

MAXIMIZING THE SUBSTANCE IN THE SOUNDBITE: A MEDIA GUIDE FOR ECONOMISTS

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Abstract. This guide aims to induce more economists to talk to people in the media as a means of expanding educational outreach. It provides discussions of “dos” and “don’ts” and offers advice on which kinds of research are likely to interest reporters. It suggests specific approaches to dealing with reporters in different types of media, including print, radio and television.

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Introduction – The Issues

People from media outlets—television, radio and newspapers and magazines—often call on economists to comment on events deemed to require amplification through expert opinion. In other cases our own research becomes the subject of media attention. These comments and explanations give us a chance to educate the public about economic issues in ways that are absent from our classrooms or scholarly papers. Explaining ourselves through the media allows us to educate far more people than we reach even in our largest classes. If handled properly, the media provide academic economists with the chance to invest our time to enhance the national and global stock of knowledge about economic issues and behavior.

One leading economist remarked to me, “. . .the majority of our colleagues seem to think that the primacy of the market test applies, except in our own profession when it comes to writing something that ten million people will read rather than an article read by ten people.” Why should we spend time dealing with the media? An appearance on *Good Morning, America* will not increase the probability that our scholarly papers are published, nor will our salaries be raised if we are quoted on the local radio station. Professors in public universities—the large majority of us—have a direct obligation to use our knowledge on a broader stage: We are paid by the public, and it behooves us to try to educate the entire public, not merely that subset who are our students, in whatever ways we effectively can. For the minority of economists who teach in private institutions the obligation is less clear, with the main impetus stemming, one hopes, from an altruistic desire to educate the public and perhaps influence policy indirectly.

No matter where you are, sensible comments in the media generate the gratifying result that people on your campus learn that you can speak knowledgeably and free of jargon about public issues and might be someone to be relied upon for advice. Administrators who cannot distinguish quality among academic works, and students and their parents too may have more respect for your work as a result of your appearances in the media. For economists interested policy, talking to journalists can also provide insights about new policy developments and thus inform your own work.

Like it or not, calls from the media will grow, as the boom in media outlets generates a growing appetite for comment and analysis. The comments will be made regardless of whether the most knowledgeable economists make them. The issue is very much like teaching children about sex—will they learn (perhaps incorrectly) from the gutter (in the case of media, from pseudo-economists), or will they learn (hopefully correctly) from you, the expert? That being the issue, discovering how to use the public media as a teaching device is crucial for any serious academic economist, lest purveyors of political propaganda, ignorance or babble fill the demand for economic comment. If we believe that we have something intelligent to say about current issues, or feel that our research merits wider dissemination, it is worth learning how to convey ideas to a broader public.

Here I discuss a variety of issues that economists face in presenting economic ideas through the media. I limit this to media appearances where we lack final control over our words—to television, radio, and newspapers/magazines that quote us rather than disseminate our opinion pieces. When and how to comment on an issue; deciding whether your own research merits wider dissemination; learning how to handle the various kinds of media, are all things that we need to learn and that can be learned.

Dealing with Popular Issues—Reacting to Inquiries

Every local newspaper, radio station and television channel seeks “experts” to comment on government data on inflation, unemployment or other economic indicators. They especially want people who can be called economists: “Economist” has become as much a sought-after honorific as an occupational title. Almost every college or university has a public relations staff that is rewarded for getting the faculty into the media. With this kind of demand, and this kind of intermediation, one would think that we would be deluged with requests for appearances. Yet most of us are not.

The reasons for the relative scarcity of matches are manifold. On the demand side, media people would rather avoid the extra costs of searching for the very best person and instead use someone who sounds good and might be claimed to be an “expert” even though he/she may be ignorant of the issue of interest. Many self-identified experts, especially consultants or economists

for banks, brokerage houses or even think tanks, are rewarded for such appearances and have incentives to maintain quasi-monopolies over journalistic attention. Similarly, despite the existence of increasingly inexpensive telecommunications, national media people are often loath to go far afield geographically—thus the remarkable preponderance in the national media of comments from economists on the East Coast. On the supply side few of us make an effort to be available to the media—to be willing and able to perform this kind of public service. Some of us think this kind of activity is unimportant, but too many are simply scared to venture outside of academe with our ideas.

We cannot directly induce the demanders of our services to alter their behavior, but we can increase their incentives to behave differently and do a better job for their clients by making it clear that we are as willing and perhaps more capable than others of providing the desired information. This involves efforts to ensure that media intermediaries are aware of our talents, and it requires us to hone those skills. How can you do this?

