan, China, Newspapers.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Background

In Japan, debates over the concept of the middle class have attracted social attention since the period of economic development lasting from 1955 to the 1970s. However, during the latter half of the 1990s, a collapse of the middle class occurred along with the rising idea of a “格差社会 (gap-widening society).” In the Chinese middle class since 2000, encouraged by the theory of the “三个代表 (Three Representations),”<sup>1</sup> the middle class was discussed together with what would later become the idea of a “和谐社会 (Socialist Harmonious Society),” which drew national and international attention.

This study reconsiders the existing concept of the middle class in the context of both Japan and China; these countries are believed to have many similarities.

## 1.2 Middle Class Issues in the Social Studies

The middle class is one of the most classic and important concepts in sociology. It refers to the class that lies between the capitalist and working classes.

Three factors—1) subjective characteristics, 2) objective attributes, and 3) an integration of subjective characteristics and objective attributes—are used when defining the middle class in sociology. However, the middle class can be portrayed differently depending on which of these methods is used, even in the same society (Butler and Savage 1995).

People who belong to the middle class, as defined by objective indexes, do not necessarily have corresponding stratum consciousness. In the past, studies of stratum consciousness have attempted to explain this kind of disagreement between the subjective and objective middle class. Some researchers have been aware that people are influenced by media in forming stratum consciousness, especially by media images. Despite some discussion of media's important functions, the media have been positioned peripherally in existing studies of the middle class. Nobody has conducted related research (Zhou 2012).

## 1.3 A Model for Understanding the Middle Class

Therefore, this study focuses on the media and spotlights these images in order to reconsider what constitutes the middle class.

This study takes its framework from the model of the social construction of “reality” as presented by Adoni and Mane (1984, pp. 323-340) and views the middle class as shown in Figure 1.

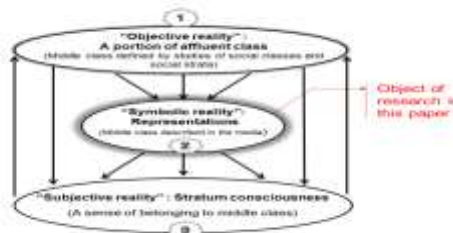


Figure 1: A model for understanding middle class

## 2. Literature Review

Existing media studies have revealed that the media have the function of image construction and the function of social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Adoni and Mane 1984). According to that, this study can make inferences that the media set people's standards for judging middle class and constructing their middle-class consciousness.

However, existing media studies have focused on the images of women and families in films and TV drama series from the perspective of feminism, whereas very few previous studies have dealt with such themes as media-created images of middle class.

In Japan, Tetsuo Arima (2003) wrote a paper proposing that TV has fabricated images of the middle class rather than basing them on reality. In Europe and the United States, three representative studies have focused on this theme (Ohmann 1996; Fernandes 2000; Liechty 2003). However, none of these researchers have concretely analysed how the media creates images of the middle class.

Meanwhile, studies of this kind by Chinese researchers can be divided into two types. First are those that criticize the stratification in the media brought about by the birth of the middle class (Tingjun and Dong 2007, etc.). The second type regards fashion magazines as “middle-class magazines” and criticizes the emulative consumption seen there (Meng 2004, etc.). However,

neither have those studies concretely analysed texts in the media.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, Zhou (2008) extracted media-created images of the middle class from China after 2001 from certain types of media—newspapers and magazines, advertisements, and TV drama series—and clarified the creation mechanism of middle-class images in China. Finally, she points out that “the middle class in China is not merely a concept of one stratum discussed in the studies of social strata, but it is rather an opportunity for a clash between reality and representation and between multiple and composite forces.” However, the scope of discussion by Zhou (2008) is limited concerning the generalizability of her findings. Therefore, this study will transgress upon the unspoken assumption that China is unique and will include Japan, which has a different state system, in the framework of analysis.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Materials

The media materials used in this study were two Japanese newspapers, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun*, and two Chinese newspapers, the *People’s Daily* and *Southern Weekly*.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun* were chosen for Japan because both are leading national newspapers and therefore highly representative of public opinion within Japan. In addition, these newspapers, which appear to have different opinions in terms of ideology, have been active in producing images of the middle class.

