



## SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

**James J. Gallagher**  
FPG Child Development Center

Interviewed by Robin Rooney  
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Gallagher: This is a tape for the SRCD Oral History Project and this is James Gallagher, Professor of Education, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, also Senior Research Fellow at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. My interviewer today is Dr. Robin Rooney, my colleague in the Center for Early Development and Learning at the Frank Porter Graham Center.

**Rooney: Okay, shall we get started?**

Gallagher: Sure.

**Rooney: Looks like this first section is about your own experiences growing up and how they influenced your thinking and moving into this career. I like this one as a start: where were you born?**

Gallagher: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the core family that I had was my grandfather and my mother who had divorced my father by the time I was three years old. However, there was also a battalion of relatives, three aunts and three uncles and their spouses, that all kept in close touch with their father who was the major core of the family.

**Rooney: Now, I always think of your family as being very Irish; is that the big Irish clan you grew up in?**

Gallagher: This is the big Irish clan. My grandmother and grandfather had thirteen children, eight of whom survived past the age of six and generally kept in very close touch with one another and with the parents.

**Rooney: And was it an Irish neighborhood?**

Gallagher: No, it was Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh was a polyglot of all sorts of backgrounds. A couple of important aspects to that, I think; one is that I grew up during the Depression and that had a major impact on me. My grandfather was a wealthy man and got wiped out in one weekend. Lost all his money, everything. We were essentially a poverty family trying to pretend like we were a middle class family. My mother went to work as a schoolteacher and the whole family had great difficulty in terms of surviving. The second aspect of my young childhood that had a big impact on me was that my mother was convinced that I was the smartest child that was ever born.

**Rooney: You were an only child, right?**

Gallagher: An only child, that made it easier!

**Rooney: And a boy.**

Gallagher: And a boy and she took me to a psychologist who had me tested or tested me, Florence Teagarden, and she recommended that I go to a special school, the Falk School. That was tied in with the University of Pittsburgh and that was a wonderful opportunity for me because the classes were 12 to 15 children and we had lots of opportunity to speak and argue and debate. Lots of chances to articulate our ideas and to explore anything that we wanted to, and I think that it had a lot to do with setting me on a good path.

**Rooney: How old were you?**

Gallagher: I was seven when I first started to go to the school and the school was first only six grades and then it extended to eight grades before I finished. The other aspect of this was I had an opportunity to get a scholarship to another private school, Shady Side Academy, and couldn't take it because there was no transportation. We didn't have a car that we could spare to drive me out there and so I went to one of the public high schools called Peabody High School and that also was a good experience for me, although very different experience. It taught me a lot about the general run of people because it was a true urban high school.

**Rooney: You had both the private and public school experiences. But starting out so young in that private school, did they start talking to you about what you were going to be when you grow up and what's your career plan?**

Gallagher: No, everybody just assumed that we're going to do something important because all the students there were quite bright. But they put no pressure on you in terms of what you were going to do and what you were going to be.

**Rooney: But that must have got you going in the direction toward the gifted, maybe, that you had that.**

Gallagher: I never thought of it that way but that's a possibility. The other experience that was important to me was World War II in which I entered the U.S. Navy V12 program. Was assigned to Villanova University and got two and a half years of college credit there in about 18 months because they had an accelerated program. Then went into radar and sonar and finished up at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. So I spent almost three years in the Navy and never heard a gun fired in anger. Nevertheless, that earned me three more years of credit on the GI Bill and I would never have attended graduate school or gone beyond a bachelor's degree if I had not had that money available to do that. Later on got a public health fellowship, but I credit the GI Bill with allowing me to go ahead and get a Ph.D.

**Rooney: So you went right straight from high school to the Navy and the Navy took you to Villanova. Were you thinking college though all that time?**

Gallagher: Oh, I was hoping I could go to college; as a matter of fact, I wheedled my way into the Navy with my parents' permission on the grounds that this was about the best way I could arrange to get a college education. Otherwise they would have held me out until the draft another year or two later.