1. Tell your Department front office personnel that you are willing to field media calls. Tell the college Public Relations Office the same thing, and list some areas in which you are particularly interested. The main Department office is the recipient of most “cold” calls, and the secretary will be pleased to be able to have someone to whom to refer them. Providing a list of general areas linked to the particular expertise of specific Department members will help the secretary to ensure a better match to media calls.
2. Return journalists’ phone calls or emails as soon as you can. Most reporters are on deadlines—several hours for the broadcast media, as much as a week for the print media—and will not be interested in your belated response. Slow responses guarantee that reporters will not call on you again.
3. If you know ahead of time what the topic is, making a few notes ensures that you have a message and can get it across.

4. Be willing to spend time making sure the journalist understands your answers. A 30-second conversation guarantees your comments will not be used, and, because he/she views you as having been arrogant and uninterested in clarifying the issues, the journalist will not call back.

5. Often the journalist is unclear about what the question even is: He/she has seen a report from a wire service and wants expert comment on it. Part of your job is helping the journalist to clarify the question. If the journalist is not on a short deadline, asking him/her to email questions can aid in the exchange of ideas. This also enables you to respond by email and can reduce the risk of misquoting.

6. Try to sense the journalist's understanding of economic modes of thought and tailor your discussion to his/her understanding. Extremely few journalists majored in economics. Indeed, many have never taken a course in the subject; and it is certain that most audiences have not studied economics. Many media people are very intelligent, but some of the audience may not be; and almost none of your listeners or readers can think like an economist. You should speak in a language that your high-school graduate nephew of above-average intelligence can understand. Jargon words are prohibited, including such common terms in our lexicon as "marginal," "elasticity," and "externality," much less fancier terms that are second nature to us, but that rank somewhat below Quechua in intelligibility to most Americans.

7. Within limits set by the reporter you should make some effort to guide the interview. After deciphering the question, try to lead the discussion to make your own point of view clear.

8. Have something special to say that gives an insight to the readers/listeners/viewers that they would not have obtained from someone less familiar with the issue. On a more arcane issue, simplify while still stressing the uniqueness of the problem. For example, commenting on the impact of a sales tax holiday, such as we have in Texas

every August, one can point out the effects of repeated holidays on consumers' expectations and distinguish them from those of a surprise tax holiday. Conveying a simple and surprising fact is often worthwhile; and journalists are always grateful if you provide them with a specific number to illustrate your point.

9. Attempt to induce the interviewer to focus on a horizon longer than one day. For example, if asked for a reaction to the latest monthly unemployment figures, a comment about potential seasonal problems (in December, January, June and September) may be in order. If asked about recent GDP data, remarking on possible quirks due to blips generated by hurricanes, terrorist attacks or import splurges may work. Commenting on the vagaries of consumer price inflation by pointing out trends in the CPI minus food and energy, or mentioning biases in the CPI, is useful.

10. If asked to comment on someone else's research, observe two crucial ground rules: If you agree with the results and their interpretation, say so; but if you have some amplification or interpretation that stems logically from the research, be forthcoming with that. If you disagree with the research or with the journalist's interpretation, be negative without being nasty. State that you disagree, and state clearly and scientifically (but without jargon) what the correct inference is.

11. Do not comment on the day-to-day vagaries of the stock market, except if you have something to say based on economic analysis (for example, discussing wealth effects on consumption). Too many people in the general public equate economics with the study of stock markets, and we should not reinforce that opinion.

12. A common question involves some forecast, typically about inflation or unemployment. Although there is no danger that anyone will remember that your forecast of six months ago went awry, we also mislead the public if we convey the notion that our main business is short-term macroeconomic forecasting. A better response to a question about the course of the macroeconomy is to stress intermediate

trends, such as changes in productivity growth or demographic changes, that will condition outcomes over the next few years.

Before you begin to deal with the substance of a question, you need to ask yourself whether you are the best person to answer it. For a local news or broadcast outlet, the relevant set of alternatives includes your colleagues or faculty at nearby institutions. For national media the set is broader and includes the entire nation and, indeed, perhaps even economists abroad. There is no shame in telling a reporter that you are not the person to interview on a particular subject. Indeed, the reporter will be grateful to you for steering him/her to somebody specifically expert on that issue. If the person you refer to is more junior, you obtain the special satisfaction of broadening the set of economists on whom the media can rely.

