

## Henry “Hank” Levin

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### Video 1

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

My name is Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, Associate Professor at Arizona State University, and today we are speaking with Dr. Henry Levin with Inside the Academy. It’s a pleasure to honor you today and interview you about your life, your personal and professional history.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Thank you.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

First of all, tell us about where you were born and where you grew up.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I was actually born physically in Brooklyn, New York at a hospital because my uncle was a doctor there, an obstetrician, and then we, they took my body within a week back to New Jersey, which is really where I was brought up. So I was born there, but I never really lived in Brooklyn.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you’re one of how many children?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

One of six.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

One of six children.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I have a twin.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Oh, you have a twin. And where does your twin live?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

My twin lives in New Jersey.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Oh, great. Tell us about your parents.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

My parents were an odd couple. My mother (1:00) had a master’s degree actually from Teachers College where I teach and a bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, and was one of ten children. My father was a high school graduate, and my dad had a modest furniture store in an

industrial town in New Jersey. When I say “modest,” he had a couple of employees to deliver furniture, and one to people the office. I was going to say “man” because I’m old, and we use those terms. But to “people” the office, and it happened to be a female. But he was one of these people, he would get up on the roof when it leaked. He was just a jack of all trades kind of person, as opposed to a real business person. He never owned a tie, or a jacket, or anything like that. So they were kind of an odd couple because (2:00) and he was also kind of a reactionary conservative—saw communists everywhere. And my mother was very much a liberal, progressive, got to get out there and change the world, you know, do justice things like that. And then they had six children, so that kept her busy, and she also worked. So it was a pretty active household.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Did you attend public school in New Jersey?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I did.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

All the way through high school?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And how were you as a student?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I would say pretty mediocre. School wasn’t for me. Let me put it another way. It doesn’t mean that things we normally associate with school weren’t for me. I loved to read. I loved classical music. I had my own amateur radio station. Put together all kinds of electrical equipment, communications equipment, and designed antennas, and things like that (3:00). So I was kind of active intellectually. But was I a good student? No, I would get in trouble, and I would spend the time, for example, making satirical songs about awful teacher. The then when the teacher would step out to smoke—that was common in those days—teachers would give the class an assignment, I would get up in front of the room, my friend would get up by the door to watch for the teacher, and I would read or sing the song that I had made. And then great friends, the teacher would be coming back, but the friend wouldn’t say that, and I would get caught in the middle, and then I would get suspended. Anyway. I was not a good student.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

How did those experiences influence the education scholar that you have become today?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, I think that they made me see some obvious things. You have to build on people’s experiences. You have to engage them (4:00), you have to stimulate them. To me, all children deserve enrichment, not remediation, and not, you can get some very, very pedestrian learning

out of an excitement about a relevant activity for my life. Whereas if you do it for its own sake, it becomes very difficult for some of us. We don't see purpose in it. Dewey talked about purpose, that education is purpose, even though most people whom I've spoken with think Dewey just said, "Let kids do whatever they want." That's nonsense. He thought that all education should have purpose. But that purpose should be decided by what is good and should involve getting people actually engaged together and working on that purpose. I discovered that in my own education. For me, that worked (5:00). If it worked for me, maybe other people too.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

As a student, did you always plan to go to undergraduate or to get a higher degree?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

No. My father wanted me to take over this business that he had. I wasn't enthusiastic about it, but he was pretty authoritarian, and in those days I was pretty willing to comply with his wishes. My mother would whisper to me about going to Cornell and experiencing what she thought I should experience in a college education. I was an athlete. In fact, that was the only fun part of school. And I finished third in the mile in the New Jersey state championship. And I did very well on my SAT. See a lot of people complain about the SATs. That's actually (6:00) what rescued me—very high SAT scores. Surprisingly so. Surprisingly so that the college counselor at my high school said, "You're lucky that mixed up SAT score with someone else," because she looked at a B, C record in terms of grades. Although I have to say that B's and C's meant something quite different in those days than they do today. But teachers would also punish you if you weren't compliant. So you could do A work, but get a B or a C in those days, and you had no, you had no ability to challenge that. On my high school grade point average, I finished barely in the top third of my high school class. Now it was a high school class that had very high college participation. But still, top third, you're not going to get into any of the top schools. But I did have very strong SATs (7:00), and so I was given an offer for a couple of scholarships, not clear whether they were athletic or academic, given my GPA. My dad, I didn't want to disappoint my dad; so I decided to go to business school, even though I wasn't particularly interested in it. That was at least consistent with what he wanted. And it also meant that if I stayed close to home, I could work on Saturdays or whatever for him. So I went to, I did go to New York at that time. I came to New York University Stern School, which it wasn't called that then, it had a different name. NYU still existed, and the business school still existed, but today it's called the Stern School of Business or whatever it is. It's much more prestigious, by the way, than when I went there. The business school was not the most prestigious school at the university by any means in those days. But that's where I went to school (8:00). I went to New York University, studied in the school of business.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You referenced your running. What many people don't know is that you were quite the runner, nationally ranked as one of the top ten distant runners in college, is that right?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Yes, during that year, during that Olympic year when I graduated. I won't tell you which year unless you mention it.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

I can do the math really fast.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

But I was, I had one of the top ten times. Not good enough to make the Olympic teams because...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

But you almost made it. You were close.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well I was close, but I had other challenges in my life at that time. I just couldn't possibly devote myself to Olympics. I had dental problems. Then they had to get paid for. I had to figure out, I was kind of engaged and planning a marriage. So, a lot of things that when you don't get your priorities straight (9:00), you get a lot of things competing for your energy, and talent, and things like that.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

How fast did you run the mile?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I wasn't a miler actually. My fastest time for the mile wasn't extraordinary, although you have to remember that this was more than 50 years ago. It was 4:12, but I was a 3-miler or equivalent to a 5,000 meter today. 5,000 meter is the event that I was ranked nationally.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Do you still run today?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I kind of manage my weight on a treadmill, and I walk some, yeah.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Walk and run?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Yeah. But more just for health reasons.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Then you went on the get your master's then your Ph.D.. Tell us about that.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

No, no, no. Then I worked (10:00). I had to get a job. So I started off with my dad and realized pretty quickly that that was probably not going to work out well because he completely, he completely obliterated that I could have learned anything in college that would be useful in his business. Let's remember that he had been doing this for, at that time, for 40 years, and his view

was if I worked with him, really worked for him, I do what he tells me to do, and I have no ideas or anything like that. "Because how do you have any ideas if you haven't worked in this business, and I've had this business for 40 years?" But the good thing was that he recognized that after a few weeks. Literally a few weeks, maybe a month, that this wasn't going to work. So I applied for another position. I really actually wanted to be a writer (11:00), and, but, you don't just become a writer out of college. You don't just say, "I want to be a writer. Let's see, where are the writing positions." And they all say, of course, "Experience" and "Send Samples." My samples were only samples of academic work, which...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And songs about teachers.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

And songs about teachers. Things like that. So I got a job selling insurance. Hated it. The first they tell you is, "Look through your college yearbook. Think about your friends. Call them, and tell them that you really want to work with them in terms of helping you secure a good future for them, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." I thought that was insincere, and I was intruding on people's lives. So that lasted about two months. Then I was at wits' end, and I had a friend who was the personnel manager at the one of the branch stores of Saks Fifth Avenue (12:00), and so I went to her, and she hired me as a sales associate in the boys' department. I guess that people saw that I was a hustler. Not a hustler in the sense of selling dope or things like that as it's used today. But hustler in the sense of having a lot of energy, and listening carefully, and hearing what people wanted, and seeing issues in the organization. So in one week I was promoted to what was called a section manager. I was section manager, meaning that basically what you do is solve problems, you re-allocate personnel, you meet with customers who have a lot of complaints, or there's a credit problem, which is a little embarrassing for you and the customer, but you bring them aside and tell them "We're happy to take a bank check." In those days we didn't have credit cards actually (13:00). At least I can't recall. Well there were American Express cards, but not Visa or Masters. So I had to deal with those things. I had to wear a tie and a jacket. There were a lot of pretty girls in the store. So it was fun. I mean pretty girls in the flirtation sense. Not pretty girls in terms of dating them because you really have to stay away from those kinds of relationships if you wanted to be professional and move on. And after the, basically during the year, I learned something about that business, which I didn't like. And that is you have to beat the figures that you had last year. You know, the figures, the numbers, the sales in every department, and if you don't, you look for what the problem is in each department. You can tell, some ugly stuff. At the end of the day they would go into the managers' office, and I would be (14:00) invited too. And you'd pull out a couple bottles of J&B, and everybody would drink, and they'd get loud. I just asked myself, "Is this the lifestyle that I want?" And I was still very oriented towards reading, and discussions, and I didn't see any of that in this business. It was all, "Success is money. Success is moving up." So I started to apply to graduate schools, and I didn't know much about graduate work, to be honest. I looked at my units at NYU. I didn't want to go to business school, so I found that I had more units in economics than any other single subject. Fortunately, NYU in those days required about half the credits in the liberal arts. I had some background in writing and other subjects, which was great. I applied to two or three (15:00) places in economics to get a master's degree. As soon as I got accepted, I made the decision to get out of the retail, the rag business, or whatever you want to call it, as