**Rooney: Now you were saying you went to Villanova and then went on for your graduate degree after that; was there something in there that lead you into child development and psychology?**

Gallagher: Yeah, there's a number of things. One is that my mother was a teacher of young children, of children who were mentally retarded, and when I came back from the Navy I finished my college at Pitt and was working for an hourly wage punching a computer, a calculator, and the professor who I was working with, Professor Larry Stolurow, had a friend, Milt Cotzin at Southbury Training School in

Connecticut, and he said why don't you spend nine months up there before you enter graduate school, and so I did and that was another significant turning point in my life, because there I met my wife of 48 years who was teaching young children at the time. I also met, in addition to Milt Cotzin who was a mentor to me, Seymour Sarason from Yale University who was a consultant to Southbury Training School and who we had a chance to meet and interact. Seymour was in turn responsible for getting me into Penn State graduate school. So then at Penn State I was under the tutelage of Bill Snyder who was the number one apostle to Carl Rogers in nondirective therapy and that whole training had a long effect on me.

**Rooney: So you got your Master's in psychology.**

Gallagher: I got my master's with a minor in speech pathology.

**Rooney: You did? I didn't know that!**

Gallagher: Yes.

**Rooney: You never told me that and, you know, I have one in speech path.**

Gallagher: So you do. Well, I worked with Gene MacDonald who was the chair of the department then and they had a fellow by the name of Russell who was a specialist in stuttering.

**Rooney: Oh, no, you went into stuttering!**

Gallagher: And other people in articulation but it was a good background.

**Rooney: Yeah.**

Gallagher: They were a good group. So the combination of clinical psychology in the psychology department and speech pathology was a good mix.

**Rooney: But both of those are sort of the whole life span; how did you start getting interested in the children part?**

Gallagher: Well, I don't know. I've always been interested in children. Probably trying to figure myself out as a child. When the time came in the psychology department of Penn State there were 22 fellowships given out, 21 of them were for the Veterans Administration and went to my colleagues and one was a public health fellowship for young children and that was the one that I took.

**Rooney: So you had a choice and you took that one.**

Gallagher: Yes, I've always been interested in that and so I followed through on that. My work at Penn State was child clinical psychology so I was early preparing for that particular area.

**Rooney: Now was there a big research emphasis at that time?**

Gallagher: Bill Snyder ran a group research on non-directive therapy and got me involved along with six or seven other people, so we did group dissertations and that was an interesting experience. Another significant personal thing was being given an office in what was called Lepley Hall, a very tiny building on the campus but one in which they combined young staff people in the psychology department with graduate students in the psychology department and the social camaraderie and interaction and the day by day talking about ideas and concepts was invaluable to me in my development.

**Rooney:** Now of course I'm thinking about you as a policy researcher and wondering how you got from your psych research to - I know a lot of things must have happened in the middle there.

Gallagher: Well, they did. Let me say that the other really significant thing early in my career was being picked up by Sam Kirk at the University of Illinois. I had been working for a couple of years in the Psychology Clinic at the Michigan State University, Michigan State College at the time, and Sam Kirk came up and asked me to help with some collection of data in Michigan that he was doing. On the basis of that he invited me back for a couple summers to the University of Illinois and then I became a member of the faculty there. Came to stay for three years and stayed for thirteen. Primarily because Sam is just a splendid person and a very rich collection of multidisciplinary colleagues. Bernie Farber of sociology, Carl Bereiter in psychology, Larry Stolurow again in psychology, Herb Goldstein in education, and it was just a wonderful opportunity to do research and be among a bunch of colleagues who were doing research.

**Rooney:** What were you all studying?

Gallagher: Well, I was studying two key projects which shaped my future. One was tutoring of brain injured retarded children which lasted for four years in which we think we turned away from visual perception as a major problem with these children and identified attention as the major problem.

