

TRANSCRIPT

The Work Goes On

Guest: Dan Hamermesh

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Dan Hamermesh:

This positive effect of looks on earnings goes over the entire distribution of looks. The really ugly do worse than just the somewhat ugly, who do worse than the average, who do worse than the decent looking, who do worse than the really gorgeous people.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Welcome to [The Work Goes On](#), a podcast from the [Industrial Relations Section at Princeton University](#). I'm your host, [Orley Ashenfelter](#), the Joseph Douglas Green 1895 Professor of Economics at [Princeton University](#). In this podcast series of conversations with leading thinkers and practitioners, we are creating an oral history of an entire generation of industrial relations experts and labor economists whose contributions to their fields have been absolutely extraordinary. Our guest today is [Daniel Hamermesh](#), the Sue Killam Professor of Economics Emeritus at the [University of Texas at Austin](#). He is renowned for his work in labor economics, and especially for his role in applications of empirical analyses to areas that usually are not considered susceptible to economic analysis at all. Dan, welcome to [The Work Goes On](#).

Dan Hamermesh:

Thanks for having me, Orley.

Orley Ashenfelter:

It's a pleasure to have you. Let's start the discussion by talking about your background. Where did you grow up, Dan?

Dan Hamermesh:

I grew up in Villa Park, Illinois from ages 11 through 18. It's a utterly middle class western suburb of Chicago, about 20 miles from the loop. In 1960 when I was in high school, senior year, that was a census year, the median family income in Villa Park was three dollars from the national median. This was really middle class, this town.

Orley Ashenfelter:

That is interesting. What did your mom and dad do?

Dan Hamermesh:

Dad had a PhD in theoretical or mathematical physics from NYU. At the time I was growing up from '48 until '65, he worked at Argonne National Laboratory, which is in the southwestern suburbs of Chicago, starting off as a staff physicist, becoming in his last two years, deputy director of the whole laboratory.

Mom, just right when I was finishing high school, started teaching high school English. She had a Master's in English and that was her first job doing it, and she continued that until the end of her career.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Now, is Argonne associated with the University of Chicago?

Dan Hamermesh:

It most certainly is, and it was one of the banes of my daddy's existence having to deal with the U of C.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I see. I asked in part because I know you went to the University of Chicago as an undergraduate. How did that happen?

Dan Hamermesh:

Very simple. I applied to Harvard, Chicago, and Oberlin. I was rejected at Harvard, and Chicago had the virtue that because daddy was somewhat associated with it, I got half tuition, so tuition per year was only a thousand dollars.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, of course, a thousand dollars went further back then. You were an undergraduate there. What an incredible group of people in labor relations and labor economics were present at Chicago around that time. I guess you were associated with those people.

Dan Hamermesh:

Indeed. That sort of made my career. Although I was interested in labor from day one, middle of the second year, I took a course, I think it was probably the first modern labor economics course taught anywhere. It used a book by Mel Reder called "Labor in a Growing Economy," and the instructor was Gregg Lewis, who to me, you've written an encomium to him at one point. I just published one about him. I do view him as the father of modern labor economics.

Orley Ashenfelter:

What was he like as a teacher? He was a very introverted person and I always thought he might have difficulty teaching undergraduates.

Dan Hamermesh:

Well, there weren't very many of us. There might have been ten in the class, and he had no difficulty at all. I found him to be, maybe it's just me or the match, rather than a pure individual effect of him, but I found him to be incredibly inspiring. Maybe it's the material which he was enthusiastic about, and so was I, so all the stereotypes people have of him being introverted, being nasty, I always found the opposite in every dealing I had in the class and then starting that summer after my second year he hired me as an RA and I worked for him with the exception of one quarter until I graduated two years later, and he was fantastic in every respect.

Orley Ashenfelter:

It's interesting. He visited us and I always found him to be a very interesting and wonderful person, too, but you're right. His reputation is not the same as that.

Dan Hamermesh:

And I don't know why. Maybe he just viewed me as sort of a kid who he wanted to help out and he certainly did. Well, I'll never forget. He showed me a grad school recommendation that he had written for me, and he wrote in it, "Hamermesh is one of six RAs I'm employing currently. The other five are all grad students. He is the second best." Now, most people would say, "Gee, that's real good." I was really ticked off until years later, I found out the best by him was Sherwin Rosen, and so I didn't feel so badly about it after that.

