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Recent middle class studies. Historical and Ethnographic Contributions for a Renewed Research Agenda

Estudios recientes sobre las clases medias. Contribuciones históricas y etnográficas para una agenda de investigación renovada

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ABSTRACT: This text presents the dossier *Middle classes: recent historical and ethnographic contributions*. The aim of this dossier is to present the renewed path taken by studies on the middle class carried out in the last twenty-five years. A significant part of this research is mainly (but not exclusively) historical and ethnographic and differs from pre-existing studies in its focus on the middle class and the questions it raises. What has characterized this field of studies is less the unified character of its theoretical-analytic perspective and more an agenda based on problems that the usual approaches have not been able to solve or even formulated. Basically, several aspects that had been taken for granted until then were problematized: the "given" character of the middle class; its universalism; the supposed correlation between objective conditions and ways of thinking and acting; and underestimation of internal heterogeneity. Instead, these studies addressed the processes of historical formation of the middle classes, the specificities of national contexts, and the diverse practices of identification and delimitation in everyday life. After the texts by David S. Parker and Mark Liechty in the Fundamentals section, the issue features contributions by Moises Kopper, Leela Fernandes, and Anna Jefferson and Charlotte Perez. The number also includes contributions by Marco Maureira Velásquez y Diego González, Kristina Grünenberg and Anja Simonsen, and Pablo Francescutti in the research articles section, and by Luis Enrique Alonso and Carlos J. Fernández Rodríguez, and Ana Grondona in the Inherited Identity section. The issue also gathers, in the critical papers section, three contributions regarding middle classes (by Lucía Gandolfi Ottavianelli, Markus Shall Enk and María Florencia Blanco Esmoris) and two additionals by Ramón Ramos Torre, and María Martínez.

Keywords

Middle class
Ethnography
History
Social identities

RESUMEN: Este texto presenta el dossier *Clases medias: recientes contribuciones históricas y etnográficas*. El propósito de este dossier es presentar el camino renovado que han tomado los estudios sobre la clase media realizados en los últimos veinticinco años. Una parte significativa de esta investigación es principalmente (pero no exclusivamente) histórica y etnográfica y difiere de los estudios preexistentes en su enfoque de la clase media y, por lo tanto, en las preguntas que plantea. Lo que ha caracterizado a este campo de estudios es menos el carácter unificado de su perspectiva teórico-analítica y más una agenda basada en problemas que los enfoques habituales no habían podido resolver o ni siquiera habían formulado. Básicamente, se problematizaron varios aspectos hasta entonces dados por sentado: el carácter «dado» de la clase media; su universalismo; la supuesta correlación entre condiciones objetivas y formas de pensar y actuar; y la subestimación de la heterogeneidad interna. En su lugar, estos estudios abordaron los procesos de formación histórica de clases medias, las especificidades de los contextos nacionales y las prácticas diversas de identificación y delimitación en la vida cotidiana. Tras los textos de David S. Parker y Mark Liechty en la sección Fundamentales, el número cuenta con las contribuciones de Moises Kopper, Leela Fernandes y Anna Jefferson y Charlotte Perez. El número también incluye las contribuciones de Marco Maureira Velásquez y Diego González, Kristina Grünenberg y Anja Simonsen, y Pablo Francescutti in la sección artículos de investigación, y de Luis Enrique Alonso y Carlos J. Fernández Rodríguez, y Ana Grondona en la sección identidad heredada. El número también reúne, en su sección papales críticos, tres contribuciones sobre clases medias (de Lucía Gandolfi Ottavianelli, Markus Shall Enk y María Florencia Blanco Esmoris) y dos de temática libre escritas por Ramón Ramos Torre, y María Martínez.

Palabras clave

Clases Medias
Etnografía
Historia
Identidades sociales

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The purpose of this dossier is to present the renewed path taken by studies on the middle class made over the last twenty-five years. A significant portion of this research is primarily (but not exclusively) historical and ethnographic and differs from pre-existing studies in its approach to the middle class, and thus in the questions it raises. What has characterized this field of studies is less the unified character of its theoretical-analytical perspective and more an agenda based on problems that the usual approaches have been unable to solve or have not even formulated.

