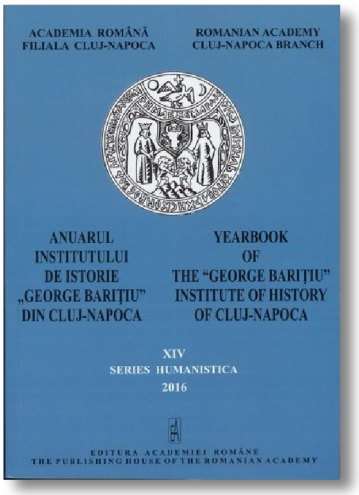

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STUDII

SOCIOLOGIE ŞI ANTROPOLOGIE

SOCIAL CLASS AND SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

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Abstract: *This paper aims to capture the relationship between the social class and social inequalities, using a subjective positioning, namely a respondent's perspective upon its own position in society, using data collected on a national dataset. A subjective approach offers a glance into the manner in which social inequalities are constructed and applied by and on different categories, also creating the context for a discussion related to the reasons and implications of these perceived societal positions. I guide my analysis on two assumptions: 1. that different individuals, belonging to different social classes – measured in an objective way – discern and comprehend in multiple forms the structure of the Romanian society; 2. these individuals self-position themselves according to their perception and to their objective position in the stratification order. The results did not support the first assumption because a large proportion of the individuals from our sample describe and understand the Romanian society as one characterized by important inequalities between people. However, I found evidence for the second, related assumption, as all classes seem to aspire to be part of the middle class and to report that they are closer to that middle class than the objective measures would suggest.*

Key words: *social stratification, social class, subjective positioning.*

GENERAL IMAGE

Social stratification implies social inequality in every aspect of life, as a structure of class – even though *class* is a relational concept, as social classes are defined and indexed in terms of their relations to other social classes and classes are distinct groups (Kohn & Slomczynski, 2006) – facilitates the social inequalities among individuals. My main interest in this article is to examine the relationship between the social class and social inequalities, using a subjective positioning, namely a respondent's perspective upon its own position in society, using data

collected on a national dataset[1]. In other words, I analyze the way in which individuals belonging to different social classes (employers, managers, professionals, supervisors, self-employed, technicians and office workers, skilled manual workers, service and trade workers, unskilled manual workers, and farmers)[2] perceive the structure of the society, trying also to understand how they position themselves in this structure. This subjective approach offers a glance into the manner in which social inequalities are constructed and applied by and on different categories, also creating the context for a discussion related to the reasons and implications of these perceived societal positions. As a result, my main hypothesis is that different individuals, belonging to different social classes – measured in an objective way (Pop, 2014; Pop, 2015a) –, discern and comprehend in various forms the structure of the Romanian society. Related to the first one, the second hypothesis assumes that the respondents auto-position themselves according to this perception and to their objective position in the stratification order.

The analysis builds on a questionnaire item in which respondents had to choose between five different (ideal type) images that could represent the Romanian society (as described in Figure 1 to Figure 5, from Table A2, Appendix A). Each image or figure is organized in seven levels, describing distinct positions, from these possible societies, where the individual can be found, from top to bottom. Level 1 represents the top and level 7 the base for each of these ideal type societies. Between them we can find the intermediary positions. After choosing an image that represents the Romanian society, respondents were asked to position themselves on one of the seven levels.

Table 1 represents a "translation" of the above mentioned images into percentages. Each segment of a distinct Figure can be transformed into a corresponding percent from the total, by evaluating its length and reporting it to the length of the other segments seen as levels from the represented societies. In this manner, one can add a plus of clarity to the explanations from the questionnaire (the SRATSOC project). Figure 1 has *a small elite on the top, very few people at the middle, and most of the people at the base* (as represented in Table A2, Appendix A). This small elite (segments 1 and 2) totals 19.5%; those in the middle average 21.9 percent, while the

[1] I used the data from the STRATSOC 2010 project, a dataset collected from the research: "Class Structure and Social Stratification in Contemporary Romania". The research was conducted by the University of Bucharest in partnership with the Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, the University of Oradea and the Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS), with the financial support of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, Grant PN-II No. 92131/Oct. 2008. The sample design was a multistage stratified-random sampling, and the final dataset included 4,508 respondents above 25 years old. The field research took place in November-December 2010, and it used face-to-face interviewing at the respondents' residence.

