17 September 2013

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Vice Editor-in-Chief
Journal of the New Economic Association

This letter is in reply to the letter of critique by Professor Shen about my article published in the journal. (I'm sorry for the delay in responding because I now more often use my gmail address, Dr.StephenColeman@gmail.com.)

The writer raises several general questions about my article and the research behind it. He seems to question: (1) the mathematical model of conformity, as quantified with the entropy measure; (2) the empirical analysis and, in particular, the few Russian elections and large units of analysis; and (3) whether is speaks to the question of possible fraud in the election.

(1) As to the model, I would assert that the article presents a good summary of the theory, though necessarily shortened by space limitations. For more information on this, I would urge Prof. Shen and others to read my book, *Popular Delusions: How Social Conformity Molds Politics and Society* (Cambria Press, 2007). The book give a much expanded argument for the theory and numerous empirical analyses from over 25 countries over most of the 20th century. Please refer to my website, www.populardelusions.org , for more about the book.

(2) If Prof. Shen has questions about the empirical result, I suggest he try to replicate the results himself. Replication is indeed the true test of any scientific research. In fact, my book presents the same type of analysis of all national elections and referenda in Russia since 1990. In my journal article I had also cited the article by Borodin published in the HSE journal which confirms the results for earlier Russian elections with a smaller unit of analysis. And several Russian scientists have tested the theory and replicated the results on the more recent Russian election in 2011. For example, please refer to online blogs: http://jemmybutton.livejournal.com/2550.html, and http://bbzippo.wordpress.com/2012/01/09/russian-elections-and-social-conformity-take-2/. So one cannot simply ignore the results. It is important to try to explain them. If Prof. Shen questions the theory, I invite him to propose an alternative empirical theory that would account for the observed results.

(3) The research method I used, and the article, cannot refute the possibility of fraud occurring in the elections analyzed. In the last several Russian elections the question of fraud has been very prominent and, yes, there is some clear evidence for it. The article addresses the question of whether fraud on a massive scale in favor of United Russia produced the observed statistical pattern of voting for that party. This has been the subject of the debate by many people who have done statistical analyses of vote distributions for United Russia and other parties. My research shows, however, that much of what seem to be voting anomalies better fits the mathematical model I developed and

can be better explained as a manifestation of social conformity than outright fraud. The mathematical model fits so well, in fact, that it is beyond imagination that the observed results could have been produced by any organized attempt to change the election result.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to reply to Prof. Shen's critique. I welcome any debate or discussion that will bring attention to this research, and I hope that Prof. Shen and others will continue to re-test it, refine it, and examine what it tells us about voting behavior in Russia and other countries.

Best Regards,

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