Orley Ashenfelter:

It's a little bit like... there was a similar story about Al Rees saying that the best class he ever taught was the one that Jim Heckman was in, and of course, Jim Heckman was the only student in that class.

Dan Hamermesh:

Well, I was the only student in another class at Chicago. My third year I decided to take a course on economic growth theory and there were seven grad students auditing it and me. The instructor was Harry G. Johnson, who these days nobody has heard of. He's a man of whom Milton Friedman said, "A writing machine fueled by alcohol." That was the soap briquette about him.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Wrote a lot, yeah.

Dan Hamermesh:

He wrote a lot. I did a term paper for him on putting human capital into a growth model and he wrote back, this is a great paper, you should get it published. B. This was Chicago. The only person that didn't behave like this was Al Rees, who you mentioned, who my fourth year, he taught, of course, was really industrial relations class, which I took both fourth year fall and then winter term as well, a second quarter of it, and he was always extremely gentle and very interesting to listen to, too. Much more philosophical than Gregg certainly was, but equally interesting, I thought.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Interesting guy. Well, of course, I was very close to him. He was a great friend of ours. Now, how in the world did you get from Chicago with a crowd like that to Yale where you did your PhD?

Dan Hamermesh:

It's a great question. It seems somewhat bizarre. The answer is I talked to Gregg about it, and he said, "You should not go to Chicago. You should go somewhere else." I said, "Okay, where?" and I figured Harvard and MIT, those are the obvious ones. There was a man there then, international economist named Herbert Grubel, who eventually left, taught Simon Fraser, became a right wing member of the Canadian Parliament by the way. He'd gone to Yale. He thought I should apply there, so I did, and for the second time in my career, I was rejected by Harvard. This has gotten to be a continuing story, got into MIT and Yale, and for some reason, which I don't now understand why, I chose to go to Yale, not to MIT.

I'm very glad I did for very strange reasons because I think MIT was a better program, but be that as it may, I chose to go to Yale and spent three and a half, four years there.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Who was your advisor?

Dan Hamermesh:

Another not so easy question to answer. The nominal advisor was a man who taught labor economics there named Mark Leiserson. He was really a development economist who did labor, and he was incredibly thoughtful, not theoretical, mathematical, empirical at all. I had him in class my first year. Also, for my first year and part of my second at Yale, I took econometrics with Marc Nerlove, who people do know. He won a Clark Metal later on, and he was the second advisor who had much more to do with the thesis really, which is a quite technical thesis than Mark Leiserson did. So Mark was helpful, he was a nominal advisor, but the real influence on the thesis was in fact, Marc Nerlove.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I know you wrote about labor demand and especially, costs of adjustment, and you wrote about that quite a few times as I recall.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yeah, I've made a living off that sort of. Actually, the thesis... Was talking about theses with somebody recently about, I can't remember who it was, said it took a number of years to publish his thesis. Well, in my case, it took almost no time at all because we had to publish most of the darn thing in a journal called the Yale Economic Essays.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Oh, I remember that.

Dan Hamermesh:

Well, it's not memorable at all. I'm amazed you know about it. I published mine in fall of '69. The journal died a year later. I'm not sure that's cause and effect, but it's quite possible my thesis helped kill off that journal. I did get one essay in the RE Stats out of it, the Review of Economics and Statistics. It's a very technical piece, not really part of it. The thesis was looking at gross flows of labor. In other words, not just employment change in response to shocks, but how new hires changed, how quits changed, layoffs, rehires, blah, blah, blah. That was the novelty, how these responded.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I know you were always interested, I guess, as a result of that in the cost of adjustment by firms, and I wanted to ask you about that because that issue has, I think, come up again in the current period.

Dan Hamermesh:

I haven't seen much on it in the current period. What I got, I worked on labor demand, I've worked on it off and on over my entire career. In fact, I'm doing a labor demand piece right now, believe it or not, which is having great fun with. The cost of adjustment stuff was just asking the question, in all of our models, we assume firms adjust smoothly when they're hit by a shock, and I was as certain that wasn't

correct. Indeed, I got the idea for thinking about cost of adjustment in the early 80s when I became department chairman, and it came quite clear to me that it was much easier for me to hire three people, these costs per hire, than it was to hire one person.