To begin with, let us remember that the middle class has always been a thorn in the side of social class theories in terms of both Marxism in its different versions and the theory of social stratification. From the outset, studies on the class system in capitalism have had to face the problem of how to explain the existence of a vast segment of the population made up, basically, of merchants, professionals, and bureaucrats, as either property owners or wage earners. The concept of middle class has been imagined as an objective and universal category that classified certain segments of the population in capitalist countries, homogenizing its empirical variations through criteria selected by the observer or analyst, such as income level, occupation, or education level. However, this attempt to establish an objective and universal criterion for defining the middle class collided with the economic, political, and cultural heterogeneity of the sectors that make up the middle class. Consequently, it made the category so imprecise that it has inevitably led to the question of what justifies using it as a way of incorporating so much heterogeneity (Visacovsky & Garguin, 2009; Weiss, 2019).

Problems tend to increase when we seek to establish correlations between the middle class as a sector defined *a priori* and certain ideological orientations, ways of thinking and acting. This is well known in the case of political analysis, with statements such as "the middle class voted for" or "so-and-so received majority support from the middle class". The assumption is that given certain objective conditions (income levels, location in urban space, housing characteristics, level of education, capacity, and type of consumption, etc.), political adhesions or rejections become understandable, rational, and transparent. Although this reasoning seems coherent, it is also true that it is not very useful when it comes to explaining cases in which the correspondence between objective conditions and political adherence (or other ways of thinking and acting) is not established as expected. Something similar could be said about the relationship between objective conditions and consumption of goods and services, which we will deal with next.

The emergence of a new field of middle-class studies can be seen as a consequence of the general renewal of approaches to social classes (Giddens, 1997; Wright, 2018). Moreover, it is difficult not to see many of the challenges to the idea of the middle class as relevant to social classes as a whole. However, the idea of middle class entails very specific problems that may persist even when employing a different approach to social classes. As a scientific concept, "class" has been used both in a logical or taxonomic sense and in the sense of a conditioning (or determining) of actions, ideas, or beliefs of social groups. In other words, to speak of "class" has implied a way of grouping a population that would share common properties (such as income levels or occupational characteristics), as well as an objective position that would make it possible to understand the ways of acting and thinking of a part of the population. In the specific case of the middle class, both the design of good classifications and the establishment of connections between objective positions with actions and ways of thinking have been particularly problematic, usually demanding unsuccessful efforts. In the case of expert definitions of the middle class, the most problematic aspect has been

the grouping in the same category of a heterogeneous population (from rich to poor, from occupations with higher to lower levels of education, or from wage earners to self-employed workers).

It is not that the categories and definitions created by the experts are meaningless; they are useful to those who design and implement public policies or to those who want to observe the distribution of wealth in certain areas, the access to certain goods and services, and even the potential connection between this and political choices. But whether in terms of consumption practices or political adherence, the correlation between a segment of the population and a certain type of consumption or political inclination always requires a question that subjects this relationship to a critical examination that allows us to study it as something that has been established, has been forged, has not always been this way and could well have been otherwise. Clearly, a certain level of income determines access to certain goods and services. Nevertheless, this relationship cannot be understood in a mechanical way, precisely because what we seek to understand are those actions and ways of thinking that seem incongruent with what the theory predicts. Much has been contributed to the development of a perspective that approaches class as a process that can be addressed in historical terms by works such as those of Edward P. Thompson (1989), which analyze the formation of the working class in England.

Another major influence in the development of new research approaches on the middle classes can be attributed to the efforts of Pierre Bourdieu (1998), who gave capital importance to classificatory acts, within a project in which objective conditioning was neither abandoned nor underestimated. Bourdieu argued that the objective became subjective in a *practical* way, and thus reworked the concept of *habitus* as generative schemes of perception and appreciation learned from early childhood through primary socialization, which would appear to be structuring new practices. Although researchers can estimate the objective positions of agents in the social space, classes are continually constituting themselves as such through the acts of consumption and the appraisals they make of them, thanks to the actualization of the *habitus* embodied in them.