soon as I could. So I started after one year—I worked there a year at Saks Fifth Avenue. And I was offered then to enter their executive training program to move to a higher level, and I just said, “No, I’m going to do the dumb thing. I’m going to go for a master’s degree.” Then I started working the master’s degree. I had, again, I was a very homebody type at the point. So I went to Rutgers in New Jersey. Commuted from my home, didn’t have to get an apartment, and didn’t have much money because I was paying for dental (16:00) work and stuff all of the previous year with my earning from Saks. So I started, and I found it difficult. Difficult because it was just a different way of thinking. I thought, “When I’m done with the master’s degree, I’m done with university, with college. I’ll for something else after that.” So the idea was just to pace myself to get finished. But I got involved in my master’s dissertation, and at least in those days, the required a substantial master’s dissertation. Today, I think things have changed where the master’s degree is, you know, you give people a memo, or something pretty close to it. But in those days, and it may have been because they had a very small doctoral program at Rutgers in economics. So they had the master’s program as their main program at that time (17:00). But I got into it, and I really, really enjoyed working on the dissertation. I enjoyed looking for materials, and you had to do in the old way in those days. You literally had to look them physically in college card catalogues, all kinds of other hands-on stuff. Which, by the way, was also fun for me because I was kind of hands-on person with electronics and stuff like that. Then I kind of did well enough that they offered me to come into the doctoral program. And that’s what happened. I came to the doctoral program. I had a professor, who was very quiet, very modest, but really emphasized very high quality work—meeting his standards was really something. And he wasn’t famous-famous. He was well known, but he wasn’t famous-famous. So I chose my field within economics (18:00), field of public finance, because I wanted to work with him. I started to work with him, and he was shocked that I did really well. It turns out that I, in the second year, when I was taking his course, I got mononucleosis. Don’t ask me house because I wasn’t kissed enough when I was, but during those days, what you did, there was no medicine or anything. You went to bed, and you just recovered by resting. And my sister, my twin sister, who is always studying economics at Rutgers would give me all the books on my reading list from the library. So here I was in bed all day, and I was reading, and I was absorbing, and when it came time for the finals in the course, he couldn’t believe how capable I was in terms of answering the questions. It had nothing to do with intelligence (19:00). It had to do with I really read the stuff, you know, because I had a little time on my hands—like all day, 24 hours, you know. So, anyway, I did really, really well. And as you know, professors who see their students do really well also want to spend some time with those students and work with them, and that’s basically what happened. I worked with him, and by this time I was married. I had a child. Problem, it wasn’t a good marriage. The child was good—that was Mia. But I had to earn money. So when I finished up the exams and the coursework and everything, I got a job with a professor, actually at New York University, who’s very famous in his field. He was an expert on the property tax, and he was the head (20:00) of the mayor’s temporary commission. This was Mayor Robert Wagner in New York City. The mayor’s temporary commission for New York City finances—a comprehensive study of New York City finances. And my professor, Harry Kahn, got in touch with him and said, “I’ve got this guy, who’s kind of good, and you have an opening that he would be really good for you.” So I met with him, and he hired me. He gave me a big surprise, a pleasant surprise. My salary was 10,000 dollars for a year, which actually wasn’t that bad then. And he said, no, he said, this is like July, “All of our reports have to be done by January.” I figured, wait a minute, I’m getting paid July to the following June. I said, “What happens after

January?" He said (21:00), "You'll write your damn thesis then." So basically I saw myself with five free months. All I had to do was stay with my research for my dissertation at that point and work on the project that I was assigned for this mayor September Commission for City Finances. I chose the sales tax. I worked on employment and income effects of the sales tax. Then Netzer, Dick Netzer, who was the head of the commission, this professor at NYU really liked what I was doing, which was good because it turns out that he and my professor were really closely connected with a lot of people in the field, like at universities, and think tanks, and things like this. So that led to my next job. First of all, I took from February, to June, July to complete the dissertation (22:00). And then applied for a lot of jobs and got a lot of offers, which was surprising because Rutgers and economics was a second tier institution. It was not a first tier institution. By second year, I would say between 20<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> out of maybe 300 institutions that offered a Ph.D., but not top 20 or top 15 or whatever. There was a hierarchy; but because these guys, who were plugged in recommended me, I got offers from Michigan, from Brown, and from the Brookings Institution in Washington. I thought, "Where do I want to be?" If I'm at Brookings I'll be. Brookings, by the way, was an outpost for a lot of the intellectuals who were in the Kennedy and Johnson administration. I knew their work and so on, so I chose Brookings, on the basis that I would now (23:00) have contact with a lot of different people. If I went to a university campus, I might get stuck there. And I had other offers as well. My first offer was at Iowa State University, which I was really excited about because the people were so nice. The only problem is it snowed; and so I was isolated there for three days and realized that each day was kind like a repetition of the last one. I heard the same stories. I thought, "This is not for this part of life for me." In the meantime I have this marriage that I'm, with a child and so on and so forth. So, I went to Brookings.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Is that when you turned your interest into education?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

It is.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And what inspired that?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well what inspired that was actually a command performance. When I came to Brookings they were, even when I was interviewed, they said, "We're forming a new division of our economics group (24:00) called Social Economics that will deal with education, that will deal with health, that will deal with public assistance and welfare. It will deal with a number of these social areas," which you did not have in economics in those days. "So what do you want to do?" I thought, "I'll pick a card. Well, education seems pretty interesting." I hated mine, therefore there must be something to study there, you know. So I chose that, and it was an exciting time in Washington. I arrived at Brookings about two weeks before the Coleman Report was published. So all the news on that, and immediately made contacts with the Department of Education to talk with the researchers who had worked on that to get data et cetera. So it was a very exciting time.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You wrote a pretty poignant critique of the Coleman Report. Is that right?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I did (25:00). I started to look, I looked at the actual data, and I also looked at the report; and I thought, “This report uses inappropriate analytic techniques, and it’s very misleading in terms of the data, and the interpretation.” Then I had a new friend at Harvard, Sam Bowles, and we got together one day, and he saw the same thing. So we decided to write an article together, which was critical of the Coleman Report. I should tell you we submitted it to a number of places. It was rejected by all of them. At least four or five rejections saying, “Well this group of young turks. All they want to do is tear down a great man. No other purpose than that; therefore there can’t be any substance in what they’re saying. This is a very important report and should not be critiqued,” and so on. It also (26:00) undermined some of the arguments of those who are our friends in the civil rights movement because they were arguing that school resources make no difference. “You can’t really improve schools for blacks by getting better teachers or any of that stuff. The only way you can do it is through integration—giving them better peers.” So these were our friends. It’s terrible, you know, when you’re loved by your enemies and hated by your friends. And I’ve gone through that in a number of phases in my career. But what we did is we eventually got in published in a relatively new journal, *Journal of Human Resources*; and as far as I understand, it’s been reprinted I think 36 times. But in those days it was not accepted.