[2] Using the data from the STRATSOC – 2010 project I constructed a new class schema for the post-communist Romania, using criteria related to the type and sector of the economy, property and the control over the means of production, control over the labor power of others and skills (Kohn & Slomczynski, 2006; Slomczynski & Dubrow, 2012; Slomczynski, Janicka, Shabad & Tomescu-Dubrow, 2007). For a detailed presentation of the class schema see Pop (2013).

base contains almost 60 percent of the population (segments 6 and 7). This is a hypothetical society based on profound inequalities. Evans, Kelley and Kolosi (1992) believe that this is the most elitist society, with a small elite at the top, negligible middle classes, and a great mass at the bottom. In their view, this is a system resembling medieval agrarian societies rather than industrial societies, being also the traditional Marxist image of the capitalist society. Figure 2 represents *a society like a pyramid, with a small elite on the top, more people in the middle and the most at the base*. This imagined society contains also important differences between its segments, as almost 50% of the individuals are situated at the base. The top segments represent a minority of almost 11 percent, while in the middle we can find 43% of the population. In Evans et al.'s (1992) view, this image, along with that from Figure 3, is the closest to the traditional functionalist imagery and to Goldthorpe's (1966) view of an early capitalist society.

Table 1

Structure of the types of images representing possible societies (%)

	Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 3	Figure 4	Figure 5
Level 1 (Top)	12.2	3.6	4	5.2	16.1
Level 2	7.3	7.1	8	12.2	24.2
Level 3	7.3	10.7	12	19	19.9
Level 4	7.3	14.4	16	27.2	16.1
Level 5	7.3	17.8	20	19	11.9
Level 6	12.2	21.5	24	12.2	8
Level 7 (Base)	46.4	24.9	16	5.2	3.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

In Figure 3 we find *a pyramid, excepting/excluding the fact that few people are really at the base*. This society becomes more equal (compared to the previous figures), almost 50% of the individuals being placed in the middle segments (levels 3, 4 and 5 together), but we still find 40% of the population at the base of the society and only 12 percent at the top. Top and base are two metaphors for privileged and prejudiced individuals, in what respects their position in society. As a result, this image depicts a still more equalitarian society having large middle and lower-middle classes above a small underclass (Evans et al., 1992). For the same authors, this moderately elitist society is similar to Germans' image of their society in the 1960s. It is also Goldthorpe's (1966) view of the modern capitalist society. Figure 4, *a society with most of the people at the middle*, represents the mirage of a society dominated by the middle class. The middle segment represents more than a quarter of the population (segment/level 4 has 27.2%), being completed by "the upper and lower middle" segments, each with 19%, accounting in total for more than 60% of the population. Here, the top and the base levels are equal (17.4%). Evans et al. (1992) depict this society as a very equalitarian one,

with small top and bottom classes and most people in the middle, in other words, a middle class dominated society.

The last image, Figure 5, represents an ideal-type society *a society with most of the individuals close to the top and just a few at the base*. Here the privileged make more than 40% of the population, those in the middle almost 48%, while the least privileged ones almost 12 percents. This can be seen as an optimistic view of the society, placed at the other end of the scale, compared to the first pessimistic figure. For Evans et al. (1992) this is the most equalitarian image that portrays a society, with an inclusive elite at the top, very large upper-middle classes, and only a vestigial bottom class. Moreover, this society resembles the traditional socialist ideal. In what follows, we need to see if some important, social and demographic variables could be used as explanatory items for possible differentiations among individuals who opt for one of the five images.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCES

The results from Table 2 present the image of a perceived highly unequal Romanian society in 2010. More than 80 percent of the population, regardless of gender and place of residence, pointed Figure 1 and Figure 2 as representing the society in which they live. Only 10 percent of the respondents believe that the Romanian society is an equalitarian one, as they choose the last two images. In a different context, if I look at some inner-image distinction, those living in the cities believe stronger than those from the rural space that the Romanian society resembles the one described in the last Figure. This, however, is, again, a result based on a comparison between two very small percents (but with a statistically significant difference) and the patterns remain: both men and women from the rural or the urban space see the society they inhabit as being a highly unequal one, with a very large bottom class, an underdeveloped middle class and a rather small top class.

We can take into account the year when the respondents were born, as the national sample contains individuals from different generations, born in several socio-historical contexts that might have a consequence on their life trajectory (Table 3)[3]:

> The first cohort is made of the generation born until 1939, the oldest individual being born in 1917. Here we have the cohort born at the time of the First World War and immediately after. The next cohort is composed from the persons born between 1940 and 1954, in the time of the Second World War. The period 1955–1966 refers to the generation born at the time of the post-Stalinist urbanization politics. The fourth cohort, 1967–1976, is born at the time of the coercive pro-birth policies introduced by the communist regime. The last generation consists of the individuals born in the socialism's economic crisis period, 1977–1985, a time when socialism began to decline and, afterwards, was replaced (Jecan & Pop, 2012).

[3] For further details about the five cohorts and their intra- and inter-distinctions see Cucu and Culic (2012), Pop (2015a) and Pop (2015b).

Table 2

Perceptions among individuals related to the current type of Romanian society (valid %)

Type of society[4]	Men	Women	Urban	Rural	All respondents
F1	46.9	47.0	47.0	46.9	47.0
F2	35.1	36.7	34.9	37.2	36.0
F3	7.4	6.7	6.8	7.4	7.0
F4	5.0	4.4	5.0	4.3	4.7
F5	5.6	5.1	6.3	4.1	5.3
N	2027	2326	2369	1984	4353

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

Table 3

Distribution of the chosen figures (types of society) in each cohort (valid %)

Type of society	Till 1939	1940–1954	1955–1966	1967–1976	1976–1985
F1	45.3	47.2	50.6	45.7	45.0
F2	39.6	35.9	34.3	36.9	34.0
F3	6.6	7.7	6.2	7.3	7.1
F4	3.0	4.6	3.9	4.6	7.3
F5	5.5	4.5	5.0	5.5	6.6
N	667	1099	921	871	793

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

This generational distribution presents similar patterns with the one based on gender and place of residence, with the highest response rate for the first and the second figures, representing unequal societies. However, those born between 1955 and 1966 agree more than the other cohorts that the current Romanian society is the home of many poor people, choosing the first two figures in a higher percent compared to the other generations. It is important to observe that between this generation and the youngest one (1976–1985) the difference is statistically significant, as the latter cohort is the most optimistic one, because here we can find more support for the last two images, representing equalitarian societies. Of course, the percents are really low, and permit only a space of speculation where we can observe that the 1976–1985 generation had access to higher education significantly more than the other generations. Higher education in Romania promotes equality in rights and meritocracy. In addition, in this cohort we will find the most individuals that, through the mediating effects of occupation and education, are in the social classes of entrepreneurs, managers and professionals. These are all classes with resources, with important positions in the social structure and a declared somehow

[4] F1 = A small elite on the top, very few people at the middle, and most of the people at the base
F2 = A society like a pyramid, with a small elite on the top, more people at the middle and the most at the base
F3 = A pyramid, excepting/excluding the fact that few people are really at the base
F4 = A society with most of the people at the middle
F5 = A society with most of the individuals close to the top and just a few at the base.

more equalitarian vision of the society, which may be used as a justification for their position in society (a good example is related to a justificatory opinion like the one that they worked hard for it). This equalitarian view can be attributed to an ideological opacity relative to the positions of the other classes that serves their discursive needs and their social interests (defined in a personal manner, but which aggregate and create a cumulative effect that depicts their own reality).