The *People’s Daily* and *Southern Weekly* were chosen for several reasons. *People’s Daily* is an organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and is thus the most influential and authoritative general newspaper in China. The *Southern Weekly*, in contrast, is a commercial paper that gives priority to readers. Therefore, it allows us to apprehend public opinion in China through analysis and to complement the analysis from the *People’s Daily*. Another reason is that both papers allow us to examine the dynamics of the media, the market, and the government.

#### 3.2 Analysis

The primary research methods used in this study of middle-class images were quantitative totaling and discourse analysis.

In specific terms, the following operational indexes will be used for quantitative totaling in this study: (1) the number of relevant articles posted by year, (2) comparison of translations of middle class, (3) analysis of the various compositions of the middle class, (4) attitudes of reports on the middle class, and (5) comparison among newspapers.

Additionally, in analyzing discourses, this study particularly examines hegemony in the media’s construction of images of the middle class. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the social positions of the agents who speak of the middle class and examines the uniformity and regularity of their discourse practices.

This study also addresses the following points by using intertextuality as an analysis model: What kinds of texts are associated with each other, and in what way, when referring to the middle class in reports and articles? How are they aggregated into one representation of middle class?

#### 3.3 Search Methods

To extract data from the Japanese newspapers, this study searched two databases, “Yomidasu Rekishikan” and “Kikuzou II Visual,” for articles published in *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun* between December 2008 and March 2012 that contained one of the following keywords: 中産階級 (middle capital class), 中流 (middle level stratum/class), 中間階級 (middle class), or 中間層 (middle stratum). This study found 261 relevant reports and articles in *Yomiuri Shimbun* and 47 in *Asahi Shimbun*.

To collect data from our Chinese sources, this study first conducted a full-text search of the *People's Daily's* "People's Daily Picture and Texts Database." Because *Southern Weekly* has no such online database, this study instead conducted a full-text search using the online database found at <http://www.infzm.com/> to extract relevant reports and articles. For both publications, this study searched for articles published from 2006 onward and containing one of the following keywords: 中等收入阶级 / 阶层 / 群体 / 人群 (middle income class/stratum/group/group of people), 中产 (middle capital stratum/class), 中流 (middle level stratum/class), 中间层 (middle stratum), or 中间阶级 (middle class). This study found 378 relevant reports and articles in *People's Daily* and 473 in *Southern Weekly*.

For the sake of analytical convenience, this study determined whether articles were relevant based on whether they directly or explicitly refer to one of our search terms. Articles that included even one mention of a keyword in the headline or body text were included in our dataset.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Volume of Coverage

Figure 2 shows how many articles on the middle class were published in Japanese newspapers each year. References reached a peak in 1960: this was the year the Democratic Socialist Party attempted to "turn the whole nation into a middle class," and when the Liberal Democratic Party adopted a policy of "embourgeoisement," advocating a "road to a prosperous state" and an "income-doubling plan."

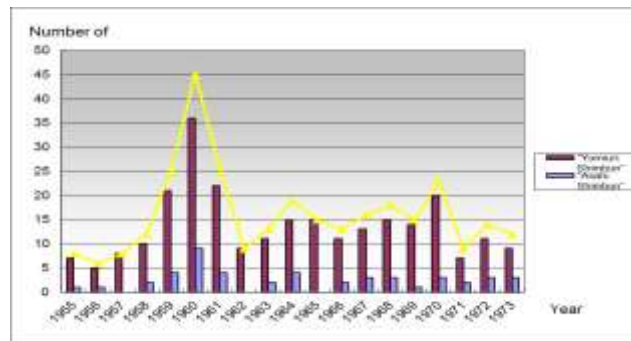


Figure 2: Number of relevant articles posted in Japanese newspapers by year

Figure 3 shows the number of articles on the middle class published in Chinese newspapers each year. The highest coverage was in 2006–2007. The middle class was hardly mentioned until 2001: there were only six relevant articles on *People's Daily* between 1946 and 2000. In 2000, Jiang Zemin, former General Secretary, advocated the "Three Representations" theory, and in 2001 he stated during the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China that he would welcome emerging classes, such as the managers of private companies, into the party. In 2006, at the 10th National People's Congress of China, the "the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan" was announced, which again stressed expanding the middle-income group. In 2007, this became governmental policy during the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