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Video 2

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Around this time you actively protested the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, as well?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And protested for the war on poverty?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I’m sorry, protested?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

The declining funding.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Oh. Well what we were concerned with was there was a connection between the two. But as far as the Vietnamese War, I frankly just didn’t understand it. And I went to meetings, and I tried to talk to people, including people in the Pentagon and in the White House. You have to remember that Lyndon was the President then. Brooklyn. Brooklyn? Brookings had a very close relationship with Lyndon Johnson. Indeed, we had our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and he was the keynote speaker at the anniversary. So, allegedly, I was able to talk to insiders, and (1:00) I couldn’t get a coherent picture of why we were in Vietnam, of why we were involved in deaths, destruction,

the maiming, and I came strongly against the war when I saw this picture of this child running down the street—a Vietnamese child—who had been napalmed. You know, of course, collateral damage—no one tried to napalm her. When I saw that, by that time I had two children, and it just made me sick. And so I figured, “I’m going to work against this,” and I had a colleague at Brookings, Martin Carnoy. Martin and I worked together with about four or five other people to form a group called Concerned Citizens for Peace. What did that consist of? Well, we were a little naïve, but we went from house to house on Saturdays with a map of Washington to take over, to try to (2:00) get people to take over precincts, so we could try to get Johnson out of there. What we did is we did interviews with people, short interviews, and then we did punch cards at Brookings—they didn’t know this—in the Brookings computer system with their attitudes, whether they were willing to attend meetings. We had churches in Washington that were willing to host meetings because a lot of the church people were against the war. We had I.F. Stone. I don’t know if you’re familiar with him. He was a journalist who wrote against the war and a lot of other of the bad policies. He was very well known at this time. Basically it was this organized thing to try to take over the democratic precincts to get precincts, to get basically nomination representatives, I forget what they’re called to find an alternative to Johnson (3:00). Basically our alternative was Robert Kennedy, who had also created great skepticism on the war, and so we were involved in that. I also took a long-term substitute position in Washington public schools. I realized I didn’t know enough of practice. Again, I tend to be fairly hands-on in terms of connecting the way I understand things. So I got a job in a junior high school in Washington D.C., Benjamin Banneker Junior High School, 14<sup>th</sup> Street NorthWest. It was all black, even though this is now 1967, and the Supreme Court had come out with its decision saying separate is not equal in ’54 and ’55. The Washington D.C. schools were still segregated. So I taught social studies in (4:00) this school, and I think I learned a lot about the daily life of teachers and students. Long-term substitute meant that they couldn’t decide where you were going to teach or move you around. They could make you an offer, and you could accept it or reject it. Washington D.C. had so many openings that they couldn’t fill that there was this category of long-term substitutes—people who could teach as long as they wanted at any particular school. So I chose this school. I had a friend who also taught in this school. That’s the reason, I was in touch, and he told me, “Oh, there’s an opening in social studies.” So I worked in the school basically till three. Then I would go to Brookings and work for another few hours, and I would turn the school check over to Brookings because Brookings was paying me more, and they accepted that I could do this. So I did this for most of a year.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You really just wanted the experience of doing that (5:00) then?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Yeah. I wanted the experience, and it was most of a year. I learned so much—a lot of it not very elating, but that’s life.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You consider that a life changing experience, right?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well a lot of it, some of it I suspect, it's always hard to say, "Gee, it was just one of those things that just suddenly changed." But then when you combine that with what you know from people who have been in education for a long time. I met people like Larry Cuban. Larry Cuban was in the Washington D.C. schools at the time. I met a lot of people at Brookings. That part was really successful. I didn't meet Larry at Brookings, but I met Larry in the Washington D.C. schools. Larry eventually became a student of mine, and then he became a colleague of mine. So it's interesting how these paths go. Back to Martin Carnoy, Martin and I became very close friends. This was 1966 (6:00), so you can imagine how long we've been colleagues and friends. People at Brookings objected to the stuff we were doing. We were also broadly, I didn't do this, writing editorials for the Washington Post for the nation, for the new republic, saying that we had talked about a peace dividend, and all that peace dividend, in terms of the public budget, is being eaten up by this war, and this is squeezing the war on poverty, which is the war that we really favored. And we started to get subtle pressures in Brookings. I mean there's academic freedom, but subtle pressures. We were lowest level on the research staff. This wasn't going to be a very welcoming place for people like us in the long run. The job market was phenomenal at that time. So I started to get letters, based largely on the article that Sam Bowles (7:00) and I had published at this point, or at least I had gotten around in a clandestine way at this point. But people had heard about me and this new field, economics of education. It was a relatively new field. So I started to get calls from schools of education, and one of them was Stanford. I had never been west of Indiana, I think. So I figured, "Well, if they're going to invite me out to give a talk, I'll see the Bay Area." To make that as short as possible, that led to their making an offer, which I accepted with an appointment in education, but also in economics teaching economics. I hadn't ever taught in the school of education or gotten enough background in the school of education. So that kind of cemented it because I would still have a relationship with the field that I knew better. So I accepted that, and that was probably a good decision (8:00) because that was late fall of 1967. And then in 1968, you know what happened to Robert Kennedy in the spring of 1968. He was assassinated. So, I mean, our hopes just got destroyed. The peace movement, all this. So getting a new start was important, and I also thought, "Since I now have two kids," and the marriage wasn't really working at all, it was important to get a new start. So within six months I found another opening at Stanford. I told them "Martin Carnoy is the only person in the country that could possibly fill that opening." And within six months Martin joined me.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You proud that you brought him out? You were the first professor of economics of education, and he was the second.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

And he joined me.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

After you made the move to Stanford, your daughter, Mia, fondly remembers sitting on your shoulders at the forefront of a massive peace march in 1969. That's one of her (9:00) fondest memories. She also remembers you playing the Beatles, Jimmy Hendrix, Santana, Donovan, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, the Brazilian jazz album, Black Orpheus, nonstop and loud when she was little. You love your music.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Yeah, I do.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

She also recalls you teaching her how to write limericks and that the itchiness that she felt under her thick winter coat was caused by vicissitudes. She and your other children note that you were always and always, you always have been quite the comedian.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, I mean, they consider very corny comedy. When they say “comedian” I think they’re speaking tongue and cheek. They’re saying, “Oh, God, not another one of those.”

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You also served on the Palo Alto School Board?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I did.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Tell us about that.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, Palo Alto was going to do something, which was a big mistake. This was in the middle ‘80s (10:00). When we arrived in Palo Alto, there were 22 elementary schools, there were three high schools, and three junior high schools. Probably about 9,000 students, 10,000 maybe. Over time, families changed. Kids grew up. So the school population went down—pretty dramatically. At that time, there were about 7,200, 7,300 students, and they had gone from 22 elementary schools to 11. So there was this mentality of, “How do we continue to downsize?” What I call “Sharing the shortage among the peasants” mentality. And if you think that way, you don’t think of possibilities. Well I went out, and I looked at the demography, and what was happening then was these (11:00) yuppie families were moving into Palo Alto, these young families, buying the homes of that previous generation. And then in their 30s having children. That wasn’t the recognized in Palo Alto. And when I looked just at newborns at Stanford hospitals, just a number of sources, we were going to be expanding our population, and they were trying to figure out how to get down to just, they already closed one, actually two of the three, what were junior high schools then middle schools. So we had just one middle school still open. They wanted to merge the two high schools into a super high school with about 2,400 (12:00) students, instead of having two high schools that, at that time, had about 1,200 students. The argument was, “Oh, it’s going to be great for the town. We’ll have a catalogue that will be like a college catalogue with all the classes we can offer with 2,400 or 2,500 students as opposed to 1,200.” It was just bad thinking. I would ask, okay, you have two swim teams that compete against each other between the two high schools. Half of those kids aren’t going to be eligible to swim. Which half? Think about it. I also, by that time, was very persuading by Ted Sizer—less is more. Let’s really do such beautiful stuff in terms of writing, and English, and things like that, that we won’t need to have one course for science fiction for those kids who just want science fiction, one course for romantic writing or, which was the idea, to get loads and loads of different courses in a college

catalogue kind of a thing. Let's just do beautiful stuff across the genres. So that all kids are excited and exposed to different genres. Put (13:00) a smaller number of courses, and then let's look for the teachers who can really turn on kids. You see, this corresponded with my work on accelerated schools, which I started around 1980, which emphasizes enrichment—treating all kids as gifted. Anyway, so I ran for the school board on the basis that let's not close more schools, we can find ways to finance them. The population is definitely going to be increasing in these schools. We need to move in the opposite direction. It was a very optimistic, positive message. And people were shocked by it because their view was always: how do we save our school system? We're inevitably going to be downsizing. I said, "No, no." Well, it turns out now Palo Alto, which is all kind of, it has been developed for, I don't know, a century, is now up at 9,000, 9,600. They're looking for space. They (14:00) closed too many elementary schools. That's exactly what happened. It takes time, and demography change. Demographic change takes times; but that's exactly what happened. So I was elected to the school board. I had the largest number of "yes" votes of any candidate, not only for that election, but as far as they could tell, ever. And all it had to do with, it had little to do with the fact that I was at Stanford because they had always had at least one Stanford professor on the school board. But it had to do with a much more optimistic message that most of it was, would be realized over time, fortunately. You know, it's not good if you have a message and it's nonsense. So, anyway, I was on the school board. I learned a lot. Another thing that's interesting is that people came to me and said, "Oh, this is just like playing with blocks. You've been in education for so long. You've done so much work in education." I said, "No, (15:00) I'm just learning a lot," about, again, that hands-on stuff. What happens at the street level, you know. I did. I felt as naked and naïve on a lot of things as anyone coming on the school board because there's a difference between knowing something about the field of education and, you know, getting involved in practical decisions in your community.