SOCIAL CLASS AND PERCEIVED INEQUALITIES

Table 4 helps in answering the question: "how do social classes see the current Romanian society?" I organized the results both on rows and columns. On rows we find the distribution of the respondents from each social class who selected different types of societies (with bold). On columns, the respondents who chose different types of societies were distributed in different social classes (with italics). Regardless of social class, all the respondents opted in the highest degree for the first Figure, representing a society based on large inequalities between people. More than half of the supervisors, technicians and office workers consider the current Romanian society as being represented by the Figure 1. This is an intriguing result, because these two classes occupy an intermediary position, as, in most of the cases, they are also supervised by higher management, but they have a degree (higher or lower) of freedom in the decision making process related to their work and to the work of others. One would expect that individuals occupying these class positions should have an in-between view of society, as they have interactions both with lower and upper positions in the stratification structure. The result of these interactions is that they perceive a highly unequal Romanian society. The somehow similar percentages for the unskilled manual workers and farmers can be easily understood as they speak from a very precarious position.

We gain useful insights examining also the column results. The skilled manual workers (24.6%), the technicians and office workers (15.4%) report in the highest percent that they live in a society with a small elite and middle class but with a large population at the base (F1). This opinion is also largely shared by the service and trade workers (12.5%) and by the supervisors (12.3%). The second type of society finds its most supporters also among the skilled manual workers (28.4%) and technicians and office workers (13.7%). In addition, the service and trade workers (12.1%) believe that they live in a society like a pyramid (F2). Besides the skilled manual workers (25%), the farmers (14.8%) characterize the society as being like a pyramid but just with a few people at the base (F3). More than 40% of those who opted for the fourth figure are skilled workers and service and trade workers. In addition, here we can find an important percent of the professionals (12.4%) who, in a statistically significant proportion opted for this type of equalitarian society. A society with most of the individuals at its top is again an important option for skilled and service and trade workers (48.7%). Thus, the skilled manual workers chose this type of very equalitarian structure of society

significantly more than expected. Moreover, technicians and office workers but also the supervisors are among the advocates of Figure 5. Of course, we need to interpret these results carefully, as we have different totals in each social class, and a class like skilled manual workers has more members among its ranks comparative to the other social classes, and they represent the highest percent that opt for every possible type of society.

Table 4

Social classes and images of the structure of society
(row and column percents)

Respondent's class	Which figure describes the best the country situation in 2010?					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	N
Employers	**46.8**	**38.7**	**6.5**	**6.5**	**1.6**	**62**
	1.7	*1.9*	*1.6*	*2.4*	*0.5*	
Managers	**44.9**	**35.5**	**8.4**	**6.1**	**5.1**	**214**
	5.7	*6.1*	*7.4*	*7.6*	*5.8*	
Professionals	**46.5**	**32.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**6.3**	**284**
	7.8	*7.3*	*8.6*	*12.4*	*9.5*	
Supervisors	**51.2**	**33.3**	**4.9**	**4.4**	**6.2**	**406**
	12.3	*10.7*	*8.2*	*10.6*	*13.2*	
Self-employed	**47.9**	**34.2**	**6.8**	**5.5**	**5.5**	**73**
	2.1	*2.0*	*2.0*	*2.4*	*2.1*	
Technicians and office workers	**51.2**	**34.0**	**6.3**	**3.4**	**5.1**	**506**
	15.4	*13.7*	*13.1*	*10.0*	*13.8*	
Skilled manual workers	**44.0**	**37.9**	**6.5**	**4.8**	**6.9**	**943**
	24.6	*28.4*	*25.0*	*26.5*	*34.4*	
Service and trade workers	**47.1**	**34.1**	**7.4**	**5.4**	**6.1**	**446**
	12.5	*12.1*	*13.5*	*14.1*	*14.3*	
Unskilled manual workers	**49.8**	**37.7**	**5.9**	**4.6**	**2.1**	**239**
	7.1	*7.2*	*5.7*	*6.5*	*2.6*	
Farmers	**49.2**	**35.8**	**9.7**	**3.5**	**1.9**	**372**
	10.9	*10.6*	*14.8*	*7.6*	*3.7*	
N	*1686*	*1256*	*244*	*170*	*189*	3545