A lot of fixed costs, and quite frankly, I told the dean, "Look, save your money up. Give me three slots. Don't give me zero. One this year, one the next year." Of course, the dean didn't buy that because I can't budget. They aren't smart enough to budget that way, but I'd have been a heck of a lot better off, so it got me thinking about the fixed costs of hiring and thinking about whether firms in fact do face what we call non-convex adjustment costs. Then in fact, of course they do, and I did stuff on that for a number of years, and as I say, I'm still working on labor demand or trying to.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, I think it's come up recently because of the current... there are some sectors of the economy now, at least I see anecdotally where people think demand has fallen off, but where employers, because of their most recent experience trying to hire and how difficult it was, have decided they may not cut their employment as much as they otherwise would, and that's sort of consistent with your view.

Dan Hamermesh:

It is very much consistent. It's consistent also with these non-convex costs. Rather than make a little cut now, I'll postpone and make zero cuts, and if things do get bad enough and I think, I can do it, I'll get rid of a bunch of people at once. What I'm working on now is related to this. I'm working on days versus hours and how they adjust, which we've had no work on whatsoever in our business. We don't know how days change.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, you have actually recently talked about, and I think people are interested in this, the idea of the four-day work week.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yes. This is sort of an unfortunate story. Some group in England has been pushing a four-day work week, what they call an experiment, which isn't an experiment by any person, and certainly not an economist. They demonstrated that some firms that they got to agree to do this could cut their work hours to four days, eight hours a day and get more productivity. Now, I find this as an economist very hard to believe that employers are so dumb that they're throwing away eight hours of work a week by their employees, and this has gotten press all over the world.

I was on national television about it two weeks ago trying to poo-poo this, and I did a paper on four days just recently, looking at how much there is, and everybody thinks that this is a huge thing going on. It's not. About six percent of the workforce is four days, but everybody thinks this is the coming thing. It'll be a panacea. We'll be able to work less, make more money, et cetera, et cetera, and if you believe that I have a bridge just across the street here that I'd be happy to sell you.

Orley Ashenfelter:

We should explain that you're in New York, so I think you're talking about the Brooklyn Bridge.

Dan Hamermesh:

I'm talking about the Brooklyn Bridge, which if you want to buy it, you're as lucky to buy the Brooklyn Bridge as to get more work from fewer hours.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Now, I know you've worked on some very unusual areas, and I think we should probably talk about the one that, at least I think probably you're best known for, and that's the role of people's looks or beauty as you call it, and their compensation and how they're treated in the labor market. First of all, how did you, I actually, now I know about this in part, I heard you on NPR once in a taxi cab in Chicago on the way to the art museum. The guy had NPR on and you were being interviewed about the merits of plastic surgery.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yes.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I remember that distinctly that your response to what should economists say about plastic surgery was you should do it early, so you can collect the benefits over a long period. I don't know if you remember that.

Dan Hamermesh:

I do.

Orley Ashenfelter:

How did you get onto this issue? Because you did a lot of empirical work associating people's appearances with their compensation. How did you get onto that topic in the first place?

Dan Hamermesh:

Well, first of all, I'm still doing it despite my wife's admonitions that I should get out of this business. It's a gift that keeps on giving. How did I get on it? Very simple. I was doing another paper on something else. I can't even remember what it was, and I came across a data set, which happened to have in the interviews, the interviewer would rate the beauty of the respondent. I said, "Wouldn't it be cool to ask how this effects wages once you adjust for everything else, how it might differ between men and women, how it might affect other bits of behavior?" My co-author and I got off on this probably in the, oh gosh, when was it? Probably in the late 80s, early 90s, based upon the data that we had seen. It was a very bad thing to do. The moment I saw these data where they rated people five, four, three, two, one, I wound up walking around campus looking at people and mentally giving every one of them a rating. This is not a good thing to do at all. I don't recommend this.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, and you had, I know one of the studies that I found pretty convincing was one where you used Look Book.

Dan Hamermesh:

No, I'm not sure what you call it. It was the picture book of law students from the University of Michigan.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Yes. Some people call it the Look Book or some people call it the Facebook. In fact, that's how Facebook got its name.