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### Video 3

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Tell us about your friend and colleague, David Berliner, and how you met him.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Yes. I arrived at Stanford in the summer of '68, and I had the fortune, or misfortune, of walking down the hall, trying to get familiar with the building that I would be working and teaching in, and as I passed the rooms, one of the faculty, whom I didn't know casually said, "Levin. Oh, you're here now. What are you doing now?" And I said, "I'm walking around in shorts and sandals, just." "Oh, good, so you have a little time, right?" I said, it was the wrong answer, I said, "Yes, I have a little time." He said, "Good, would you be willing to join us for a dissertation hearing?" And I said, "I'm sorry, a dissertation hearing? My understanding," and I had never been on a dissertation committee before, "is that you actually read the dissertation (1:00) before you can be on the hearing." And he said, "Well that's the normal procedure, and we have enough people who have read the dissertation, and this particular candidate is extraordinary; but, legally, we need a regular faculty member because one of our faculty members is sick," or didn't show up, I don't know what happened exactly. I just don't have a recollection, "so will you fill in for that faculty member?" So I figured, Listen, may make your colleagues like you. I want to be

liked. So I said, “Okay, sure, sure.” So basically I stepped into the room, and the candidate, the doctoral candidate was David Berliner. So I sat and listened. I’m sure, I don’t remember what kinds of questions I had; but I’m sure that they weren’t very well informed. But I thought, “This guy is extraordinary. I mean this guy is so competent (2:00).” And he was answering other people’s questions in such a competent way that eventually, of course, I voted in favor of his receiving the degree. So that’s how I met David Berliner. I met David Berliner by being on his tribunal. Of being ignorant of what he had done and of his field, but nevertheless, in the proper way judging him.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You unleashed him on the world. We have you to thank for that.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

It was a summer, and it would have been difficult to find someone else, particularly in close proximity. And he was almost on the plane in terms of his new job at the University of Massachusetts. So it’s always important to do.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So not only were you the first member in the education economics faculty, David credits you for helping to found the field of education economics entirely. He thinks that’s your most significant accomplishment. He and Martin Carnoy (3:00) noted that all of you have lots of adventures academic and otherwise, shared a love for Latin America, and formed, you and Martin formed a Center of Economics in Education, particularly to protect yourselves in case you didn’t get tenure.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

That may apply more to Martin than to me. Martin is one of the most productive economists, I mean, if you look at his career, and he still is one of the most productive economists. He’s doing books on Cuba, and China, Brazil, and these are books that are being very, very well received. But I think it’s fair to say that Martin was a more controversial personage than I was. Martin would take up the challenge, the cudjel as they say, very quickly. And the result was that Martin got his tenure much later than I received mine, even though were (4:00) probably comparable in terms of qualifications at that time. So I believe I got tenure in ’73, and I think, I think we started the center about that time, and Martin didn’t get tenure until I think ’77 or ’78.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Tell us about the time that you and Martin were in Paris and met with an official from the OECD.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Martin and I were very, very interested in the ‘70s in all forms of democracy. So we had projects with that center, Center of Economic, can’t even remember the name of it now. It’s the Center of Economics studies. Our office was in a church. We’re in this very liberal Presbyterian church in Palo Alto, and the reason the church let us do this is because of the emphasis on democracy, and on (5:00) social movements, and things like this. So as part of that, we went to countries and to agencies that were supporting this movement. The idea of worker self-management. Democracy

in all of its forms in the workplace. Our basic premise was, if you don't have democracy in daily life, it's very difficult to have a political democracy. People voting for some representative every few years is not the same thing as engaging in democracy in daily life. The most authoritarian, even more than schools, the most authoritarian organization is the workplace. That democratic workplace, we believed, were more productive than authoritarian ones. And there was a movement around the world in the 70s, centering more in Europe than in the U.S. (6:00) So we did take this trip, this was our European trip, and in Paris we decided to visit the person at the OECD that was responsible for the work being done in democratic work places. He had been told by the person who had set this tour up that we were a bunch of Marxists. So we came into his office on May 1, 1975, and he said, "Okay, you're here. I will tell everyone that you interviewed me. Now you can go out to your Mayday parade." Which, you know, is a big parade in Paris, Mayday. We said, "No. We're really quite interested in finding out what your plans are, what you're doing, and so on." He was very skeptical, but began to warm up to us. So after the ice was broken, we opened up little kind of journalist books (7:00), journalist notebooks to take notes on our interview. He got very suspicious and said, "What are those?" And we said, "Oh, well we have colleagues in Palo Alto. We have to take notes. We're responsible, you know, we're here, but we have to take notes so we can report back to them what we've learned." "Okay." He continued to warm up to us and became very nice and even said things like tongue and cheek. So, for example, he said, "You know what's behind this movement in the U.S. It's basically just to fool the workers and to get them to be more product—higher productivity, but make them think that they're participating in the workplace," he said, "with one exception. We had a conference about a month ago, and there was a guy from Exxon here, and he (8:00) really pointed out that what was at the base of this movement in the U.S. that had little to do with democracy and participation, and had a lot with just increasing worker productivity to increase profitability. So, when you're revolution comes, don't kill him." Martin had picked up his notebook and said, "Could you give us the precise spelling of his name, and if you have it, his present address?" The guy just froze. Anyway, we kept on parrying back and forth, and that way he would make tongue and cheek and cynical remarks, and then we would respond. He had a lot of "when the revolution comes."

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That's funny. Tell us about the book that you and Martin published together, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State*.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

That particular book, *Schooling and Work in the Democratic State*, was based upon a more complex picture than a lot of (9:00) radical critics of schools had suggested. The really influential work, which happened to be Bowles and Gintis mainly, was very bright. It was brilliant. But it was built on what is a structural functionalist model, suggesting that schools, all of the institutions of schools, correspond with those of the workplace, and that schools are there simply to reproduce labor power for the workplace and the social labors of production, so then they work in a way that fulfills the requirements of the capitalists for profit and capital accumulation. Workers are divided against each other. They work for external awards, rather than for intrinsic awards. Symbolic awards. They work because they want to be promoted. They're worried about losing (10:00) their jobs, failure. All of these have parallels in schools, and so as we analyze school institutions, looked to see how they're reproducing capitalist