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

After distinguishing between different types of hypothetical societies, the respondents were asked to position themselves on the different levels from 1 (the top level) to 7 (the base level) in these ideal-type societies. Table 5 presents the result of this auto-positioning for each individual in terms of cumulative distributions for which the mid-points of these distributions were taken into account. This is again a "translation" (based on that used for Table 1) of what it means to be placed in one of the five figures, at different levels. It is useful in creating a general image of the cumulative proportion that each segment retains for different figures. As an example, for the Figure 1, 23.2% of the population is at the

base level, up to level six there is 52.5% of the population, up to level five we find 62.3% of the individuals, and so on. We can observe how the percent of the individuals concentrated at the base of the society – in other words, the most deprived of them – is on an important decreasing path from the first to the last imagined type of society. The same thing is true for those placed at the sixth level. Even more, if we take level 5 as the one right before the middle (which can be considered the fourth level), we can observe that in the first type of society, on average, 62.3% of the population is bellow the middle. In Figure 2, this proportion is of 55.3%. For Figure 3, the percent represents, on average, half of the population, while for the fourth figure it drops down to almost 27 percent, with an even more reduced proportion of 17.8% in the last figure. In other words, the more equalitarian the society is, the smaller is the proportion of those living below the middle, in precarious conditions.

Table 5

Transforming levels of strata into cumulative distribution (%)

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
	Intervals (%)				
Level 1 (Top)	100 – 87.8	100 – 98.2	100 – 96	100 – 94.8	100 – 83.9
Midpoint	93.9	99.1	98	97.4	92
Level 2	87.8 – 80.5	98.2 – 89.3	96 – 88	94.8 – 82.6	83.9 – 59.7
Midpoint	84.2	93.8	92	88.7	71.8
Level 3	80.5 – 73.2	89.3 – 78.6	88 – 76	82.6 – 63.6	59.7 – 39.8
Midpoint	76.9	84	82	73.1	49.8
Level 4	73.2 – 65.9	78.6 – 64.2	76 – 60	63.6 – 36.4	39.8 – 23.7
Midpoint	69.6	71.4	68	50	31.8
Level 5	65.9 – 58.6	64.2 – 46.4	60 – 40	36.4 – 17.4	23.7 – 11.8
Midpoint	62.3	55.3	50	26.9	17.8
Level 6	58.6 – 46.4	46.4 – 24.9	40 – 16	17.4 – 5.2	11.8 – 3.8
Midpoint	52.5	35.7	28	11.3	7.8
Level 7 (Base)	46.4 – 0	24.9 – 0	16 – 0	5.2 – 0	3.8 – 0
Midpoint	23.2	12.5	8	2.6	1.9

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

Next, I reverse the perspective, and I take the top 3 levels of each type of society in order to observe the percent of individuals that are placed higher than the middle level (that is level 4). For this figure 1, this percent averages 24.3 (93.9 – 69.6). For Figure 2, it is 27.7% and it grows to an average of 30% for figure 3, to 47.4% for the society represented in the Figure 4 and to an average of 60.2% for Figure 5. Thus, if for the least equalitarian type of society, represented by Figure 1, less than a quarter of the population inhabit the top 3 levels, in the last and most equalitarian type of society, more than 60% of the individuals are placed in a top position. This is a simple and intuitive demonstration related to the way in which different possible societies could be stratified and of the levels on which we could find most of the individuals from these societies. However, we need not to forget that this is a

subjective auto-positioning of the individuals, and, in the same figure, level 7, for example, could mean different aspects for different individuals.