On general topics, such as interpreting the meaning of new government data, anyone who has taught introductory macroeconomics should be able to say something intelligent and useful. For more specialized issues one should defer to a local or national specialist (depending on the media outlet that contacts you). One very senior economics professor was noted for talking to any media outlet about anything, even specialized topics far outside his field. He gave a simplistic supply-demand analysis of any issue, but was blissfully ignorant of research or thought beyond that. Local media people were unaware of his deficiencies; but his colleagues knew that his lack of knowledge meant that he was failing to educate the local population about important economic issues, and he was the well-deserved target of their ridicule. As another example, a local consultant, who had not done any scholarly research for at least 25 years, commented at length about John Nash's work when he was awarded the Nobel Prize rather than referring the question to a well-known local professor who had done distinguished work on the use of game theory and who was perfectly capable of speaking clearly.

Nobody is an expert on everything, not even everything economic. Although you should not hide your light under a bushel, you should exhibit some self-denial. This will endear you to the more intelligent and discerning journalist (there are many), will help you avoid looking like a fool and

angering your colleagues, and, most important, will allow the public to obtain the best possible discussion of the particular topic.

Your Own Research—Creating Issues

Most of what fills space in newspapers, talk on radio and clips on television that is devoted to economic issues does not originate in the minds of journalists. Instead, press releases, phone and email messages to reporters, unpublished and published research that reporters happen to see, and even word-of-mouth lead to demands by the media for your time. Much arises when journalists see a previous media report on some economic research and then do their own stories. Publicity in one leading outlet, such as the *New York Times*, often generates a cascade of media appearances elsewhere. Newspapers, magazines and especially the broadcast media need to fill space and time, and presenting interesting academic research is one way that journalists can meet their quotas.

Given this demand, why should you make an effort to have the media focus on your research? Of course, there is the reason noted in the Introduction—publicizing our research should be part (the public-service component) of our jobs (whether or not we are rewarded for it). Also as I noted, better that a discussion of your high-quality research fills the time or space than a description of someone else's inferior work.

Beyond these reasons I hope most economists believe that their research is relevant, either immediately and directly, or eventually and indirectly, to issues that concern the typical citizen. If not, we do a disservice to the public and, in a larger sense, to humanity generally by failing to do our best to ensure that what we have created expands the thinking of the public. We should not view what we do as does Rubinstein (2001):

... though I am rather doubtful about the applicability of economic theory, it is not a cause for my concern. In other words, I am not sure that applicability is desirable.

The worldview implicit in the final paragraph of Keynes (1936) *General Theory*:

... the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else.

correctly underscores the conclusion that you should try to be the economist whose ideas provide those intellectual influences. The influences, on both policy and public thinking, may be circuitous, but they are far more abundant than most academic economists realize (Ehrenberg *et al* 1977).

There is an additional selfish reason for making sure that your research attracts public attention. In many cases trying to explain your results to a university public relations officer or a journalist, just like explaining them to an undergraduate class, is a good way to check how well you understand your work at a basic level. If nothing else, this can allow you to catch some simple mistakes in logic or, more often, can help you to realize the extent to which your ideas accord with commonly held views of the issue. A good way to approach this is to have a one- or two-sentence summary of your research in mind before you begin talking with journalists.

Some types of research have more mass appeal than others—are more “mediatropic” than others. Studies dealing with demographic economics—family behavior, deviant behavior, birth, marriage, death, sex, race or gender—are honey to the media bears. Indeed, it often seems that the more unusual our research on these topics might be, the more the media love to discuss it. Thus such studies as Kopczuk and Slemrod (2003) on the incentives to die provided by the estate tax; Donohue and Levitt (2001) on the impact of previous abortion rates on crime rates; Waldfogel (1993) on the value of Christmas gifts; or my own coauthored work on beauty (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994), are immensely attractive to the media. Each generated stories in the *New York Times* devoted to explaining the research, and each was discussed on national television shows.

These are probably not fundamental pieces that lay out major research agendas for large numbers of economists. They do, however, provide novel perspectives and interesting facts to the general public (and to economists). Most important, they educate the public about the roles that incentives play, even in areas where people would not usually think that economic rewards operate. Publicizing such research thus performs the broader function of educating the public that incentives matter—which is, after all, one of the most basic messages of economics and one that experts in other fields are unlikely to convey through the media (or anywhere else).