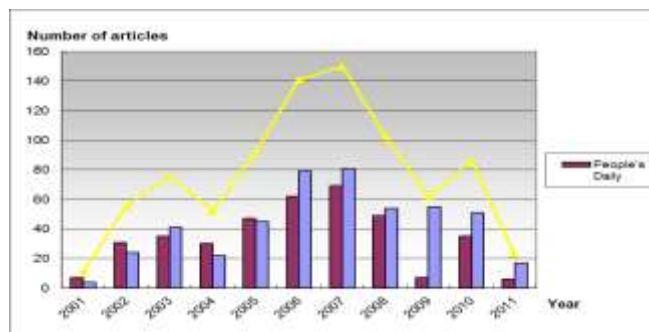


Figure 3: Number of relevant articles posted in Chinese newspapers by year

#### 4.2 Translations of Middle Class and their Semantic Contents

Japanese newspapers describe the middle class using four different terms: 中産階級 (middle capital class), 中流 (middle level stratum/class), 中間層 (middle stratum), and 中間階級 (middle class). Figure 4 shows how frequently each of these terms occurs in the relevant articles. 中産階級 (middle capital class) is primarily a political concept, while 中流 (middle level stratum/class) is more closely linked with lifestyle and behavioral patterns. 中間層 (middle stratum) is a more comprehensive term, and 中間階級 (middle class) is the least frequently used and the most general, referring to the vast stratum who occupy an intermediate position between upper and lower classes.



Figure4: Analysis of translations of “middle class” in Japanese newspapers (Unit: %)

Likewise, Chinese newspapers use several words to refer to the middle class (Table 2). In *People’s Daily*, the most frequently used term is 中等收入者 (middle income people), followed by 中产 (middle capital stratum/class). The former term implies government principles and policies, while 中产 (middle capital stratum/class) and 中产阶级 (middle capital stratum) are used to discuss the economic roles of the middle class and introduce their consumer characteristics. *People’s Daily* only uses 中产阶级 (middle capital class) when quoting international sources, and 中流 (middle level stratum/class) is used only when referring to Japan. In *Southern Weekly*, the most frequently used term is 中产阶级 (middle class), followed by 中产 (middle capital stratum/class). The former term is used primarily to describe middle class consumer characteristics and to cite international examples. In contrast, 中等收入者 (middle income people) and 中产阶级 (middle capital class) are used to reference relevant governmental policies. There are also some Chinese phrases that occur only in *Southern Weekly*: 中产收入阶层 (middle income stratum), 中间收入阶层 (middle income group), 中间群体 (middle group of people), and 中等阶层 (medium stratum).

The terms commonly used in both Chinese papers suggest that understandings of the middle class in China are centered on income. Words like 中间层 (middle stratum) and 中间阶层 (middle stratum) do not frequently appear in Chinese newspapers, perhaps because they only suggest a vague image of the mid-level of social structures. Instead, Chinese papers use words like 中等收

入 (middle income), which is used to convey governmental policies, and 中产 (middle capital stratum/class), which has economic implications.

People's Daily		Southern Weekly	
Translations	Frequency of use (number of times)	Translations	Frequency of use (number of)
中等收入者	191	中产阶级	421
中产	116	中产	170
中产阶级	94	中等收入者	131
中等收入群体	77	中产阶层	116
中间阶层	76	中间阶层	25
中等收入阶层	62	中等收入群体	23
中产阶级	12	中间层	14
中产者	4	中等收入阶层	12
中流	2	中等收入人群	8
中间层	1	中流	7
		中等阶层	3
		中产收入阶层	2
		中间收入阶层	1
		中间群体	1

Table 2: Analysis of translations of “middle class” in Chinese newspapers (Unit: %)

### 4.3 Definitions and Compositions of Middle Class

The Japanese and Chinese newspapers define middle class using primarily three methods: quoting academic interpretations, borrowing what the government and political parties say, and defining the term by the newspapers. The newspapers, in turn, derive their definitions from two perspectives: one is a definition derived from studies of social classes and social strata, and the other is a definition based on lifestyles.

This study examines the composition of the middle class based on four standards.

#### (1) Educational Background

There is no specific agreement on what constitutes the educational background of middle class in Japanese newspapers. Similarly, the educational background is often included in discussions of middle class in Chinese newspapers, but there, it is clear that a university degree is an essential requirement for being middle class.