Thus, this new field of middle class studies was generated from a strong problematization of the basic assumptions that had guided the analysis for decades, such as the "given" character of the middle class, its universalism, the supposed correlation between objective conditions and ways of thinking and acting, and the underestimation of internal heterogeneity. Instead, these new studies approached the middle class in different forms: as processes of historical formation and with diverse characteristics according to the peculiarities of each national context (which led to the reformulation of the notion of "middle classes", in the plural); as multidimensional processes, in which ways of thinking and acting are not seen as mere precipitates or products of objective conditions, but as constitutive and fundamental aspects; and finally, as internal heterogeneity, not as an obstacle to be ignored or remedied with *ad hoc* cuts, but as part of the historical problem to be understood.

Empirical research on the processes of historical formation of specific middle classes was fundamental in transforming the hitherto universal models based on studies of the United States and Western Europe (see Liechty's article in this dossier) into specific national and regional processes. This did not necessarily imply ignoring the general conditions shared by capitalist societies, but attempting to understand the specific processes of formation. Hence the efforts to study the emergence of "middle classes" in different national contexts (e.g.,

Kocka, 1995), which involved subjecting the already mentioned universalist, teleological and homogenizing pretensions of the classical perspectives to strong critical examination. As Liechty points out, historical specificities must be understood on the basis of certain conditions of possibility. These studies offered a vision of the middle classes from the point of view of their constitution and permanent transformation, prolonging the efforts of Max Weber (2002 [1922]), with the cultural specificities, the forms of identity ascription and the way in which the actors give meaning to their lives acquiring particular relevance. From these perspectives, "middle class" was studied not only as a mode of expert categorization, but mainly as a not necessarily exclusive way by which a specific population orders its experience, classifies itself with respect to another with which it differs (Gobo, 1995), especially in moral terms by accessing certain goods, living in and frequenting certain places, assuming a certain personal appearance in public space, appealing to a certain way of speaking, among other characteristics (Furbank, 2005).

One of the most important consequences revealed by these studies is that the use of the category "middle class" as an identification (including its public invocation) did not automatically emerge everywhere at the same time, or in the same way, as in the United States and Western Europe. This is well appreciated in David Parker's work (see this dossier) on how and why employees in Peru's offices, banks and stores began to define themselves as members of the middle class. Parker set out to challenge well-established ideas in Western historiography about the incompatibility between stratified conceptions and languages and modern class politics. What he found is that behind their classist and combative language, Lima's employees were not only seeking to defend themselves from certain threats of capitalism, but also to preserve certain prerogatives acquired in the times of the caste society. Uniquely, the persistence of rhetorical figures of speech typical of a society of estates was not seen by Parker as a vestige of the past, but as an integral part of the constitution of a middle-class identity.

In a similar vein, we can mention other works on the formation of the middle class in Latin America, such as Brian Owensby's (1999) study on how Brazilian men and women reformulated the meaning of work and home in the period 1920-1950, in order to differentiate themselves from those below them and, at the same time, project a sense of belonging and moral superiority over those above them. Alternatively, the work of Ezequiel Adamovsky (2009), who showed that the emergence of a middle-class identity in Argentina occurred at a much later date than usually believed, linking it to the rejection of Peronism as a political movement among the upper classes and middle sectors, and the politicization of ethnic-racial dimensions. In addition to this already rich panorama, a significant number of historical studies have focused on the unique conditions of middle class formation in Latin America (Barbosa Cruz, López-Pedreros & Stern, 2022; Barr-Melej, 2002; Candina Polomer, 2013; López-Pedreros, 2019; Parker & Walker, 2013; Stern, 2021; Visacovsky & Garguin, 2020).

Studies such as the above questioned the universalist postulates of American sociology in the first half of the 20th century, according to which modernization led to the institutionalization of secularized values in schools, parties, the State and businesses, thus giving rise to a "meritocratic culture" that was open to social mobility and equality of opportunity (Parsons, 1940). This would become evident in the growth of "white-collar" workers (employees, clerks, administrative workers) and the decrease in industrial workers, all of which would lead to a middle-class society in which the conflict between capital and labor would diminish (Dunlop, Harbison, Kerk & Myers, 1967; Lipset & Bendix, 1963; Mayer, 1963; Wright Mills, 1951).