relations of productions. It's a very strict, and so-called instrumentalist model because everything is instrumental and deliberate. What we did is we raised the following question, we said, you know, schools are not part of the capitalist order. They're part of the state has very different dynamics than the capitalist order. There are some big differences between the schools and the state. Example, if you look at schools in the way they treat gender, the difference, even in those days, is very small, and in some cases favor females. You don't find that in the work place. If you look at all the unfairness in equity in educational finance, (11:00) and there were a lot in those days, more in those days than today because of the property tax and differences among states. But the bottom 20 percent, in terms of investment in education, gets about one half of what the top gets, in terms of spending, and the numbers of years of schooling, so more years of investment. But if you compare the wealth of the top 20 percent to the wealth of the bottom 20 percent, it's infinite. It's so much larger, so that the inequalities in work sector, in a capitalist sector, are far greater than in things like schools in the public sector. Well why is that? Because there is something to the fact that democracy has an influence on the public sector. In democracy there is more of an emphasis on protecting (12:00) those at the bottom of the order, et cetera, et cetera. So the state, the dynamic of the state, and the dynamics of capital are quite different. There are points at which possible for them to come together in a very, very reforming kind of mode. And then what we argued is that history shows that in the most unusual times of confluence, we're the state with its tools—the courts, legislation, and so on—come together to push for greater equality—civil rights movement is a good example, the women's movement, and so on. They come together because the most powerful tool of democracy is that of social movements. The capital has its (13:00) resources as well. It can promote an ideology. It has, obviously, a lot of economic power, even the purse strings to a lot of degree of the state. So there are a lot of these strange intersections that are both colliding. But, they might come together around various challenges. Why is it that the capitalist sector eventually embraced the civil rights movement and supported it? Even though it discriminated badly against blacks and the rights of enterprises to serve whomever they wanted and so on, which was, again, relevant to separating out blacks. So basically what we tried to do is to show a dynamic picture, a historical picture that was different than that of Bowles and Gintis, or Michael Apple, or Giroux, or some of the other critics (14:00), acknowledging that they did have some good points in their work, but that in this larger view, this notion of social movements and two different dynamics and studying how they either are in conflict or come together through a common confluence of interest over time. So that was the heart of our book, and it turns out that, even though the book is out of print, it actually is still pretty active.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Martin notes that of all your significant accomplishments, he thinks your best work was figuring out how schools work effectively and communicating this both to educators and economists. You also did a lot of important work on school finance, which fed into your research on the working of schools, and he notes that. Along your earlier works on finance at Stanford, you define the concept of cost effectiveness and argued that policymakers, and educators, and the public must better understand how to evaluate competing alternatives to (15:00) inform future investments. How far have we progressed in this area?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

We haven't really progressed very much at all. I started my work on cost effectiveness, I published my first article on cost effectiveness in the *Journal of Human Resources* in 1970, 41 years ago, almost 42 years ago. Although it had it in some of the very things we're emphasizing, the whole idea of maybe it's worth paying more and getting a more select pool because what we found from the Coleman data were that teachers with higher, in this case they were only vocabulary scores, but let's say test scores, actually had better results with their students, than hiring teachers with more experience, but keeping the (16:00) academic qualifications at the same level. Today that's being increasingly recognized. You know, let's pay more, let's get a teacher supply where we can choose more talented people and keep them in the system, and nurture them, and all of those things. But the fact of the matter is that for whatever reason, cultural or other reasons, cost effectiveness is not part of educational decision making. So it hasn't been a great success. I mean, if you look at my career, a lot of the things that I really believe in and have worked on, have not gone anywhere. That's one of them. The only place they've gone is we've produced a number of books and articles and things like this. The books actually get cited quite a lot. The two editions that I did of the cost effectiveness book have been cited (17:00) more than 800 times according to Google Scholar. So people cite them, they just don't use them.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Particularly in policy.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN  
They get them into their bibliographies.

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#### Video 4

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Your son, Jesse Levin, refers to you as the guy whose accomplishments go on and on and on. He never ceases to be floored by all the groundbreaking work you have done, and he agrees you are most deserving of the accolades you have received. Beyond your accomplishments in academia, Jesse recalls long car rides while you were driving, and you would perform extensive repertoire of *Gilbert and Sullivan*, selections from the *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and the *marcato*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*, quite the interest in opera as well. Also in comedy, Jesse notes that you are also a walking catalogue of jokes. He also recalls a time you debated Nobel laureate, Milton Friedman, on the Public Broadcasting Service, the PBS series, *Free to Choose* in 1990. What was that about?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Friedman, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and basically the fall of the Soviet, Soviet Nation (1:00), or set of nations, was given a lot of money by conservative interests to show, "See? We were right all along. They fell, and for good reason," and could he put together a series to demonstrate why markets are the better alternatives, if not the only alternative in the long run. So he put together a series called *Free to Choose*, which then, as Jesse mentioned, was published on PBS. There were four series. One of them was on education. And, as you know, Milton Friedman had recommended voucher plans back in 1955, started back in 1955 as the alternative.

So his presentation basically was an attack on the public schools, and a plea to move to where people (2:00) had choice and through competition, and education would become quite magnificent and would be a better system. Then each of his shows, they were hour long, but the first part would be about half hour, 35 minutes, and then there would be a debate between Friedman and someone who disagreed with his point of view. And so he asked me to be the person who disagreed with his point of view. I was part of that debate with Friedman on vouchers.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

We'll address that in a little bit too. Your son, David Levin, remembers your frequent trips into San Francisco. Tell us about the time the waiter in Chinatown told you so.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

There's a famous restaurant in Chinatown called Sami Wo's, and it's a little house. We had heard from the newspapers, it was very well known, Herb Caen, who was (3:00) a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* or *Examiner* would constantly talk about getting insulted at Sami Wo's. So one day we were all in Chinatown together, Pilar, and I, and the kids. We brought up all the kids lived with us, even though the first three were from my first marriage. So we were there, and we went to one of the middle floors. This was sort of a vertical restaurant with different small floors that were all cut out, I don't know, kind of Lego style, or erector style, or whatever. We sat down at a table as requested, and the waiter came to us, and apparently, this was the obstinate wait, or the difficult waiter who insults you. He apparently put one of the plates down on the table and said, "Don't touch it. (4:00) It's hot!" Pilar picked it up and kind of tilted it in a direction, and it spilled a little. And he came back screaming with a towel, "I told you! I told you! I told you!" So it's interesting that we all remember that. But he insulted us properly, it's okay.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Sounds like an episode out of Jerry Seinfeld. What did you do with your kids after that? Do you remember?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I don't remember.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

The caps that you bought them? With the buttons on top?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I don't remember.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Bright blue, communist, worker-style caps, with red Chairman Mao buttons.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Yeah, it's quite possible. I had all that paraphernalia.

## AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

David recalls wearing that. He loved it. He wore it to school the next day and got a lot of stares from his teachers and his classmates. What most of your family members and friends note is that among your many professional accomplishments, one of your most notable was in the area of school reform with your founding of the accelerated schools (5:00) project, now here at Teachers College, Columbia. Tell us about this work and what inspired this. Well the ideas are still very much alive, I should tell you, practices are, if not defunct, then close to it because of No Child Left Behind, which is based on a very different philosophy, but much more funding, and much more political power and regulation than we who are in nongovernment entity could muster. So I think it's only fair to say that it's still possible, by the way, to see accelerated schools. Northern California and Santa Rosa, for example, there's a district called Roseland. It's a district that was formed around migrant workers because the Santa Rosa Unified School District didn't really (6:00) want those students in their schools many years ago. That school district operates completely with accelerated schools and is getting marvelous results, documented, again, by the California Department of Education in the data. So we do have some vestiges, but the regulations that are associated with No Child Left Behind really lead to just the opposite practices. Test prep, much more superficial approach to learning, that is if you can get it on the test in terms of results, that's all that's necessary. Now the narrowing of the curriculum. Everything that if you were to take what we do and what is promoted under No Child Left Behind, they are polar opposites, okay. So what is the accelerated school (7:00)? The accelerated school was, in a sense, stimulated by the notion that if we have children that are coming into school, and they don't have the kind of skills or experiences that make them successful in the schools that are currently constituted, then we need to change schools to make them successful, given whatever they come in with. Now usually the way that is handled is they're given remediation. Remediation, first of all, remediation means to repair. If you start off with the assumption that these children are defective, you're in trouble already because you are going to construct something that assumes they have defects. We don't even follow through with the analogy because these kids never come out of the repair shop if they're in Title I (8:00) in the beginning, if they're in special education in the beginning. If we just look at the numbers, at the statistics, we find that they become sealed in those programs, so they're not, it's not even a repair shop that succeeds. You know normally if my shaver isn't working, I can take it to a repair shop—they're going to charge me too much, I know—but when I pick it up, I can try it, and it's going to work. Even the name "remediation" is wrong because that's not typically what happens with these children. So going back to basics, all of these children should be in a healthy mainstream. I say "healthy" because the mainstream is often defined as proficiency on a narrow test, and I'm not sure that's what I have in mind. It's much broader than that. But to do that, if you want to say that they don't have the experiences when they enter school that (9:00) have them enter the mainstream, then you don't want to slow them down, which is what remediation, remediation is basically to simplify the curriculum, to simplify what is taught, and to reduce the level of challenge so that they learn it well enough to get some basic score on a test. We said, "No, no, logically, if you want these kids in the mainstream, you've got to accelerate their growth element." So how do you do that? Well we have a precedent to provide enrichment in gifted and talented instruction for one group of kids. And the question is: why can't that work for all kids? Or what is enrichment for gifted and talented students? It's basically getting them involved in real world projects that have deep components, as well as the kind of lower level of (10:00) fact, operations, kinds of things that you want. But when you talk about remediation, you limit kids to drudge, to the fact, the fact