**Rooney:** Wow, that is a big shift - we're still in—

Gallagher: Yeah, we're still moving in that direction. And the other one was adjustment of highly gifted students in the regular classroom in which we were looking at kids with IQs of 150 and over and trying to figure out how to help them adjust more effectively to the classroom. So that's been my career ever since. Half on the side of youngsters in serious trouble and half on the youngsters who were very bright.

**Rooney:** So you've always had this kind of dual research interest.

Gallagher: From about 1954 on, yeah.

**Rooney:** So you were in Illinois doing a lot of your work with Sam Kirk and we still aren't to the policy point yet.

Gallagher: No, well one other thing that's important from the SRCD standpoint and that is I had a sabbatical leave from Illinois in 1960 and I got a National Science Foundation Fellowship to study at Stanford University during that time and I was lucky enough to get some quarters in Owen House which was the Headquarters of Bob and Pat Sears and Eleanor Maccoby and a whole collection of very bright and active researchers in the general field of child development and they introduced me again to the field of child development as opposed to the special areas of mental retardation and gifted. I also learned from Pat Suppes there who was a 33-year-old dean of the graduate school at the time. One of the true really bright people and I tried to understand a little bit of what he was trying to teach in mathematical models.

**Rooney:** That was all at Stanford?

Gallagher: That was all at Stanford. Then the second sabbatical I had from Illinois I came to Duke University.

**Rooney:** Duke, I didn't know you were at Duke.

Gallagher: And worked with the Ford Foundation project on early intervention for youngsters in poverty there and met a lot of key people there, but while I was there I was asked to go and head the newly

created Bureau of Education for the Handicapped in the US Office of Education and that's where the policy comes in.

**Rooney: Now how did they pick you?**

Gallagher: It was a plot as I found out later that the position was made open and Sam Kirk who was still instrumental because he had gone into the government and worked for a little while and I found out later that he had orchestrated a telephone tree in which people around the country called me up and said you must take this job, it's really important that you take it. So I went in for interviews and interviewed with Doc Howe who was the Commissioner of Education at the time. He and I knew each other from North Carolina because he once ran LINC, the Learning Institute of North Carolina, and he once offered me a job there and so I knew him and was comfortable with him. Then I met John Gardner who was the head of HEW and John Gardner has always been one of my heroes. A splendid man who ended up running Common Cause, and both of them convinced me that I could have a receptive home there in HEW. So I stayed for three years there and became very fascinated with the huge gap between academia and the public policy arena and decided that if I ever had a chance I would try and do what I could to try and reduce the gap because I felt that the academic community at that time had little or no influence on what was going on with the decisions that were being made in Washington and the decisions were being made totally on the seat of the pants kind of thing or political factors and did not include what we knew about children and improve their lot and that sort of thing.

**Rooney: That must have been a shock.**

Gallagher: It was quite a shock and I'm still learning.

**Rooney: You're still in shock!**

Gallagher: I'm still in shock and still learning about how there are many motives for people in the political life and at the same time I got an enormous respect for the people who worked in, both the staff people who worked in the congress and the congressmen themselves because I met some really splendid people. John Brademas comes to mind; Lister Hill was a noble figure. Hugh Carey, John Fogerty - there were a whole bunch of outstanding legislators who, fortunately for me, were quite interested in children with disabilities at the time and were quite willing to carry the banner. There were many people on both sides of the aisle, both Republicans and Democrats, who were supportive in this regard which made life a lot easier for me.

**Rooney: Because you were getting it all started. You started the bureau, is that right?**

Gallagher: I started the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. There were pieces laying here and there in the Office of Education and they brought them all together; there was a piece on training that was over here, and a piece on research that was over there, and they brought all these together and made them one entity. The Bureau was formed out of a painful fight. Again, this was not something I was fully aware of when I went in, but essentially the Congress drove the Bureau down the throat of the Executive Branch and said you will form a Bureau, which is very unusual. It's the Congress reaching down in the Executive Branch and determining how the Executive Branch is going to organize itself and I don't think that can happen today, but it happened then because of the extreme power and influence of the political leaders that were there at the time.