Research on education is always of interest, even though it may not seem so to the researcher while doing so. Take, for an arbitrary example, a recent study that measured the rate of return to education in 28 countries (Trostel *et al* 2002). This seemingly mundane topic can and should be made interesting to the public, as the authors showed that the well-known rise in the returns to education in the United States has not been part of a worldwide trend. Putting U.S. experience in international perspective—informing the public about the uniqueness or representativeness of its own experience—also works well as a topic for media interest.

Topics in finance, especially as they apply to stock markets, and thus to people's hopes of becoming rich, are of continual interest to the media, especially to business reporters. Any study that sheds light on the random-walk nature of share prices, or even one that purports to show that there are gains to be made (although I wouldn't believe it) will attract media attention. Studies of betting behavior, intrigue a large fraction of the population and thus intrigue journalists also (Sauer 1998).

Research in macroeconomics and international finance is or can be made relevant to the consumer of media output. The activities of the NBER's Business Cycle Dating Committee are of immense interest; and perspectives on the causes of the Great Depression are relevant to current concerns (about deflation, for example). Economic history can be media-relevant, especially when the general topic is something with which everyone is familiar from high-school history class.

Experimental economics lends itself to studies that will intrigue the public, because it concerns very concrete manifestations of behavior that is familiar to most people. An experiment that deals with gender differences in behavior (e.g., Andreoni and Vesterlund 2001) is perfect for the media and deserves to be publicized. Experiments on fairness and human interactions (e.g., Fehr and Gächter 2000) offer another fertile field.

Research dealing with an issue of public policy, especially a policy that either affects most people or is highly controversial, will interest the media. Controversial research on the U.S. minimum wage (Card and Krueger 1994), a relatively unimportant but highly charged issue, garnered tremendous amounts of media attention. Anything having to do with Social Security will attract

attention, as most readers/listeners expect to attain old age and be partly supported by Social Security, and many already are. Studies of tax policy also fall into this category.

A good time to publicize research you think is important is when it is sufficiently final that you are sending it off to a journal for refereeing. One might be concerned that having obtained publicity for one's research before the article embodying it has been accepted for publication will jeopardize its chances of acceptance by a scholarly journal. One department chair told an untenured economist that the national media attention that his unpublished research paper received would guarantee that no major journal would wish to publish it. Fortunately, a call to a senior economist whose work had been publicized worldwide reassured the junior faculty member. The paper was accepted, and the assistant professor had the pleasure of seeing his name on the front pages of both the *New York Times* and the *Journal of Political Economy*.

This simultaneity should not be surprising: Both journalists and editors of scholarly journals are interested in disseminating results that will interest their readers/listeners/viewers. What we economists find fascinating is surely not orthogonal to what interests the public. Whether media attention affects the likelihood that a scholarly paper is accepted for publication is unclear, although even here I would bet that there is some positive causal relationship, because media attention may alert journal editors to something that will intrigue their readers.

Just as one should occasionally recuse oneself in dealings with media people on questions they bring to you, so too some modicum of modesty is required in presenting your own research findings. Not all your research merits media attention, even if you have a well-developed relationship with reporters who are apparently willing to report on everything you write. Consider whether anyone aside from your mother, you and a few other economists might care about your findings, lest you outlive your media welcome fairly quickly and obviate future opportunities to draw attention to your more important subsequent research. It is also worthwhile not to overstate your results. It is tempting to suggest that you have discovered something fundamental, but that is rarely the case, and

there is little loss to acknowledging that your contribution is incremental. The journalists who interview you will appreciate the scarcity value of your modesty.

Behaving in the Print Media

The print media give the advantage of time to explain in detail to the reporter what your ideas are and to make sure that he/she understands them. Take advantage of the time offered. You have an opportunity to explain your answers to the questions that the journalist brings to you or to discuss the ramifications of your research findings. Your interactions with a good reporter will allow you to infer what is worth stressing—what might be important to the reader. This allows you to answer so that, consistent with being correct, you can convey those of your ideas that appear to be the most mediatropic. If you are going to say something that you believe will be particularly quotable, it is worthwhile to alert the reporter so that he/she jots it down.

The print media offer no opportunity to make corrections to what the reader sees in a newspaper or magazine as apparently having come from your mouth. An ex-colleague, who is happy to appear in the broadcast media, refuses to be interviewed by newspapers for precisely this reason—he lacks control over what is attributed to him. One solution at the better-quality print media is to make it clear *ex ante* that some particular statement or opinion is not for attribution. If an article makes you sound like a fool, the public may assume that you are a fool rather than blame the reporter's incompetence. You should think carefully about using one-liners. Some that sound clever may not look so cute in print. One well-known economist opined in a national newsmagazine that a tax proposal “did not pass the ‘idiot test.’” Recalling the 1980 election, I was quoted in a national business magazine that Sen. Dole's 1996 economic plan was not voodoo economics, but instead “doodoo economics.” Cute, but childish.