#### (2) Occupation

Both Japanese and Chinese papers focus on occupation when creating their images of the middle class (Table 3). In Japan, newspaper portrayals focus on salaried and white-collar workers, and middle-class women are often portrayed as housewives. In China, however, more focus is placed on the middle class as members of management, intellectuals, and government officials than on white-collar workers in general. There are also unbalanced descriptions in terms of gender composition.

Occupation	Number of mentions (numbers in < > indicate females)	Frequency of mention	Ratio (%)
<b>&lt;New middle class&gt;</b>			
Skilled worker	26	12	66.66
White collar worker	10 <1>	18	9.94
Intellectual	5	42	23.21
Engineer	5		
Organized worker	3		
Specialist	3		
Clerk	3 <1>		
Intellectuals	3		
Big firm executive	2		
Company employee	2		
Managerial worker	2		
Company president	2		
Technologist	2		
Big firm middle management worker	1		
Business person	1		
Intellectual class	1		
Specialist	1		
<b>&lt;Old middle class&gt;</b>			
Small business owner	9		
Farmer	8		
People in agriculture, forestry, and fishery	4		
Retail store owner	4		
Small/medium-sized trader or manufacturer	3		
Merchant	3		
Skilled worker	2		
Workers at small/medium-sized trader of manufacturer	1		
Retailer	1		
Self-employed worker	1		
Factory owner	1		
Seller	1		
Handicraftsman	1		
Small-scale rentier	1		
<b>Individually referred terms</b>			
Housewife	18 <18>		
Salesperson	8 <1>		
Teacher	6 <1>		
Nurse	5 <5>		
Doctor	4 <2>		
Politician	3		
Reporter	3 <1>		
Professor	2		
Government official	2		
Writer	1 <1>		
Travel agency owner	1		
Ship captain	1		
Drug store owner	1		
Small company executive	1		
President of advertising company	1		
Sociologist	1		
Psychologist	1		
Artist	1		
Producer	1		
Instructor	1		
Assistant	1		
Lawyer	1		
Cultural activist	1		
Reporter	1 <1>		
Health nurse	1		
Civil servant	1		
Actor	1 <1>		

Occupation	Frequency of mention	Ratio (%)
<New middle class>	12	66.66
(Housewife)	18	9.94
<Old middle class>	42	23.21

People's Daily and Southern Weekly

Occupation	Number of mentions (numbers in < > indicate females)	Frequency of mention	Ratio (%)
<b>&lt;New middle class&gt;</b>			
Managerial worker	24	24	89.26
White collar worker	16 <3>	32	11.86
Intellectual	9	42	10.74
Government official	15 <4>		
Reporter	10 <2>		
Doctor	10 <1>		
Writer	9		
Actor	8 <1>		
Specialist	8		
Editor	7		
Government staff	6 <3>		
Civil servant	6		
Lawyer	5 <2>		
Director	4 <4>		
Housewife	4		
Freelancer	4		
Accountant	3		
Player/act	3		
Engineer/worker	3		
Producer	2		
Artist	2		
Millionaire	2		
Athlete	2		
Engineer	2		
Service industry worker	2		
Reporter	2		
Photographer	1		
Banker	1		
<b>&lt;Old middle class&gt;</b>			
Small/medium-sized business owner	21		
Self-employed worker	1		
Skilled worker	1		
<b>Individually referred terms</b>			
White collar worker	9 <3>		
Teacher	6 <1>		
Managerial worker	6 <1>		
Writer	5 <1>		
Housewife	4 <4>		
Sociologist	3		
Government official	3		
Small/medium-sized business owner	3		
Editor	3		
Film director	3		
Business person	2		
Doctor	2		
Athlete	2		
Self-employed worker	2		
Lawyer	2		
Player/act	2		
Civil servant	2 <1>		
Lawyer	1		
Ship captain	1 <1>		
Grillo	1		
Photographer	1		
Singer	1		
Actor	1		
Producer	1		
Economist	1		
Engineer	1		

Table 3: Occupation in Japanese and Chinese newspapers

**(3) Income**

Japanese newspapers define the middle class as households earning 25,000–150,000 yen per month (500,000–1,000,000 yen per year) from 1955–1960 and 490,000–1,800,000 yen per year in the 1970s. In Chinese newspapers, there is much more variability in terms of a middle class income level; standards vary even within the same newspaper.