**Rooney: Wasn't that under Johnson?**

Gallagher: Yes, it was under Lyndon Johnson and then of course it was under Richard Nixon because the '68 elections changed the leadership tremendously in terms of who was in charge of HEW and a whole collection of things. So there was, from my standpoint, a real downturn in the fortunes of children when that happened because from the President on down to the people he appointed there was a less of an interest in the topics that I was interested in.

**Rooney: Is that when you decided to go?**

Gallagher: Yes, I decided to go in 1970 when it became clear that I was not wanted or needed. I found out later that I resigned three weeks before I was going to be fired so I figured that was the right decision at the time!

**Rooney: Kind of reinforced that decision!**

Gallagher: Yeah, and I also had the opportunity then to come down to North Carolina and North Carolina had a directorship open of a new child development center that they were just trying to put together. And I had been in North Carolina a couple of times to teach summer school and a year with sabbatical at Duke and so I felt very friendly toward North Carolina and thought this would be a good place to live and bring up my four children. Well, a couple of them were pretty well along by that time. But it was a good combination of things that happened all at the same time.

**Rooney: When you look back on those three years in Washington, what do you think were some of your major accomplishments there?**

Gallagher: That's a good question. I think that one of the things that we did was to make the government friendly to the people out in the field. One of the major things we did was to hold seven regional conferences in which we went around the country and asked the people, invited the people, 125 people in each of these conferences, what their major needs were, what they would want to have happen with this new Bureau and what kinds of things they would stand behind and encourage their friends to stand behind. Really, you could have gotten ten people, if I could pick ten people, we could get them in a room and they would come up with the same list of things that all of these conferences came up with, but the key was that we listened to these people and we took back what they said and we said, well, that looks like a pretty good agenda for us and so we put it into effect. And so the people around the country said, hey, the government is listening to us and they are paying attention and they are going to do what we told them to do, and that made a really fine relationship with the people out in the field.

**Rooney: You met with teachers?**

Gallagher: Teachers, professors, administrators, all people dealing with children with disabilities and it was always a mix of people in Atlanta or Denver or wherever we were.

**Rooney: Do you think that that kind of approach was somehow a product of your research experience that you'd had?**

Gallagher: I think it really goes back more to the nondirective therapy in which the emphasis was to listen and listen carefully to the feelings of people and what they are trying to tell you and we just put that into effect here and it worked out very well. The other thing that worked out well was that the three division directors that I had, or three divisions - one of research, one of service and one was teaching, personnel preparation - were all solid professionals, even though they turned over they were still all solid professionals. So that when we went to testify we went with a really good knowledge of what the subject was that we were dealing with and we could answer questions that were raised and we could draw on literature that we knew about and so forth and so on and so we impressed the congressional people. As I found out from the congressional aides later that we were called the professionals in the department and that we really knew what we were doing and so they could feel comfortable about giving resources to us and let us spend and that was, I think, very important for the field and I think we've kept that aura for a while, at any rate, after we all departed because Ed Martin who was my deputy director of the Bureau at the time, which was second in command actually, spent 11 years there and he directed the program after I left. And so he was able to carry on a lot of this kind of thing and so it worked out very well.