More recently, a similar critique pointed to an idea widely accepted in certain circles, i.e., the existence of a "global middle class". Encouraged by organizations such as the World Bank and defended by academic institutions that provided financial and intellectual resources to address it, this notion assumed that poverty on a global scale would fall progressively, since globalization would boost the incorporation of broad sectors into the labor markets. A significant increase in income for large sectors of the world's population would produce greater participation in the global consumption of goods and services, such as transnational brands of electronics or clothing. From this perspective, the expansion of a "global middle class" (according to certain studies, households spending between 2 and 4 dollars per capita per day, or between 6 and 10 depending on the country) in countries and regions that have recently become thriving capitalisms would demonstrate that it is capitalist development that would inevitably lead to a reduction in poverty (see, for example, Banerjee and Duflo, 2008).

Phenomena in expansion during the present 21st century, such as the global demand for clothes of prestigious brands, but also the emergence of local designers working in a more limited market, the adoption of habits and knowledge linked to wine consumption or the number of visits to shopping malls that are also spaces for leisure and sociability, can be understood, in part, as a result of the globalization of markets, and the accompanying deterritorialization of customs to become universal ones. However, as several analyses have pointed out, these global processes can only exist through specific forms of sociocultural reception (Appadurai, 1996). As we pointed out with respect to the classic studies on the middle class in Western Europe and the United States, the conception of a "global middle class" presupposes, on the one hand, a teleology, in which certain countries or regions are considered models to which others should aspire, and on the other, a significant homogenization derived from access to goods and services of global circulation which, consequently, would form a sort of global identity that would subordinate or destroy local identities. If historical studies were concerned with showing how the processes of middle class formation cannot be understood independently of their specific contexts (López-Pedreros & Weinstein, 2012), ethnographic studies not only further reinforced this principle, but they also showed that the modernization implied in the idea of a "global middle class" and the inexorable razing of pre-existing traditions and identities was not evident in countries such as India (Fernandes, 2006), China (Zhang, 2010), Nepal (Liechty, 2002) or Egypt (Schielke, 2015). Neither was it evident in a significant part of the population of Latin America during the first decade of the 21st century, where a large part of the population classified as "middle class" had seen significant growth in income levels and, therefore, greater possibilities of access to goods and services (O'Dougherty, 2002; Kopper, 2022; Visacovsky, 2012, 2014, 2022). In order to carry out these discussions, it was essential to address a classic topic in studies on the middle classes, such as the way in which they relate to consumption. Bourdieu's work was crucial here, as Liechty points out in this dossier. Between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, ethnographic studies focusing on populations that defined themselves (or are defined) as "middle class" began to appear. Precisely, most of these studies have investigated consumption practices, their link with gender, religion, ethnicity, and nationality identities in relation to the role played by the mass media and electronic communication in the dissemination of lifestyles, and in the local forms of appropriation, use and re-signification of these practices (Donner, 2017). Ethnographic studies offered the possibility of observing practices from everyday life and, thus, of recording the specific, contextualized uses of classificatory categories. This is evident

in the work of Liechty (2002 and in this dossier) when he focuses on the urban middle class in Nepal. He showed how "being middle class" implied being part of (or adhering to) a project that sought to overcome the paradoxical, conflicting relationship between the traditional-Nepalese and the modern-global. It implied adopting a traditional Nepalese culture which was removed from the "vulgarity" of the urban poor and, at the same time, "being modern" without simply submitting to anything foreign, a phenomenon that is considered typical of the upper classes. It is interesting to compare this study with that of Carla Freeman (2015) on the work practices and lifestyles of entrepreneurs on the Caribbean island of Barbados. She sees the Caribbean in general as a good case study to examine how neoliberalism maintains a constant negotiation between global integration and local responsiveness, which prompts the emerging entrepreneurial middle class to generate new forms of bonding beyond class, including gender and racial aspects that exceed the sphere of labor.

Much has been said about the growth of the middle class in Latin America during the first decade of this century, as a result of public policies that led to a marked incorporation of vast sectors into consumption. Based on the results of long ethnographic research work in the city of Porto Alegre, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Kopper analyzes in this dossier the formation processes of a new middle class in Brazil through the upward mobility resulting from the federal housing program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (*My House, My Life*), enacted in 2009 during the second government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2007-2011). This program subsidized the acquisition of a house or apartment, thus facilitating access to real estate for families, depending on their income levels. According to subsequent government reports, the program enabled almost 15 million people (7% of the population) to purchase a property. Kopper discusses the emergence of "being in the middle" as a category of identification, which expanded as public housing beneficiaries moved away from the informal settlements, where the poorest sectors traditionally lived, to become urban homeowners. He attempts to show how the process of formation of a middle-class identity depended closely on this process of location within a morally connoted urban space.