Dan Hamermesh:

No, exactly. I call it the Facebook. Actually, that posed a very interesting research question. These were classes, I can now say it, from the University of Michigan Law School. One of the classes contained my wife. The question is-

Orley Ashenfelter:

I did not know that.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yes. No, it's not well known. The question is, do I have a bunch of other people rating my wife's looks or do I excise my wife from the sample? It's sort of an ethical issue, and I decided, well, it's okay in econometrics to get rid of an observation as long as you're not doing it because of the outcome the person had, and I did not want my raters, which was students and young staffers, rating my wife's look, so I removed my wife from that paper. She was not unhappy about not having her looks rated, believe me. Anyway, I got off on beauty. We did a whole bunch of them. We even did one on the beauty of economists, and what I did was, as you I'm sure know and others may know, every year the American Economic Association sends out a ballot. It's now, of course, online, in which they have pictures of all the candidates, and I remember seeing that, and some person whom I know, I'm not very fond of, had a picture which looked like it was from her teen years.

She didn't look like that at all, but she had a very good-looking picture in there and it really ticked me off, so I asked the question, does an economist looks affect how well they do in these elections? I asked the then secretary treasurer of the association, if he would send me all the ballots. He said, "Why?" I said, "I want to use rate their looks and see if it affects their electoral chances." He said, "You can't do this study. They're all ugly," which may well be the case, but they're differentially ugly, and in fact, the idea worked out quite well. There was this almost statistically significant, but substantial size effect of being good-looking, everything else the same on your chance of getting elected to an office in the AEA. This doesn't matter very much. These offices have, essentially no power, but it is an honorific and being better looking gave you access to this honorific. This may be one reason why I've never won elections, by the way.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I honestly do not remember seeing that paper, and I can understand why some people in the Association may want to bury it. Tell us about, what would you say are the main findings after all this work on looks and appearance and pay? What would you say are the other takeaways from it?

Dan Hamermesh:

Two or three. First of all, comparing the top third of people to the bottom sixth in the U.S., the impact on wages is about the same as an extra year of schooling, say ten percent, which is not small, and that's after adjusting for every other possible thing you can think of that would affect wages. The second thing which surprises everybody, but it's now been verified in a number of countries, is the impact on wages of differences in beauty is larger among men than among women, which surprises everybody since

women that we know are more concerned about it. The reason, which is something we investigated many years later in a study is that women are bothered by their looks. It's not that bad looks make them get a little money that affects them a little, but they're terribly bothered by not being good-looking. They think about it a lot.

Whereas men, much more of the difference in happiness due to looks, is due to the effect on their earnings, so that's a second takeaway, the gender difference. I remember when we came out with that in the first paper. There was a story on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* where they concluded that from our work, and they had this leading feminist economist with this wonderfully non-intellectual quote saying, "I don't care what they think they found. I know this is more of a problem for women than for men." This is what we economists have to deal with. You had some serious study and somebody who doesn't do economics or do empirical work says, "I don't care. It's rubbish. I don't like the conclusion," and you've come across this in your own work countless times, I know.

Orley Ashenfelter:

What was the third thing then?

Dan Hamermesh:

The third thing I think is interesting. It is that basically, this positive effect of looks on earnings goes over the entire distribution of looks. The really ugly do worse than just the somewhat ugly, who do worse than the average, who do worse than the decent looking, who do worse than the really gorgeous people of whom there may be one or two percent. Maybe in certain jobs, there is what I call a bimbo effect, a gorgeous woman who may not do as well, but this is very, very minor or unimportant. In other words, in economic or mathematical terms, this is a monotonic thing. You get better looking, you do better. On plastic surgery, maybe in my own case, if I could have hair implants, I don't have too much. The journalists who write about me on this, say I'm follically, F-O-L-L-I-C-A-L-L-Y challenged.

If I could have hair implants, if I could have my entire facial structure beaten up and recast, it might make me better looking, but the general evidence suggests that plastic surgery, while it may make you feel better, doesn't really do that much for your looks as perceived by others, and certainly, clothing, haircuts make very little difference. I have a paper on that asking whether spending more money on your dress, your hair, et cetera, affects how you're perceived, and the answer is very, very small effects. It's not a good investment if all you care about is a monetary return. Now, let me let me say something to you. You asked about the crazy papers I've worked on and beauty is the most well-known of the crazy papers, but there's one which came out of my time at Princeton, which you haven't asked and since we are-

Orley Ashenfelter:

I was going to get to that, I think.