**Rooney: So it was like you brought academics to Washington, then you left Washington to go back into academia, is that right? Brought Washington to academia.**

Gallagher: That's not a bad way of putting it. I did feel however that it was important to get these two groups together and when I had a chance which was with some contacts with the Bush Institute. The Bush Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota, played an important role in the early life of Frank Porter Graham Center when I was the director of the Center for 17 years. The Bush Institute contacted me, at one time because they had known of my Washington experience and they said, "We want to do something unique in child development. We want to do something that would be distinctive for our foundation and we want to know what it is." So they brought together myself, Ed Zigler from Yale, and Harold Stevenson who (I forget whether he was at Michigan or Minnesota at the time) and we had about a two day meeting in which we tried to decide what could the foundation do? We finally ended up by saying, well, the foundation could help on this social policy dimension and that if they set up a training program in social policy we would agree to carry out that program. So they gave us fellowships that allowed us to carry out multidisciplinary policy kinds of studies here. So while we were at North Carolina here, we had people like Duncan MacRae from the Political Science Department and John Akin from economics and people from the law school and people from public health and education and brought these fellows together once a week or so for a seminar and they all did a special policy project that was supervised by one of the faculty members. So essentially this was a kind of add-on to their Ph.D. They got a Ph.D. but then they spent an extra six months to a year with us and then they went away with this special additional training and policy.

**Rooney: What kind of work would they get after that?**

Gallagher: Well that's interesting. Some of them become congressional aides. My associate director, one of the two really outstanding people I had as associate directors in that project, Ron Haskins is now the majority staff person for the House Ways and Means Committee. The other person that was my associate director in that period was Dick Clifford and Dick is still with the Frank Porter Graham Center but he has played a major role in policy in child development in the state of North Carolina being one of the key figures in Governor Hunt's Smart Start Program. A lot of the other people have contacted me and said you may think I'm not doing anything in the public policy area because I went back to my university but I am now teaching courses in public policy in education as a result of that experience that I had, and so we felt very good about what happened. So did Bush for that matter; they extended the program another five years beyond the five years that they had given and they said that they had never done that before. And said that they might have been willing to go ahead and do it some more but they had other things, so ten years was enough. But then we managed to keep some course work and other kinds of policy activities going here that followed up on the Bush program.

**Rooney: So when you came to Frank Porter Graham that was one of your goals was to get that policy strand going and that was one way you did that. Now, the Frank Porter Graham Center, was it brand new when you came?**

Gallagher: It was really brand new; Hal Robinson and Nancy Robinson, the husband and wife team that were well known in child development, had this dream of setting up a child development center here at the university and they spent an enormous amount of time and energy trying to bring together all of the factions necessary to establish the center and they did. They got state support for it and got support from NICHD for a mental retardation center which would be a part of this Frank Porter Graham Center but in the process they kind of wore out their political acceptance in the University and outside and took off for the University of Washington. So they had an interim director for a while and then I came in and we had a day care center with about 15 kids, a couple of day care workers, Thelma Thurstone, retired research psychologist, Frank Loda a pediatrician, and Joe Sparling who is in education and that was it. We existed in trailers for a couple years while major construction was being built for the Center itself.

**Rooney: Where did you get all the funding to get things—**

Gallagher: Well, it came from all kinds of sources that was one of the deliberate things we did. Sometimes things happen by luck and chance, and sometimes they are deliberate. This one was deliberate in the sense that we knew that we did not want to be run or directed by a single federal agency and that if you signed up with only one agency and that was responsible for all your funds then you are pretty much at the mercy of that agency in terms of what they wanted to do. So we deliberately went out to try and get money from the private sector, from education, from health, from so many different agencies, state and federal, as we could so that we could maintain a certain degree of independence in terms of what we wanted to do and where we were going. One of the major things that we started, and this was also something that came out of my earlier experience, was a technical assistance center for young children with disabilities. It was first called TADS and its now called NECTAS, its been called three or four different things, but essentially, it's had 25 years of continuous existence which is a pretty good record for a technical assistance program. That too was built on nondirective therapy concepts in which we said listen to the people, listen to what they say their needs are, don't go in and tell them, on the basis of your expertise, what their problem is. Let them tell you what their problem is and then help them with that problem. Then when you help them with that problem they'll come to you with the real problem. But they're going to try you out. They're not going to risk everything by handing you the biggest, most serious problem that they have right off the bat any more than the patient who sits across from you in a counseling situation is going to tell you what their most serious thing is. They are going to tell you some problems that they have and they are going to see how you handle them and how you work with them on those problems. Then on the basis of that then you may get down to some more serious work, but if you come in as the "expert" then you will never have a decent relationship with these people and they will hold you off at arm's length and you'll never really understand what the issues were and what the problems are. So we trained a lot of people in that particular model and sent them out to do individual counseling and needs assessments and that sort of thing and it turned out to be really quite successful which wasn't surprising to me, but it was surprising to other people who had a different model of expert-client kind of relationships. On the basis of this, this technical assistance has moved on for a long, long time. It's changed its orientation a little but—