tables, order of operations, rules, and things of this sort. And that's not an inspiration for engagement or learning, and it doesn't build on people's experiences in the Dewey sense, which is what they bring to the table. So the idea, then, of accelerated schools was to make a school in which we build on the strengths that children bring to the school. Then we use an enrichment approach in order to do that; and in which the school becomes responsible for making those decisions, not just for test scores. So that was the basic idea. It turns out that it's very attractive (11:00) to a lot of educators, at least in theory. But it means they have to change what they do. That becomes harder. Implementation, in particularly leadership. Getting a principal who not only understands this, but continues to provide the opportunities for people to work together to bring these practices into the school. Those are the real challenge in the present American schools. Nevertheless, by the year 2000, we had about 1,000 schools in 41 states, we had 50 schools in Hong Kong. So we had schools working on this. Also by the year 2001, I believe, MDRC, which is a major evaluation outfit, on their own nickel, we didn't pay them, so they weren't doing it for us, did an evaluation, which they found, even using their very conventional (12:00) metrics of test scores, that a random selection, nationally of accelerated schools were successful and improving test scores in the math and reading area. We had some problems with it, but we didn't pay for it. Properly these evaluations should be independent. We had some problems because our goals weren't the traditional test scores. So the fact that they did well on the test scores, and these were children who they consider to be very much at risk was of course important to us. But we would have loved to have had an evaluation of what we were trying to accomplish as accelerated schools in terms of participation, engagement, the evaluation of projects that the kids were doing, deeper thinking, and spinning off (13:00) ideas, and all the exciting kinds of things that we think are really important in a good education.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So if you were in charge of the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, would this foundational to that effort?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

It would be foundational, but the question is, do you really get good change through regulation? I don't think you create accelerated schools through regulation. You create them through persuasion. It's a much better life for a good teacher. A teacher's ideas counts. When we say build on strengths, not only the children's strengths, but the parents and the teacher. That gets you thinking very different. And most schools start off with the notion that parents have weaknesses, not strengths. That's why you're getting these kids who are not well prepared.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

They need repair.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Yeah, so you start off there, and you don't realize. A lot of teachers would confront me and say, "Oh, you coming from (14:00) academia. Yeah, the parents have strengths. They don't show up for the conferences. They don't respond to notes that we send them, and so on. So what are their strengths? Tell us." And I ask, "Well, do you think they love their children?" "Yeah." I said, "Do you think they want their child to succeed in life? Or do they want their children to fail?" "Yeah." I said, "Those two passions are powerful strengths you can build on if you can make

connections with them. If you can show them that out of love for their child, and the fact that they can help their child succeed, you can motivate them to move in all kinds of directions. It may not be in terms of raising money for the PTA, but they will be in terms of asking a child to explain a particular project that he or she has worked on.” I said, “There are all kinds (15:00) of behaviors that we can talk about, just building on those two, if you acknowledge that they love their children, most of them don’t hate their children. They’re sending us the best children they have. They don’t have another set at home. And the fact that they want their children to succeed. They haven’t set out in life to have children who are going to fail.” I said, “So what can you do with that?” You know so much of it is just common sense. It’s logic. But the thing is, it’s the culture of our schools, and the culture of the Arne Duncan’s of the world. He’s not the worst, don’t get me wrong, but not the best either. No imagination. No real leadership. He’s a followership type person. Lead us to the type of rote practice and mediocrity that we have in so many of our schools.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

One of those around you who is most proud is your present wife of 36 years, 40 years together (16:00), Pilar Soler. Tell us about Pilar.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, Pilar opened up a whole new perspective to me. I came from a family that, I was I guess fourth generation American, so my family really had no special cultural or linguistic tradition. I grew up in a community where there wasn’t much contact with others who had different backgrounds. The result was that when I met her, and we got together, culture can also be very conflictual, but she opened up a whole new way of understanding the world. Not just for her culture, which is Spanish and Latina, but more generally. Interestingly enough from my perspective (17:00), for today’s youth, who even when they’re in high school go abroad. I, at the age of 31, had never been out of the country, ever, not even to Mexico from California. Suddenly I was in a situation, under, with her kind of natural influence and also Martin Carnoy’s because Martin is very internationally oriented. He speaks six languages, seven languages, I don’t know. And the students that I had in this program that Martin and I were engaged into understand other cultures, to hear other cultures, to see other cultures, to see what we could learn from them and the work that we did. Pilar really reinforced that because this was up close. I mentioned street level knowledge (18:00), and street level knowledge was that her family lived with us, her mother and father, and we started to travel together, as a couple, and as well as my doing it for work, being exposed to other cultures. So her impact has been tremendous, not only at that level, but obviously at a personal level too. But when you ask about the large picture that she put into my life in terms of my career, it was opening up literally a whole new world to me that I just hadn’t been part of.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

At your wedding in 1975, your longtime friend, Ed Bridges, Stanford Professor Emeritus, whom you also recruited, this time from the University of Chicago, stood up as your witness. Tell us about your wedding.

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well (19:00) Pilar and I had been living together since basically 1971, and we had talked about marriage, but it was complicated. We had gotten the kids for reasons that I really don't even want to go into because they're bad memories and just not worth going into. But at that time, we had three children from my first marriage, and there was a lot of system maintenance that we were engaged in everything from my getting tenure in '73, remember we started in '71, to kind of the financial challenges in those days, not only maintaining a household, but paying alimony also. Paying money for the kids to stay with my ex-wife when she wanted them, which was not very often, but the money had to be there (20:00). Then Pilar was going to school. She was taking a master's degree in public health. So there are a lot of exigencies. We did discuss marriage, and at some point, I guess, we got the requisites, the blood tests and marriage certificates, but then the stuff sat in the drawer. But then one day in early September it was extremely hot in Palo Alto—Palo Alto didn't get very hot, not like Phoenix. This day it may have been over 100, which is unbelievable for us in Palo Alto, even 90, if you hit 90 that's an unusual day. So I was kind of lethargic and thought, "What should I do today?" And I went to her and said, "Maybe we should get married today." And she said, "Well, fine." So I called Ed Bridges, and I called his wife. We then (21:00) called the courthouse and got a judge to give us a time, 4:00 in the afternoon, late in the afternoon. And we all got dressed up because we knew we wanted to take our own pictures anyway. And we went over to the courthouse and met the judge, very nice man, Judge Feingold. He was about ready to do the ceremony when he said, "Now is this going to be a single-ring or a double-ring ceremony?" I didn't even understand the question to be honest with you. But I figured out the proper answer that this is going to be a no-ring ceremony. He said, "A no-ring ceremony it is." And he did a no-ring ceremony for us.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Pilar remembers when you had long hair, and you let her give you a perm. She said you looked like Albert Einstein and could not get out the door without twisting your head sideways. She said she was laughing so hard, as were you. What happened?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well what happened is she was very pregnant, and she was so uncontrollable in her paroxysms (22:00) of laughter that her water broke. So we had to rush to the hospital. It was very embarrassing for me because I knew my friends would come over there too. But I found a hat and put it over my head, and for the next three months I wore that even, no matter where I went, even sleeping, even sitting on the commode, I wore that hat.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you had Josh, is that right? Is that the son you had then?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Josh was born in '77. Yes, we got married in officially '75, and Josh was born in '77.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And then you took your baby "girl," Josh, to a cocktail party. Do you remember doing that?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I do. Josh was really very beautiful. He had beautiful blonde curls, and we went, actually it was a New Years Eve party, and we had gotten a babysitter, but the babysitter apparently (23:00) became frightened of the dog. The dog, every time the babysitter would touch the Josh, the dog would come over and start barking at him it turns out. And so he called us, and we said “Don’t worry. We’re actually close by. We’ll pick up Josh and just take him to the New Years Eve party.” And we got back to the New Years Eve party, I just put him on my shoulders, he enjoyed. He was probably maybe a year old. This is, I can’t figure out the date, maybe ’78, ’79 New Years, in all probability, so he would have been somewhat over a year. And I just put in on my shoulder and would talk with people, would walk around, milling around with other people. We were talking and he was up there. People were coming over and saying, “Oh, my God, she is absolutely beautiful. She is gorgeous (24:00). Oh, what a smile she has.” And then someone said, “And what’s her name?” And I said, “Her name is Joshua.” And they looked really funny at me, but I had had enough to drink that it made sense.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That’s funny. Josh hopes that, as you wrote in one of you book dedications, that you’re proud of the good work that he does, whether one to find that professional or via the terror your little accomplice caused to Pilar. Bianca. While at Stanford, your daughter, Bianca, remembers you walking her to school, singing opera as loud as you could. Were you trying to make her a stronger person by doing that?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