Dan Hamermesh:

It's wonderful story in a lot of ways, and this you may not know. I published a paper with a Princeton grad student in January 1974 called, "An Economic Theory of Suicide," and I don't think people know how it came about. It came-

Orley Ashenfelter:

I think I do know, but please tell us.

Dan Hamermesh:

I'm amazed I haven't talked about this too much. Anyway, it came about because my thesis advisor, co-advisor, Marc Nerlove, was visiting. I think this would've been probably in April of 1972 maybe, and he was going on and on about the economics of family and Gary Becker's wonderful work on this. I said, "Marc, next thing you're going to tell me is that something as bizarre as suicide can be affected and thought about using economic theory," and he just laughed at me and said, "Oh, that's silly," and I went home that night and for about the only time in my life I worked very late in the night running down a model of an economic theory of suicide. This is inspired at Princeton by the seminar and dinner afterwards. I wrote the paper up and it became a working paper somewhere, probably the IR Section, in fact. The next thing on this was in fall of '72, probably you or maybe me, invited Gary Becker to give a lecture. I don't know if you were at that lunch with him in Prospect House, the faculty club.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I remember him congratulating you on this paper.

Dan Hamermesh:

It was worse than that. He grilled me on the paper. He grilled me for a half an hour, which was one of the most bizarre experience of my career since, as you know, his wife, first wife had committed suicide a couple of years earlier, and I felt so awkward talking with him about it, but he was completely straight about this and interested intellectually in it, and I did one other paper on that and that was it. Since '74, I haven't touched suicide.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I know. I realize that. In fact, the way I remember it is somewhat like you do, which is that at first because we should talk about what the results are. At first, I think you thought it was sort of a joke to write the paper, and then after a while, I think you became convinced that you actually had discovered something. It's my memory of how it came about. Tell us what you learned.

Dan Hamermesh:

First of all, I replicated the well-known result going back to the originator of modern sociology, Emile Durkheim, that during times of higher unemployment, suicide rates go up. That's a standard thing, and you can write that down in a theory, why you should expect that. The next thing, which I believe was novel goes back... Being from Illinois, we read a poet named Edgar Lee Masters, and I can't imagine anybody's heard of this man, but he wrote a poem which is made into a song by Simon and Garfunkel called *Richard Cory*, which people may know about this incredibly wealthy guy who everybody admired, and Richard Cory one summer night, went home and put a bullet through his head. People think that the wealthy are more likely to commit suicide, which makes no economic sense at all, if you believe that higher income makes you happier, which I do in general. In fact, we showed in this that those with higher income were less likely to commit suicide, and that result is held up in bunches of studies since then.

Orley Ashenfelter:

The other one I thought was a surprise was the connection between suicide rates and age.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yes, and that too, I would expect younger people to be less likely to commit suicide... mainly because they have more life left to live. Now, again, there may be psychological things. At the time of the paper, that expectation, that theoretical prediction was born out very nicely in the couple of the data sets I have. Since then, it's not clear, there may have been some turnaround, but there's a real problem in fact with the possible turnaround, and that is, these days people can take happy pills. I don't know what they're called. Antidepressants. There's a huge drop in suicide in the United States in the 1990s and everywhere else, perfectly correlated with the sudden existence of prescriptions for happy pills.

In fact, the story on this, I decided being a rather liberal democrat, during the 1972 election involving Nixon and McGovern to figure out how many deaths because of suicide were caused by the Nixon recession of 1970. I just used the numbers I had in unemployment and got a number of deaths caused by Nixon. It made the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, which I like being in the press. Some people like sex, some like power, I like publicity. Anyway, got in the front page and I said to myself, in the 2000 election, the 2004 election, maybe we can do the same thing for Bush, too. In fact, there was nothing there because in the 90s, as I said, people started taking pills that at least removed for a lot of people, the possibility or the feeling of a need to kill themselves, which is certainly a very good thing, but it ruined my chance to make fun of W.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Oh, yes. I was not aware of this, your latter point about suicide. Last time I saw anybody do any empirical research on suicide, it was you, and that was quite a long time ago.

Dan Hamermesh:

Yeah, about 49 years ago. No, there was immense literature on this now, and even economists doing stuff on this, on suicide ideation, on the effect of failing an exam, on ideas of committing suicide, a couple of papers on Japan doing that. It's ubiquitous. As well it should be. It's an important issue. I'm not going to work on it, but other people certainly are.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I appreciate that. We're coming to the end of our conversation and it's just been wonderful having you on here and it's certainly one of the high points for your publicity career.