**Rooney: But we still see it in the family-centered philosophy for early intervention.**

Gallagher: Exactly.

**Rooney: That's interesting because some of the questions here in the protocol that come to mind - well one of them here says the tension between some of these various fields that you've been associated with. And you think about all of the various fields and then also the settings and the expectations - academics, government, psychology, education - how do you balance all that out?**

Gallagher: Well, I think the first rule is to listen and to try and understand what the barriers to action are. One of the things that government taught me is that it is probably a mistake to think that if things are going wrong it is necessarily the individual who is at the center of things who is at fault. That, in fact, it may be a systems problem and that nobody in that particular situation could have straightened them out at that time, but they all focus on the individual who is there and who is the responsible leader at that particular time and they say, "Boy if we can only get rid of that rotten person everything is going to be all right," and then they get rid of the "rotten person" and they find out everything isn't all right because the seeds of the problem lay deeper into the interrelationships of institutions and organizations and that until you reach down to that level and get people to a modicum of comfort with you and what you are trying to do, nothing is going to work.

**Rooney: And you've done some research and written on some of these thoughts.**

Gallagher: Yes, a little bit.



**Rooney: What do you think are some of your - when you think back on your research and your publications, are some of those ideas that you've gotten across that have been your strongest?**

Gallagher: It sunk in on me, not quickly but over time, that I really am interested in the applications of research. I am not a theoretician and I admire the people who are and who can do that kind of conceptual systems work. My particular interest is how you take what we know and put it to use, and so I guess I've never quite left the clinical psychology model in the sense of saying I want to do something that's useful, I can see that some of the information that we have could be useful if we can convince the people that they are to use it. We know a great deal more than we are doing and the reason why we are not doing it is because of all of these interpersonal relationships and problems of organizations and self-interest that are abroad and don't get written about very much. People write on the literature on systems development as if everybody is logical and develops a rational pattern of how things should be and then, for some unknown reason, things don't work out. But the unknown reasons are fairly well known and they're all dealing with personal image and self concept and threat and people trying to maintain their status. So change runs into all sorts of trouble because it discombobulates so many different people in the process of change and all of them are angry and probably trying to throw rocks and barriers in your way because you have done such mischief to them.

**Rooney: That's interesting because it's like you see things from a systems perspective but also an individual perspective, then how those two things play out against each other. Are those the kinds of things you've written about that a lot of people have reacted to, about how the systems work and how—**

Gallagher: Well, I've tried, perhaps not written as much as I have on just the whole area of gifted children.

**Rooney: Is that your strongest do you think, the gifted?**

Gallagher: Well, it's certainly the one I think people identify me with along with the general area of policy and disabilities because I have been visible in that area in professional organizations for a long time and also trying to change policy. We just made some major changes in policy in education of the gifted students in North Carolina with my colleague Mary Ruth Coleman and a bunch of other people in the state of North Carolina in which we think we have got a program that is more congenial to reality in the school systems that we think can do a great deal of good for young people in this state. But again it took five years and an awful lot of work out in the field with a lot of different people to convince them that not only is this not going to harm them but it's actually going to be to their advantage to pursue these new dimensions. I think that's the mark of successful reform movement of any sort is that you have convinced people that it's in their own best interest to go along with this because there's good pluses in it for everybody.