No, I was trying to maker her embarrassed.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That’s what she said. Why to this day should Bianca be afraid of bamboo trees?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, we developed a kind of a fantasy, as you probably know, living in Arizona, bamboo just takes over. Here in New York they say, (25:00) “Oh, you grow bamboo? Was it hard?” And I said, “No, once it gets into the ground, it just spreads under the ground. Looks for sources of water and takes over.” The bamboo from our house had stretched out below the fence, and so on the sidewalk on the way to school, bamboo was emerging in the sidewalk, and she, so we had fantasies about bamboo and about how bamboo can take over and can chase you. So when we would walk to school and we would see these chutes of bamboo coming up through the sidewalk. I would be talking, I would say, “Bianca, bamboo! Bamboo!” and we would just take off, running halfway to school to avoid the bamboo getting us.

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Video 5

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You’re also currently the director of the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education. David Berliner dons as your center, and your research here is most notable, as you have served as fair broker in these areas. How would you evaluate the school choice system thus far?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well, my evaluation would be to say that there's a lot less that meets the eye in a lot of respects, and a lot more than meets the eye in other respects. A lot less that meets the eye is the kind of differences that we see in the schools themselves are very small. Charter schools, in particular, were supposed to be incubators of ideas not tried by public schools. I don't think there's a single idea that you'll find in charter schools that you won't find in public schools. If we look at studies of just the test scores, (1:00) which I'm not excited about as the only criterion for judging the quality of an educational experience, but if we look at that because that's what the evaluators look at, there's no systematic difference in terms of test score results. The more than the eye can see is the effects on school stratification. And stratification in terms of values, in terms of SES, in terms of race, in terms of even within race cream skinning of others, and that's not measured and not discussed. There's very little of that going on. Jean did an early study in Arizona, but because this movement has gone so quickly, what he did around 2000, no one takes seriously because they say, “Well, there (2:00) were, 25,” or some, I don't know, some relatively small number of charter schools in Arizona in those days. Arizona never saw a charter school that they didn't think was great. Although that's changing now too. There is some concern in Arizona, but where it will go. But vouchers, I think you have a similar picture. We have no real evidence that vouchers improve performance. What they do is they do build on one value that's important to Americans, and that is freedom of choice. Not being told, “This is the school you have to go to.” But being able to choose the school. But in terms of the consequences for equity, for social cohesion of the population, for productivity, achievement, some of those just haven't been looked at, issues of social cohesion—do we really prepare people to work together politically and socially (3:00) in this society by emphasizing choice and privatization? There are some real questions about that; but there are also some that are reassuring, some segments. For example, in the time that I've looked at the Catholic schools, I think that the Catholic schools do a really excellent job, for most dimensions of social cohesion. So even generalization is hard. Evangelical Protestant schools? No, they really try to separate people from other people. And they emphasize the scriptures as determining what is right but not democratic processes. Anyway, it's a much more complicated area, that's also the part, there's much more that does not meet the eye. It's much more complicated than privatization or non-privatization, or choice versus (4:00) non-choice overly simplifies the issues tremendously.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

When you reflect on your career, where do you believe you have had the greatest impact?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well it's clear that I've had the greatest impact, this sounds selfish, but the greatest impact on my own personal development, by far. I know that's a selfish answer, but I think it's very difficult to understand number one, whether you've had an impact and whether the impact has been positive and in what ways. I would be very disappointed if my students didn't say that I was very supportive of them, and that I worked closely with them, and that I cared about their work and their futures. I would be very disappointed if they wouldn't agree with that statement. So I have to say that, but in terms of the ideas, and the other activities, and the teaching, (5:00) it's so difficult to know. I do, some people are very kind and give very, very nice feedback even years later. Having said that, though, you only have a small sample and a selective sample. I just got a

book, which made me cry, there's a book called *Dropping Out*, by Russell Rumberger, just published by the Harvard University Press, and in the preface, he thanks me in a long paragraph for having nurtured his career, and giving him certain values, and things like that. And why that made me cry because, I guess, if I wanted to hear something about my influence, those are exactly the words that I would want to hear. But again, we're all victims of selective sampling and selective perceptions. (6:00)

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So what's next for you? What haven't you accomplished that you'd still like to achieve?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well I haven't accomplished old age, so that's still going to be one challenge. Real old age, I mean, I know to some people my chronological age is already old age, but it isn't to me. I have a lot of ideas that I'm continuing to work on. One is very consistent with accelerated schools, but it's also much more social scientific, you might say. And that is expanding legitimacy of what schools do and need to do outside of narrow test scores in a couple of subjects. In other words, just moving away from the criticism of that, back to what accelerated schools tried to do, and emphasizing the positive importance a lot of these other things. (7:00) And I've been writing some papers on so-called non-cognitive outcomes of schooling and will continue to work on that. I'll continue to try to work on trying to say, "Gee, cost effectiveness isn't all that difficult. We've written it. It's there." And up the work so that people from psychology, educational psychology, and sociology, and so on can do it with a little help, and encouraging that as a way of thinking about how we deal with the problem of very limited resources now.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What inspires you?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well, what inspires me in terms of movements, personal commitments, what inspires me are social movements that are just. For example, the present movements, (8:00) Occupying Wall Street. I know that's hard. I know they don't have a single message. But you have to get people involved. You have to change their awareness of how important it is to get involved instead of just sitting around bitching or blaming themselves. So that definitely inspires me, as did the anti-war movement that we were involved in.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What do you find uninspiring?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

So much of educational policy is uninspiring. The emphasis on just on the narrow test score criterion. The notion that schools must be ruled by regulations, rather than ideas, and excitement, and collaboration, on behalf (9:00) of really good certain principles and outcomes. I think that the educational system, I'm defensive when people just criticize teachers, and say, "They're just the responsible ones." I don't think that's the case. That's partly the case. I can tell you. I've been in some classrooms that that just shouldn't happen. And if I had the power, I would immediately stop it. It's outrageous. I've been in classrooms that are so inspiring, so exciting.

And if you were to ask what was the difference between the two, I would say partly one operates without worrying about regulations, and partly the other one is protected by bad regulations. So I think that education as a regulatory movement is (10:00) not going to get there. I do realize that we have to have certain principles, and certain boundaries that schools much operate within, and that's not altogether bad. I want schools, for example, to get kids to be able to work together other people ultimately as adults, communities, and things like that, then a school that just tells a child, "No, you're an individual, and whatever you do is up to you; and no, you don't have to agree with anyone else on a procedure to solve a dispute." I think that that's wrong and it's injurious to having a good society. But I think that these are broad things. And the idea that so much has to be regulated, I think is wrong.

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## Video 6

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What is your favorite word?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

My favorite word. Passion. Ethusiasm. It's kind of two words.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What's your favorite curse word?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well, generally I use Spanish. Coño.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What profession other than your own would have liked to attempt?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I've thought about that quite a lot, and I like philosophy. I've sometimes thought about engineering, but engineering in a broad way, as opposed to the narrow aspect. But you know, I'm pretty happy in my profession, so I don't go to far in those directions. I've just contemplated it. (1:00) But I'm where, I'm a very lucky person, let me put it this way. I've been lucky in everything. All the people you mentioned, Pilar, my children, my career, the way I've been treated by other institutions, I don't have any bitching about my job. Yeah there are parts about it that are difficult, parts that are more challenging that I would sometimes like. But the thing is, I feel very lucky. I've been treated very, very well.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What profession other your own would you have not liked to attempt?