In Table 6 we can observe how different social classes place themselves on a scale that used a common metric for all the five figures. This scale is based on the midpoints of the cumulative distributions taken together in a single scale, which makes the comparison across figures possible.

Table 6

Social class and subjective positioning: all classes and the reduced version

All the classes				**Reduced version - three classes**			
Social class	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	Social class	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval
Employers	62.64	21.317	57.18 - 68.10	Privileged class	61.10	21.586	59.31 - 62.90
Managers	61.49	23.025	58.38 - 64.59				
Professionals	60.48	20.547	58.08 - 62.88				
Supervisors	54.62	23.287	52.32 - 56.92	Average (middle) class	50.55	24.925	49.54 - 51.56
Sel-employed	51.75	23.452	46.17 - 57.35				
Technicians and office workers	52.81	23.552	50.75 - 54.88				
Skilled manual workers	48.12	26.393	46.43 - 49.81				
Service and trade workers	49.38	24.333	47.11 - 51.65				
Unskilled manual workers	45.42	26.552	42.08 - 48.77	Deprived class	43.32	26.762	41.18 - 45.47
Farmers	42.04	26.748	39.29 - 44.78				
Eta^2 = .049				**Eta^2 = .041**			

Respondents belonging to different classes perceive the Romanian society as highly unequal and they place themselves in different points of this society. Employers, managers and professionals present their position as being above the middle of the distribution. The impression is similar for supervisors, technicians and office workers who auto-position themselves between the privileged classes and the middle one, which is made of the self-employed individuals. The service and trade workers along with the skilled workers position themselves near the self-employed individuals, while the unskilled manual workers and farmers subjectively place themselves at the lowest level. Between the employers (as the highest point) and the farmers (the lowest one) there is an important distance of 20%. The results are clearer if we take into account the reduced version of these social classes[5].

[5] The privileged class contains: the employers, the managers and the professionals. The middle (or average) class contains: the supervisors, the self-employed, the technicians and office workers, the skilled manual workers and the service and trade workers. The deprived class contains: the unskilled manual workers and the farmers

Individuals who are part of the privileged classes tend to claim a higher position than the middle ones, whilst the deprived ones auto-position themselves below the middle positions. However, both class (the privileged and the deprived ones) remain rather close to the middle class, even though they are sensitive and understanding to the distances that separate them. The eta square coefficient indicates a significant relation in which the social class influences the subjective positioning of the individuals.

Table 7

Correlations between income, complexity of work, years of education and subjective auto-positioning

	A	B	C	D
(A) Respondent's net income	-	.326**	.419**	.199**
(B) Complexity of work		-	.529**	.174**
(C) Respondent's education in years			-	.233**
(D) Auto-positioning				-

** p<0.01

Source: STRATSOC 2010 dataset, own calculations

The subjective auto-positioning of the individuals is significantly correlated with the stratification variables used to assess the differences between social classes in an objective form (Table 7). These variables present the distinction between the various social classes also in an objective manner, as I demonstrated in the previous work (Pop, 2015a). The relationship between these variables is described in following regression equation:

$$AUTO = 29.096 + 1.32*EDUC + 0.048*COMPX + 0.004 *INC; \ R^2 = .068$$

AUTO represents the auto-positioning of the individual in the social structure. This is the dependent variable explained, partially, by other variables. The first of them is EDUC, which is the respondent's education measured in years (from 0 to 20). COMPX is the complexity of work and it is based on Domanski, Sawinski and Slomczynski's (2009) results. The scale ranges from 0, for the least complex occupations, to 100, for the most complex occupations. INC is respondent's net income, from all sources, in October 2010. However, these variables explain only 7% of the variation in the respondent's auto-positioning, while the rest of the variation can be attributed to other exogenous and endogenous factors related to the social class.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I found a relative stability in the way individuals are positioned – both in an objective and in a subjective manner – in the social structure depending on the social class they inhabit. In other words, if we compare the results from my previous work (Pop, 2015a), where I measured the inequalities in an objective way, and the results from a subjective measuring of the social inequality, we observe, in both cases, an important difference between the privileged classes and the deprived