We have already indicated out that characterizing the middle class as a recognizable segment of society may be useful for certain purposes, but from there to assuming that those who make up the segment adopt common patterns of behavior and thinking is completely illusory. However, a different perspective emerges if researchers realize that their efforts to establish the appropriate boundaries of the middle class in questions of measurement or sociological surveys in the field are also pursued by the people who are the object of their attention. In this way, the focus of such research is redirected to the study of the various ways in which people establish delimitations (as well as experts correcting other delimitations that they judge to be erroneous), under certain restrictive conditions. These delimitation devices constitute central aspects of the processes of formation and reproduction of social differentiation and inequality. The constitution of social boundaries includes both what is usually called "objective" (which produces forms of exclusion and segregation) and the symbolic or meaningful, i.e., the categorization of objects, people, times and spaces (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). A research program focused on the constitution of social boundaries must address their features from an empirical point of view, so that their specific characteristics, such as visibility, durability or permeability, can become manifest. This can be seen in O'Dougherty's (2002) study of São Paulo, Brazil, carried out between 1993 and 1994, during the government of Itamar Franco (1992-1994). Franco's economy minister, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was responsible for introducing the economic plan called "Plan

Real", which managed to control the very high inflation that had been troubling the country for decades. O'Dougherty studied the ways in which people redefined their social positions in everyday life, just at a time when the pillars on which the middle-class way of life had been founded (stable employment, education, housing, savings, ease of consumption) became unstable, or under threat. In a context of crisis, people who were assumed to be "middle class" continued to monitor their lifestyles, thus reinforcing their ascription tactics. This line of research led to a study of the practical way in which people define the limits within which they classify themselves and try to make them acceptable to themselves and to others; thus, the middle class as an identity becomes something unstable and its limits, and those who are part of it, were under permanent discussion.

In my work on Argentina, I was able to show that the processes of impoverishment of broad sectors of the population during the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the current century were accompanied by practices of affirmation of the social boundaries of the middle class. It is true that under the critical circumstances in which Argentine society has had to live during this period, it was usual for many sectors to perceive themselves as "falling", "economically expelled from the middle class" and "very close to the usual poor". However, this self-perception also included the distinction of an "irremediable and necessary separation" from the "usual poor", whether by educational level, symbolic capital, or lifestyles (Visacovsky, 2012).

A very frequent representation of the middle class is that of a large subject that has the ability to make decisions, to get irritated or to calm down, or to listen or to speak with a unique voice. Politicians and civil servants, but also public opinion analysts, often claim that a certain address was (or was not) aimed at the middle class. It is not necessary to insist that such a subject does not exist, but imagining it as if it did has consequences from a social and political point of view. One of the issues I studied is public invocations of the middle class. I refer to certain political discourses that claim that Argentina "is a middle class country" or (more frequently) "should again become a middle class country". In these cases, the middle class is the subject of a story. I compared this public discourse with the life stories based on personal experiences of people descended from the European migrants who arrived at the end of the 19th century or during the first decades of the 20th century. Whether they are public discourses or accounts of personal experience, they all tell stories of progress, of social ascent. Progress is presented as the result of the hard work and effort of their forebears and, above all, of the postponement of immediate enjoyment of this effort in favor of the descendants (Visacovsky, 2014). To "again being a middle class country" would be equivalent to "returning to the Argentina of our immigrant grandparents". The main core of this story is the affirmation of a virtuous genealogy, through which values would have been transmitted from the past to the present; a genealogy that evokes the great European immigration to Argentina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, while excluding other later and non-European immigrants, basically those from provinces in northern Argentina or from other Latin American countries, such as Paraguay and Bolivia. This narrative has been profusely invoked during the recurrent crises in Argentina in recent decades. For those who invoke the narrative, it can confer intelligibility on both success and failure, collectively (e.g., by claiming that Argentina has gone astray), but also individually or as a family. Far from having lost its relevance, this narrative has been frequently invoked since the 2001 crisis, and in political terms it has been appropriated, fundamentally (although not exclusively), by right and center-right organizations to define their social base: the "Argentines who live thanks to

their own efforts" as opposed to those who "live off the State" (from civil servants and public employees to the unemployed sectors that receive State social aid to survive). This image of the middle class corresponds more to an identity and a moral force, to an idea of conceiving the past and progress, to an idea of Argentina, of what it had been and what it should be again (Visacovsky, 2022).