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

I have that old person's tear. I, almost every, you know, I tell my students something that shocks them if they think about it, (2:00) and they'll say, "What if I get this paper in late?" And I'll say, "Well, if you get it in late, you'll get the assignment in late; but let's agree on when you'll get it

in.” They’ll say, “You mean I can agree on a time?” They often think it’s got to be the next day then if it’s going to be acceptable. You know they tell me they have a problem with family or something like this. So I’d say, “So when do you think you’ll be able to get it in?” And they’ll say, “Well I can try to get it in by Friday.” And I’d say, “Why don’t you make it the middle of next week? We’ll agree that you’ll get it in.” And they’ll say, “Wow, I didn’t think it would be so easy to work that out.” I’d say, “What do you think I am, a policeman or a teacher?” I said, “I’m a teacher.” And I don’t play the policeman’s role well. Anything that would require me to be a policeman, I would find difficult. (3:00)

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What is your favorite movie?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well I have a lot of favorites, but if I think back, my favorite movie, the one that I always recall I saw probably around 1960 is called *Black Orpheus*—Orpheu Negro. It’s a Brazilian movie in which the kind of myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is played out in a Brazilian favela. The music, actually, is very well known—A Felicidade. A Felicidade comes from that movie. It goes (hums). It’s just a beautiful movie. If you can get it through (4:00) whatever. By the way, I have a Brazilian daughter-in-law. Joshua’s married to a Brazilian. That whole cultural thing. I have one daughter married to an English guy, Mia. David was married to a Japanese, for actually a period of time, but sadly they’re divorced. Jesse is married to a woman from the Netherlands. Joshua is married to a Brazilian. And I’m married to a Spanish person. My youngest daughter, Bianca, is not married yet. So we have a lot of that stuff, you know.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What is your favorite book?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

My favorite book. That’s really a tough one because I read so many, and there are so many that I like. I haven’t really singled out (5:00) any specific book that I can tell you. Gee, at the moment I’m rereading *The Moral of Human Sentiment* by Adam Smith, which is a very different book than *The Wealth of Nations* by the same person, written before *The Wealth of Nations*. It’s really a profound book in many respects. I find it more profound than *The Wealth of Nations*, which, of course, has had the greatest influence on western economics.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

If you could tell President Obama one thing, what would it be?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

What it would be is, when you say “one thing,” first of all, whatever you’re going after, work on strategy. Don’t do things (6:00) helter-skelter. Think ahead of time what you want to accomplish, and why, and what its impact will be. The fact that he went after healthcare reform is the first thing is the first big mistake that Bill Clinton made. So strategy. But then the other side is to stay with the program. It’s really two things, but they’ve got to be combined.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

If you could have dinner with anybody dead or alive, who would it be?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well I’m going to give a very conventional answer. My parents because I have so many questions to ask them. They came from a depression generation, which meant that they just didn’t talk about things very much in terms of some of the questions that you have—what (7:00) influenced them? Why this happened? I mean less from a personal point of view, why, not why did you do this to me? But just out of curiosity I would love to understand their perspective better and their experience better and how their experience shaped their lives.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That’s perfect, not just conventional.

If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

I guess what I would like to hear is, “I have your family waiting for you and your friends waiting for you, and I hope you guys get together and really enjoy it.”

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You have been honored multiple times as a visionary who has changed American education. You were acknowledged by President Bush Sr. and Secretary (8:00) of Education, Lemar Alexander as a leader of one of three national exemplary projects in education in the ‘90s. You are a member of the National and International Academies of Education. You have served as the president of the American Evaluation Association and Comparative in International Education Society. You have been a Fulbright Scholar twice, visiting scholar, fellow or honorary professor multiple times. You have published over 300 articles, and authored or edited over 20 scholarly books. And you have received countless awards for your service in scholarship. What advice would you offer to graduate students and beginning researchers who hope to make a contribution to education like you have?

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Well my advice would be to go with what you think is really important and develop a passion around it. (9:00) I don’t know if that leads to awards. I mean I see all of that stuff as kind of incidental. It happens. It’s great when it happens. But I can tell that after it happens, it wears off very quickly because it’s not the essence of who we are in describing us as people, as what we do, at least what drives me. What drives me is the work itself. Thinking about it. Discussing it with others. Just working on it. Just working on it. That’s what’s really important. You know if it leads to those things, I think that’s great. Often those things divert your path in ways that may not be in ways that you have liked, as would have benefited you more.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So stay focused on your passion? (10:00)

HENRY “HANK” LEVIN

Yeah. I mean look at that as commentary, as just something out there on the side. If you want to think of it as frosting on the cake that's it; but it's not the cake. It's not at all the cake. The cake is what you do every single day and how you are thinking, and working, and what you are working on. Boy, there are so many good people out there who do beautiful work and who are going to get awards in their life. But what I really admire is what they stand for. I was just thinking this morning; I got a note from Sean Reardon. Sean is just a brilliant sociologist, methodologist, but he's working on really meaningful stuff. I don't know that you saw about two weeks ago this emphasis on increasing stratification of American society in poor (11:00) communities. That's what he really cares about that he's working on. We had a group at Stanford who, they were brilliant in their own fields. One of them won the Nobel Prize in physics. But we met once a month after having read an article that was given to all of us, reproduced and given to all of us, to give a presentation, debate the article. It was always on a social mission issue. Then we would meet at someone's house for potluck. Each of us would bring something, and we'd spend the next two or three hours on a more individual level. This came out of the Vietnamese War. We established a program in social thought and social action. I was very active in it. And came out of the Vietnamese War with a dissatisfaction with not only what was happening, but a society that could engage (12:00) in such a mindless, from a moral point of view, and wrong activity. That was more important to me than any award. What can you say about an award? You get it, and you list it on the CV, and your life goes on. But if you're not engaged in something like that, you're a lot emptier than if you don't receive an award, but you are engaged in something like that.

#### AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

When I asked your friends and family members to capture the essence and nature of Hank Levin, a number of themes emerged. Family is most important to you, first and foremost. Your children could not emphasize enough what a great role model you have been for them, inspiring them to become the people they are today. You are warm, and caring, nostalgic, supportive, and empathetic. You are an inspiration to all five of your children. Pilar adds, as well, (13:00) that your five children are by far your most significant accomplishment. In terms of your professional life, you are most humble. Pilar and your daughter, Bianca, note how you have always brushed aside the frequent recognition you receive for your success and your hard work, and consistently emphasize how much you love your job and what you do. You are very funny, a really, really, really funny guy according to your son, Jesse. Corny according to Pilar. This was also evident across family members and colleagues. You never take yourself too seriously and inject humor into all situations whenever possible. You care deeply about social justice and your professional responsibility towards that end. David Berliner admires you for choosing to spend part of your career in the trenches, trying to make a difference. Very few academics have done this. Your son, David, agrees, noting your extreme passion for that which you do just to help. Ed also agrees, noting that few scholars like you practice what they preach (14:00) and supposedly stand for. Your son, Jesse, adds that your passion is coupled with a spirit of a scientist. Your mind is always at work. You are focused. Pilar notes your strong work ethic. Mia compares your professional life to your life as a long distance runner, at the height of power and agility, running through the redwoods in woodside California like a like a 10-point stag. She recalls your strength, grace, and focus just like you have been in academia. You are savvy, one of the world's greatest schmoozers, and otherwise just an all around great person. To Ed, a native of the show-me state, he notes that the true test of any person centers on the answer to one question: is this a

good person? His answer for you is a resounding yes. Your son and the rest of your family members agree. Your son, Josh, characterizes you the same way, calling you a Minch.

Thank you, this was indeed evident throughout everything that we researched (15:00) and everyone with whom we communicated about you, Hank Levin. There is no doubt that there is no other you. Thank you for everything you have done for us, for future educationists, educational researchers, education econometricians, and most importantly, the students in the schools you have touched across the world. Thank you.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Well thank you. That was much too much in terms of accolades. It's nice to hear, very nice to hear; but, you know, still what I carry inside of is "still a lot of work to be done." I'm really happy and proud that I can be part of that effort of trying to make things just a little bit better. You know, it's a lot of satisfaction. By the way, I'm doing it for me, so I have to tell you that I don't in anyway have illusions that the world is waiting until I do it. But I get satisfaction out of it.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

You're very blessed. Thank you.

HENRY "HANK" LEVIN

Thanks.