**(4) Consumer Products**

This study also identified any consumer products connected with the middle class (Table 4). In both Japan and China, a house is seen as the most important accessory, followed by a TV in Japan and a car in China.

Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun				People's Daily and Southern Weekly	
Object	Number of appearances	Object	Number of appearances	Object	Number of appearances
House	28	Dish washer	2	House	193
TV	15	Electric fan	2	Car	56
Car	13	Stand clock	1	Meal	26
Refrigerator	12	Clothes iron	1	Clothing	10
Washing machine	11	Desk lamp	1	Brand-name goods	6
Piano	9	Electric rice-cooker	1	Credit card	4
Clothing	6	Telephone	1	Yacht	4
Meal	5	Radio receiver-capacitor	1	Stock	3
Vacuum cleaner	4	Microwave	1	Art object	2
Furniture	3	Garbage incinerator	1	Furniture	1
Stereo set	3	Tape recorder	1	Cosmetic product	1
Air conditioner	3	Transistor	1	Treadmill	1
Stock	2	Well pump	1	Stereo	1
Gas stove	2	Camera	1		
		Gas water heater	1		

Table 4: Consumer products in Japanese and Chinese newspapers

#### 4.4 Methods of Describing Middle Class

This study analyzed any adjectives associated with the middle class in order to examine newspapers' attitudes toward the middle class (Table 5). This study results show that neither Japanese nor Chinese newspapers tend to evaluate the middle class in a negative way.

Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun				People's Daily and Southern Weekly			
Modifier	Frequency of use	Modifier	Frequency of use	Modifier	Frequency of use	Modifier	Frequency of use
Average	31	Powerless	2	Stable	74	Reassuring	1
Stable	22	Vacuous	2	Prosperous	65	Perfect	1
Sound	8	Rational	2	Harmonious	40	Placid	1
Affluent	8	Innovative	2	Easy	38	Helpless	1
Commonplace	6	Free	1	Reasonable	21	Unambitious	1
Uneasy	6	Intelligent	1	Fair	21	Weary	1
Conservative	6	Well-rounded	1	Core	18	Idle	1
Uninterested in politics	5	Superior	1	Democratic	15	Panic	1
Democratic	5	Vainglorious	1	Depressed	12	Worried	1
Lonely	4	Content	1	Important	10	Ideal	1
Laissez-faire	4	Advanced	1	Anxious	8	Coordinated	1
Bad	4	Individualistic	1	Uneasy	7	Compact	1
Happy	3	Inactive	1	Happy	7	Naive	1
Materialistic	3	Disturbed	1	Healthy	4	Self-absorbed	1
Moderate and steady	3	Inconvenient	1	Luxurious	4	Pitiful	1
Peaceful	3	Unsatisfied	1	Free	4	Sorrowful	1
Contradictory	3	Easy	1	Giant	4	Gentle	1
Neutral	2	Secure	1	Just	4	Feeble	1
Core	2			Depressive	3	Weak	1
				Successful	3	Conservative	1
				Equal	3	Justicial	1
				Civilized	3	High-fed	1
				Positive	2	Even	1
				FALSE	2	Flourishing	1
				Rising	2	Sane	1
				Quiet	2	Solid	1
				Satisfied	2	Common	1
				Indifferent	2	Elegant	1
				Balanced	2	Void	1
				Leisure	2		

Table 5: Adjectives

This study then analyzed any verbs having “middle class” as a subject or object in order to examine the attitudes of both the newspapers and the agents speaking of the middle class, and calculated the frequency of the use for each verb mentioned (Table 6). Japanese newspapers emphasized the words “increased,” “rapidly increased,” or “had grown”; they also appeared, to some extent, to be trying to “nurture,” “support,” or “expand” the idea of the middle class. Likewise, Chinese newspapers are most likely to connect the middle class with verbs such as “expand,” “nurture,” or “develop.” It is clear that they are aggressively trying to “foster” or “promote” the middle class.