This difficulty is especially serious at lower quality newspapers or magazines. Student reporters love quotes from economics professors, but seem pathologically incapable of getting what we say down correctly. Before you finish your conversation with a reporter, be sure from the discussion that he/she understands what you are saying. Most reporters will not object if you ask

them to read back to you the quote that they are attributing to you. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with offering your time to take a telephone call from the reporter just before he/she files the story, so that you can make sure there is nothing incorrect. The reporter will appreciate this assistance.

Unless the reporter knows you well, at the end of the conversation he/she should ascertain what title you like to use in print and the correct spelling of your name. Journalists are taught this early on, but too often they seem to forget themselves in the heat of an interview. If they do, unless your surname cannot be spelled incorrectly, there is nothing wrong with finishing a conversation by telling the reporter your preferred title and the spelling of your name. Some publications have specific style guides, although in others the style of your title is your decision. What title to use is a matter of preference, but “Professor” seems more desirable than “Doctor,” lest you lead the public to believe that you make house calls. My preference is that the attribution (in my case) be to “Daniel Hamermesh, professor of economics at the University of Texas at Austin.” No informal given name, but also no fancy title or listing of peripheral affiliations.

Talking with reporters takes time. If the reporter has made it clear that the talk is merely background, you should not expect to be in print; but if not, the implicit contract is that you will be quoted or mentioned. One reporter at a distinguished newspaper has called me several times over the past few years, with each conversation lasting over one-half hour, and has never mentioned my name in print (although he has clearly based parts of his stories on our conversations). What to do in cases like this? The best advice, at least for the first several times, is to grin and bear it. Your time is not that valuable, and you have the satisfaction of knowing your ideas are in the public consciousness, albeit without attribution to you. View the apparent waste of time as an investment in a relationship that may pay off when you have done some research that especially merits media attention.

Behaving on Radio

Radio is the most diverse medium of all. It is a huge distance from *All Things Considered* or the BBC *World Today* to the call-in segment show on the local all-news station. This distance

requires us, more than in any other medium, to be aware of what segment of the market we are playing in. Despite this diversity, some general rules should guide any radio appearance.

1. Enunciate even more than if you were lecturing to a large class. This is especially important if you are not a native English speaker or if your English accent may be unfamiliar (e.g., an American in Australia).
2. You are not lecturing and should not use a lecturer's tone, as listeners will tune you out. Modulate your voice more than usual—a monotone is deadly on the radio.
3. Unless you are conversing directly with the radio host, a reporter or a caller, and he/she is on the air with you, your tone should not be entirely conversational. It sounds ridiculous to talk in a conversational tone when you are not conversing!
4. If you are unfamiliar with the station or show, take a minute to find out a bit about it, so that you can mould your language to the listening audience. On local talk radio choose your words to fit the audience, many of whom are unlikely to have college degrees. On NPR polysyllables are more appropriate.
5. Whether your appearance is a soundbite or a ten-minute interview, think about two or three main points that you want to get across. Without appearing to be repetitious, state these in different ways several times. If you are good at this, you can hammer home your point without boring the listener. Repetition is especially important in a soundbite, where the reporter or editor will cut and paste what you have said. Inserting your main point(s) into your statement several times maximizes the chance that your ideas will be heard on air.
6. In an interview that you know will be edited before it airs, it is crucial that each individual sentence is coherent, makes a particular point and could, if the radio journalist edits out the surrounding sentences, make sense on its own. One hopes that the radio journalist realizes what parts of your statement go together, but he/she may

not. In any event, radio time is a scarce commodity, and unless you are live on air you can be fairly certain that what you say will be edited.

7. You may be interviewed with someone else, as part of a roundtable discussion or simply because the host or radio journalist thought two interviewees might complement each other (or generate sparks that would interest the audience). Try to involve the other interviewee(s) occasionally by asking what they think and by making sure not to monopolize responses to the interviewer's questions. Obversely, don't hesitate to chime in when you believe the other interviewee is monopolizing the discussion. Some apparent polite disagreement is a good thing to strive for, as it interests the audience and can clarify issues. (If you and the other interviewee(s) agreed completely, what was the point of having more than one expert?)

8. Be sure not to sound angry—either with the interviewer or about the issue under discussion. The best demeanor is emotional involvement without too much passion.