Dan Hamermesh:

Let me say one thing, although you didn't let me get in one thing, which I'd like to have in there.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Yeah, what?

Dan Hamermesh:

You didn't ask... I've been married to the same one for 56 years, and let me say I've dedicated things to her. She reads most of my papers and has numerous times told me, "Daniel, you don't want to work on this. This is nonsense," and the coolest thing is how I picked her up, actually I've used in class.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, now this is a story I don't know.

Dan Hamermesh:

No, you don't.

Orley Ashenfelter:

That's why I couldn't ask about it.

Dan Hamermesh:

You couldn't ask. It's a great story. I saw her for the first time on October 5, 1965, which happens to be the night of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. We're fairly religious. I saw her across the room at a service held in the Yale Law School, and I thought she was fantastic. In the service, one of the things you do is you repent for all the bad things you've done. One of the bad things is casting lustful glances, and I had spent the whole evening casting lustful glances at her. I'm kidding. Anyway, so I figured, how am I going to meet this lady? Three days later, I think it was a Monday morning, have to be in fact, a woman who I had met, and she, who were the best friends in fact, were walking in front of my dormitory toward campus, and I jumped out of my thing, put my backpack on, and took my crutches. I was on crutches. I'd broken my foot playing handball.

Think about that one for a second, and I walked up to the woman I knew slightly and said, "Could you introduce me to your friend?" and she did. And then I said, how am I going to get to spend time with her? I could ask her for a date, but that'd be very forward, and she might well say no. I asked her instead, I thought it was a brilliant move, game theoretical move. I said, "Could you carry my books across campus given that I'm on crutches?" Now, think about this. If she was a bad person, she would've told me to forget about it. If she was a good person, she'd say, "Yes," and I could spend time with her, and of course she said, "Yes," and the rest is now 57 years of history. I do this when I teach game theory to intro classes. I create a payoff by matrix with me, with the first mover advantage. It may be the worst pickup line ever pulled by man, but I'm darn proud of it.

Orley Ashenfelter:

I think very good that you did this during the period when you were not supposed to have lustful glances. One last thing I do need to ask you about, I think. You became very well known for this, and that's the fact that I think maybe after you'd gone on emeritus, I'm not sure if it was before or after, you decided that you no longer wanted to teach at the University of Texas, because it's said, of the state legislature and how it changed permits or whatever it is you call carrying weapons concealed. Is that true?

Dan Hamermesh:

Oh, it's not only true, it's worse. Hey, it's true that I quit what was a three-year contract to teach one giant section of intro every fall from '15, '16, and '17. I'd become emeritus in 2014. I signed this new contract, three years, one course a year at a decent rate of pay, and shortly after I signed the contract and was getting ready to teach, they passed this law. Now, if I taught like a regular faculty, a smallish class, it wouldn't have bothered me. I was teaching 600 18-year-old kids, children really, in this giant class, and the chance of one kid getting really angry with me and I've had students get angry with their grades, was not insignificant, and I did not want to face the risk of being shot by an angry student in my office.

I said, "I don't need this." Halfway through the term, I said, "I'm done at the end of this semester." It got huge amounts of publicity. People thought I was this wonderful, heroic, anti-gun guy. No, I'm a chicken. I just didn't want to get shot darn at all, and I was right, because at that time, you had to be 21 to carry a

gun in Texas. A suit three years ago, people complained that's age discrimination, and now 18-year-olds can carry guns openly in Texas. I'm a chicken. I'm a chicken. What can I say? Cluck, cluck, cluck.

Orley Ashenfelter:

You'd rather not have people with guns in the classroom.

Dan Hamermesh:

Indeed.

Orley Ashenfelter:

Well, I understand that. Dan, it's just been a pleasure talking to you today. I can't imagine that we could have much more fun learning about everything from suicide to how you met your wife with lustful glances. Anyway, I appreciate so much you're coming on.

Our guest today has been [Dan Hamermesh](#), Sue Killam Professor of Economics Emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin. Please join us again for the next episode of [The Work Goes On](#), an Oral History of Industrial Relations and Labor Economics from the [Industrial Relations Section at Princeton University](#). We will speak with [James Heckman](#), the Henry Schultz Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago. I'm your host, Orley Ashenfelter. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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