Yomiuri Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun (Unit: number of times)				People's Daily and Southern Weekly (Unit: number of times)			
Verb	Frequency of use	Verb	Frequency of use	Verb	Frequency of use	Verb	Frequency of use
Nurture	18	Disappear	1	Amplify	37	Pay attention to	3
Increase	13	Fall down	1	Foster	24	Enhance	2
Belong to	9	Occupy	1	Strengthen	13	Promote	2
Grow	9	Spread	1	Develop	10	Accelerate	2
Go to ruin	9	Be confused	1	Grow	8	Need	2
Expand	5	Bulge	1	Rise	8	Maintain	1
Place emphasis on	5	Value	1	Increase	7	Push on	1
Support	4	Make	1	Form	6	Swell	1
Radically increase	4	Accumulate	1	Cause	5	Aspire	1
Acquire	4	Rise	1	Grow up	3	Advance	1
Be told	4	Regard	1				
Dissolve	3	Bloat	1				
Raise	3	Call	1				
Broaden	3	Dispatch	1				
Amplify	3	Investigate	1				
Pay attention to	3	Contain	1				
Measure	3	Get confused	1				
Be aware of	2	Collect	1				
Be	2	Be selected	1				
Take root	2	Classify	1				
Heighten	2	Speak for	1				
Take root	2	Plead	1				
Attract	2	Correspond	1				
Think	2	Encourage	1				
Cherish	2	Proceed	1				
Appear	2	Create	1				
Be called	2	Exist	1				
Discuss	2	Raise	1				
Stand out	2	Emerge	1				
Form	2	Make one's way into	1				
Establish	2	Starve	1				
Include	2	Represent	1				
Be born	2	Penetrate	1				
Evaluate	2	Center	1				
Have	1	Be absent	1				
Be satisfied	1	Produce	1				
Aim	1	Capture	1				
Live	1						

Table 6: Verbs

The middle class in newspapers is also woven into a fabric by means of multiple texts. Quantitative totaling from the perspective of “intertextuality” yielded the results shown in Figure 5.

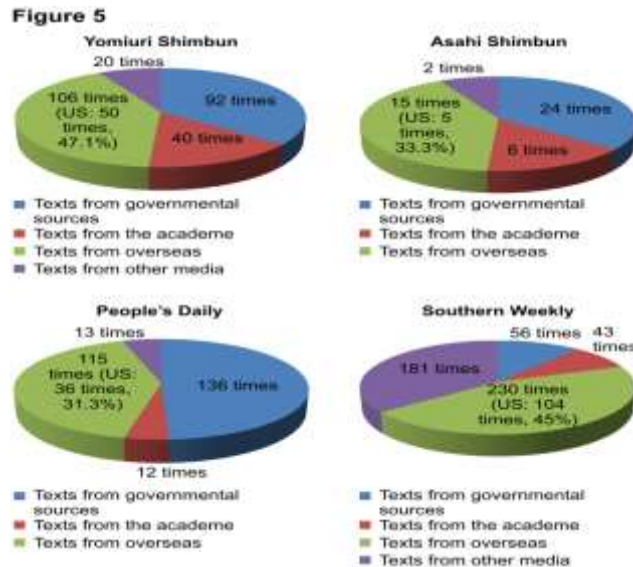


Figure 5: Newspaper intertextuality (Unit: Number of appearances)

Both Japanese and Chinese newspapers represent middle class in their countries by linking four types of texts: (1) governmental sources (2) academic research (3) a broad range of documents from overseas and (4) other media.

An analysis of those who speak or write about the middle class shows that those in both Japanese and Chinese newspapers can be classified into five categories: (1) scholars, (2) government officials, (3) those who proclaim themselves as middle class, (4) those who admit to being in other classes, and (5) media workers (Figure 6).