Much of local radio and even some national radio shows in the U.S. cater to audiences of conservatives and even right-wingers who are egged on by the radio host. If that is your political philosophy, you will have no problem. But if it is not, or if your findings or points of view do not line up “right,” you should stick to your ideas and make them even more clearly and emphatically than otherwise. Hosts will try to goad you into agreement, bait you and even talk about “pointy-headed intellectuals” and “ivory-tower professors” (terms of opprobrium that have been hurled at me in radio interviews). Don't fall for it—you have an idea, you believe it is correct, and you are there to educate. View such hosts the same way you would view a smart, very disruptive student.

The lowest form of radio broadcast is the call-in, on which economists sometimes feature as guests and field calls from listeners about some research topic or some general economic issue. You typically have a short interview with the host to lay out issues, then listeners call in questions. The problem is that many callers are inarticulate or, still worse,

want to give a speech stating their views about your subject or even about something completely unrelated. Treat the speechmakers or incoherent callers like vociferous D students who unfortunately (for you) enrolled in your class.

Behaving on Television

In terms of making an impression on people television is the king of the media. As in the print media, what you say for television will almost certainly be edited, but unlike them there is no chance for you to be sure that you are quoted correctly. It is thus essential that each little bit—each sentence or two—be coherent and make a point. Even more than in radio, it is crucial to enunciate and not speak at great length at any one time (with a fifteen-second rule being a good general guide for most television). The advice on handling radio interviews when you are one of two or more interviewees also applies to television interviews. Television has additional problems, however, because the impression that you make depends not only on what you say, as in the print media, and how you phrase it, as in radio, but also on how you appear—your dress, your mannerisms and your body language.

Your manner—how you deal with the camera and the interviewer—poses a unique problem when you appear on television. More than in the other media, Henry Higgins' comment in *My Fair Lady* on the French, “[They] never care what they do, actually, as long as they pronounce it properly,” applies to television. Always look at the interviewer, not the camera (except if you are in a studio by yourself). This does not mean you must sit squarely in front of the interviewer—if one side of your face is more photogenic, you can tilt your head slightly toward that side; but it is important to keep looking at the interviewer. Don't fidget and bounce around, but at the same time do not sit perfectly still lest you come across like a zombie.

What you wear matters on television and in no other medium. If you are dressed very informally—a t-shirt—people will have difficulty taking you seriously as an expert. We do not enjoy catering to popular prejudices about attire and appearance, but, if we want people to get our message, we need to do so. If you know ahead of time that you will be televised, an elegant blouse and make-

up are sensible for women, and a tie is a good idea for men. Nothing motley, and nothing too wild—they do not look good on camera. If you are surprised in your office by a camera crew that has arranged a taping on short notice, at the very least have a decent shirt available. (Because you can be taped at your desk, as far as the camera is concerned you can be naked below the waist, although I do not recommend this.)

How you convey your ideas verbally on television must differ from appearances in the other media. You can make (relevant) jokes on radio, and you can explain yourself at length to print journalists. On television, attention spans are too short for either of these. Pithy one-liners that summarize your ideas work well, as do similes or metaphors that might stick in viewers' minds. Most of all, remember that in many cases your eventual appearance on the small screen will last ten to fifteen seconds—make them count.

Conclusion and Apologia

The main reasons for being willing to appear in the media and for making an effort to become an effective speaker through the various media should be the desire to convey a point of view on economic issues, to disseminate one's own relevant economic research and, most generally, to educate the public. In one local television appearance you will reach, and perhaps influence more people (albeit for a much shorter period of time) than you will reach over a forty-year teaching career. The media provide a forum for the continuing economic education of the public. As educators, and as people who believe that we have something important to say, it makes sense for us to appear. But it is a forum that we are allowed to enter repeatedly only if we have something to say, and only if we can say it well: Much more than in classroom teaching, delivery matters.

There is one additional, selfish reason for being willing to appear in the media that motivates in part most economists whom one sees/hears there: Obtaining one's Warholian "fifteen minutes of fame" is a terrific ego gratification. To know that large numbers of people are seeing and/or listening to you or reading your words is tremendously satisfying. This reward should not be the only reason that you appear in the media; but there is nothing wrong with admitting that this non-pecuniary

benefit is part of the return that you obtain for your typically unremunerated time. Indeed, the desire to obtain this satisfaction should motivate you to do the best possible job in educating the public through the particular medium that allows you to present your ideas.

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