Identifying the destiny of the middle class with that of the nation is not exclusive to Argentina. In her paper of this dossier, Fernandes analyzes the emergence of a new middle-class identity in the aftermath of liberal economic and political reforms in India in the 1990s, forged through various public discourses. Fernandes focuses on an analysis of discourses that affirm that the middle classes seem to be the embodiment of public interest, being represented as ideal citizens of the nation. Fernandes argues the need to study how these conceptions are developed and used by the State, since they act as an ideological-discursive justification for the economic reform policies implemented, justifying and legitimizing inequalities in the distribution of resources.

An important line of research has focused on the processes of downward social mobility. The aforementioned work by O'Dougherty is situated on these lines as is the study by Katherine Newman (1988), further back in time, for the United States. Here we can locate the article by Jefferson and Perez in this dossier, who examine the relationship between the Great Recession of 2007-2009 (also called the 2008 Financial Crisis), the housing crisis in the United States and the meanings associated with middle-class status with what they call "the American identity". During the aforementioned period, a housing bubble occurred that affected more than half the states in the United States. The approval of mortgage loans to high-risk buyers led to a credit crisis caused by the bursting of the housing bubble, followed by a mortgage crisis (between 2006-2007, foreclosure rates among homeowners increased, causing the subprime mortgage crisis in August 2008) and a stock market crisis (2008), the origin of the aforesaid Great Recession that would later spread worldwide. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Michigan between 2009 and 2011, Jefferson and Perez analyze how foreclosures (as downward social mobility) impacted what they call "the national myth of the American Dream" for which home ownership is one of the key symbols. The focus of her work is to explore how foreclosures and the Great Recession (a time of crisis) were able to disrupt the ideal represented by a "normal middle-class American" identified with the American Dream, enabling new reconfigurations of class identities and ideologies in the United States. This study has points of contact with the work of Rachel Heiman (2015), who also investigated the collapse of the American Dream in a suburban city of New Jersey. Heiman explored the role played by neoliberal policies in offering opportunities for the expansion of wealth on individual terms and, at the same time, degraded the public sphere and with it the very foundations of coexistence and security. It is suggestive to compare this process with the way in which the narrative of middle class origin in Argentina has been further affirmed by successive crises since 2001. Those who invoke it believe that it remains a virtuous guide to both individual and national progress. Even those who object to middle-class individualism, or the emphasis placed on European genealogies, tend not to question the virtuous character of progress as a result of effort, hard work, and sacrifice.

As a corollary of the above, it is imperative for the social sciences to abandon stereotyped and simplistic views of the middle class. As we have seen, what is usually referred to as the "middle class" is both a heterogeneous population and a polysemic category that varies historically and socially. Historical and ethnographic research has shown that the "middle

class" does not have essential, immutable and universal characteristics. On the contrary, these characteristics are contingent and we must discover them through empirical research. We must think about how social groups are constituted as "middle classes" in a given context. Therefore, the new approaches emphasize the study of the processes of middle class formation as a complex interaction of objective and symbolic forces.

It is possible that these analyses can help to imagine more careful and focused public policies, from a less biased perspective that should have greater awareness of social complexities and peculiarities. An expected contribution of these investigations is to intervene in the ways in which middle class behaviors typified as "economic" and "political" are analyzed. While aware of the difficulties involved in this undertaking, despite their differences, these studies should call attention to the simplifications into which conventional economic and political analysis tends to fall. The disadvantage, moreover, is that these public analyses tend more to constitute objects (as realities) than to describe and analyze them, so that an improved study cannot fail to include the interpretations of the middle class (as productive activity) as part of the reality to be considered.

To a large extent, we can conclude that the twist presented so far consists of studying the uses of the middle class as a social category, either as part of the public discourse or as an identity. Thus, instead of trying to justify why certain sectors classified by experts as "middle class" assume certain behaviors, the point is to understand why certain behaviors, certain ideas are socially characterized as belonging to the middle class.

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