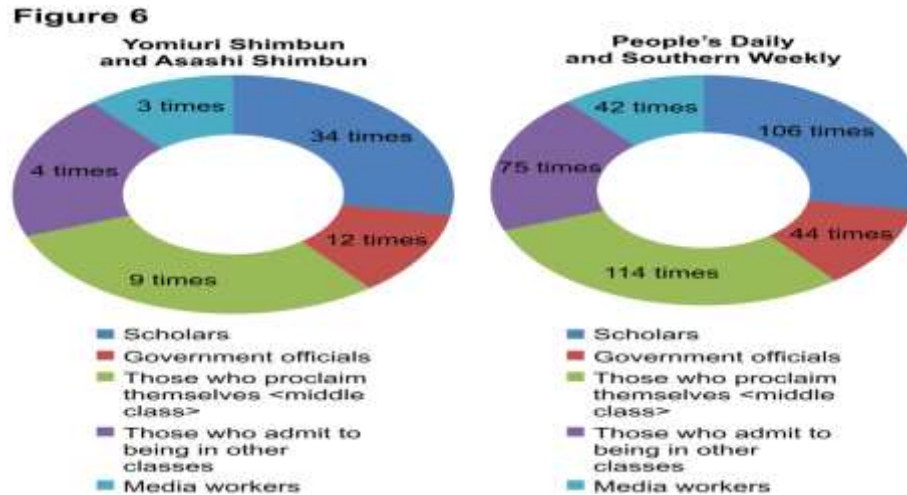


Figure 6: Newspaper speakers (Unit: Number of appearances)

A concrete examination of these five categories of speakers and what they said revealed that they all showed positive attitudes toward the middle class and embraced it.

## 5. Discussion

Analysis revealed that while Japanese and Chinese newspapers were constructing their own images of the middle class, they were also influenced by the government, academia, and so on. Similarities were also observed between Japan and China: (1) strong policy orientation, (2) the use of local language to classify the middle class, (3) bias toward a “new middle class,” (4) value for consumption of goods, (5) gender divisions in expressions, (6) a Western orientation, and (7) hegemony in the construction of middle-class images. Meanwhile, several differences were likewise observed: (1) references to educational background, (2) reporting on management practices, intellectuals, and government officials, (3) the construction of housewife images, and (4) use of modifiers, such as “average” (Japan) versus “affluent” (China).

The following are presumed to be the reasons for the similar characteristics. First, the model for understanding middle-class concepts as presented in Figure 1 comes from outside both cultures, even though differences exist between Japan and China in culture and in the periods in which the middle class was clearly recognized. Next, the media in both countries are induced by political measures. Therefore, when the government and political parties signal approval or expansion of the middle class, the newspapers immediately reflect such an action. In addition, because the Japanese and Chinese media are both influenced by the market and the pursuit of profit, the newspapers imply that it is middle class to have certain consumer products, paying attention to a portion of the emerging class in accordance with the mechanism of differentiation arising from consumption in the market economy. In general, the media-constructed images of the middle class both in Japan and China are similarly influenced by five forces: government, political parties, politicians, changes in society (formation of an emerging class, intellectual movements, the birth of a consumptive society, etc.), and the tide of globalization.

On the other hand, the reasons for the four differences may be as follows. First, during the period of strong economic development in Japan, nearly 80% of college or two-year college graduates entered middle class professions. Therefore, there was no need to mention educational background in the newspapers. In China, because educational background is perceived by society as a prime means for establishing one’s status, the newspapers need to mention it specifically. Next, in terms of occupational distribution, “salaried workers” in Japan are those required by Japanese-style management and the high degree of economic development in a corporate society. In contrast to this, managerial workers, intellectuals, and government officials in China are those

with vested interests, who have come up to the surface as the gap widens among the societal strata owing to the global progress of “neoliberalism.” The reason for calling these people the middle class is to cover up inequalities, but at the same time acknowledge the gap. With regard to “housewives,” the combination of the “salaried worker” and the “housewife” underpins the rapid growth of the middle class in Japan whereas, in China, housewives do not exist so far as newspapers are concerned, because women with high educational backgrounds and high incomes constitute the majority of middle class women, and because gender equality is a fundamental policy of the country. Finally, in terms of the difference in modifiers, I believe that this is caused by the differences in the cultures and societal stages in Japan and China.

### **Conclusion**

This study’s comparative analysis indicates that it is possible to compare Japan and China without considering each as unique, as has been the previous tendency. It also offers a new direction for international comparisons in middle class studies, and may contribute to the development of an Asian-style sociology.

Because of space limitations, meticulous discussion and careful analysis were not possible. This study lacks a thorough explanation of the influence of media-constructed images of the middle class. Rigorous measurements and statistics regarding media images were not possible, nor was there room for a detailed discussion of the causes of the differences and similarities between Japan and China. All of these constitute material for further research.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The theory of “Three Representations” is the idea that the Communist Party of China must represent (1) the developmental trend of the country’s advanced productive forces, (2) the progressive course of the country’s advanced culture, and (3) the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China.