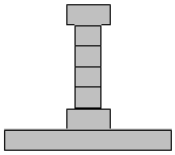
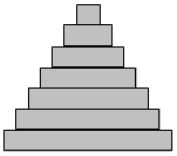
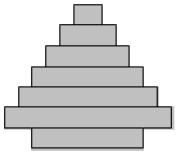
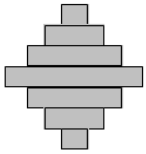
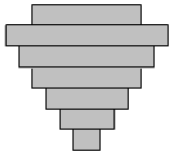
ones. In the case of the subjective auto-positioning, the privileged tend to place themselves less higher and closer to the middle levels of the five images/figures and the deprived classes tend to auto-position higher and closer to the middle levels. A few observations need to be made. First, what I denominate through privileged and deprived classes is to be understood in relative, not in absolute, terms. As we know, it is more likely that a privileged class constructed using survey data to be, actually, an upper-middle class. When we talk about a deprived class, we never actually talk about those at the absolute bottom of the stratification order, again, because of the methodological limitation of the survey data. Second, it is not completely inappropriate to take into account various public discourses that influence self-perception of our subjects in their endeavor of reassessing their own places or positions within the Romanian stratification order. I have particularly in mind things like the wishful thinking regarding the so much needed middle class as a resource for development in Romania, promoted by the capitalist system as such, along with the increasing importance of the neoliberal attitudes ruling our country and with the anti-poverty discourse promoted in the mainstream media. I assume that our respondents, when they tried to identify themselves with a particular society-figure ideology, they already had done a meta-analysis of what is "politically correct" or the desirable place to be in the class and stratification order, for the whole country. A qualitative methodology would be better equipped in order to test this hypothesis. Third, this "temptation of the middle class" is not specific only for Romania, but can be seen also in other countries like Hungary or Australia (Evans et al., 1992).

As a general image, a very large proportion of the individuals from our sample describe the Romanian society as one characterized by important inequalities between people, regardless of their class position, gender, place of residence, or age. As a result, my first hypothesis was not confirmed. In spite of this result, I can identify some class-specific options. The professionals choose in a greater measure than one would expect the fourth Figure, which describes an equalitarian type of society. A possible explanation has to be sought in the way this category is constituted as a highly educated, but relatively closed class. Another class-effect can be found in the case of the manual skilled workers, which is the class that believes the most in an equalitarian type of society. Again, a possible explanation is that this could be an effect of a large but closed class, whose members tend to have more in-class than out-class social relations. These are presumptions that are still to be empirically and theoretically tested, as, statistically, these effects are situated at the limit of significance. However, these results can be seen as evidence for the second hypothesis, where the objective positions of the individuals in the stratification structure influences the perceived position on several levels in the chosen stratification order, all classes aspiring to be in the middle class and, in consequence, reporting that they are closer to that middle class than the objective measures would suggest.

APPENDIX: A

Table A1: The next figures present different kinds of societies. Which figure describes the best the state of the country? And, between the base and the top of the society, which is the strata where you are situated?

	In 2010
a. Romanian society (figure code form 1 to 5)	
b. Your position. (level code from 1 to 7)	

	Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 3	Figure 4	Figure 5
1 – top 2 3 4 5 6 7 – base					
	A small elite on the top, very few people at the middle, and most of the people at the base	A society like a pyramid, with a small elite on the top, more people at the middle and the most at the base	A pyramid, excepting the fact that few people are really at the base	A society with most of the people at the middle	A society with most of the individuals close to the top and just a few at the base

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