**Rooney: So that's kind of your most recent accomplishment is the gifted policy piece.**

Gallagher: At the state level, yeah.

**Rooney: Well, let me see where we are. We've talked a lot about - I've been trying to get you to talk a little bit more about your publications and which ones that - I guess the one I always think of that everybody always comes up and talks to you about is the Kirk and Gallagher book—**

Gallagher: The introductory text?

**Rooney: Yes.**

Gallagher: Yeah, well it's going into the ninth edition now, so it's been around for a very long time and focuses on the importance of the young child who is different and that certainly has been one of the emphases that I have had for a long time. Particularly when I talk to people in the general area of

child development I try to convince them that by studying young people who are different from the norm you can learn a lot about the average development of young children. Because when they do something really strange, like for example have auditory skills at the twelve-year level and visual skills at the six-year level you can't say that's impossible because the kid is sitting right there in front of you showing you that it is possible. Or the autistic child who can do very strange and wonderful kinds of things but it's still as if they have a glass wall between you and him. You say, that's a very strange thing to happen, but it's happening because you can see it so, now explain, on the basis of your personality theory, how this could happen. We say that these kids are the ultimate challenge of the theorist on personality, on intelligence, on motivation, on all of these various dimensions in the child development field. If we are smart enough to figure out how these unusual kids can do what they are doing, or can't do what they can't do, then we've learned something important about the whole child development area.

**Rooney: Which is the next section here; it's on your child development area and your experiences with SRCD and what has been your linkage with SRCD.**

Gallagher: Well, actually aside from being a member for a large number of years, I only played a significant role in one dimension of SRCD and that was for about a four-year period of time back in the 1970s when I was the first chair of the Social Policy Committee of SRCD. That involved a large number of key child development people and I think was a significant turning point in SRCD and in the professional field in general.

There was a feeling at one time back in the '70s in child psychology but also in organizations like the American Psychological Association that there was something somewhat shady about getting involved in public decisions of one sort or another. There was often the suggestion that it's too bad you couldn't cut it in the real world of academia and you had to find some other thing for yourself to do in this strange and mysterious and vaguely disreputable area of public policy. I think the role of the committee at that time was to bring the SRCD to a point where it was respectable to concern yourself with public affairs of children. I think a lot of people were beginning to see more clearly that if anything of importance was going to be done at the policy level then those people who knew the most about children and their development and families would have to get involved. They could not stand apart from this and just criticize and to say look at what those stupid people have done now. And so I think over a four year time we established an office in Washington, got some additional foundation support for a little while and put the organization into more of the mainstream of public decision making. I remember one time, one of the key members of the American Psychological Association came to me and asked me what I thought the Congress felt about the position that the APA was taking on a particular issue and I didn't really tell him what I felt at the time, but what I felt was that the Congress doesn't even know you exist. It's not that they are against your position or for it, they don't even know that you are alive. The same thing for SRCD and the American Sociological Association and all those professional associations and all of these organizations have now become much more aware of this sort of thing and have offices in Washington and do work in state capitals.

**Rooney: Lobbying, do they do formal lobbying and all of that?**

Gallagher: Well, whether you call it lobbying or whether you call it information, providing useful information, to public decision makers, there certainly is much more willingness on the part of the professions to do that now than was true a couple of decades ago.

**Rooney: Well, it's always so hard with that advocacy kind of role, you know, you get federal funds and you have to fill out lobbying disclosure forms and everything so I guess there's always going to be that.**

Gallagher: Yes, and you have to be careful and follow the rules and try and avoid manifest self interest in this sort of thing although when you are arguing for children you are obviously arguing for yourself and you are arguing for funds for more personnel preparation and research and other kinds of

things which eventually come back to you. The point is not to lobby so directly that you will be arguing and saying, give me some funds for the Frank Porter Graham Center and never mind about the rest. That's obviously unethical and not even very smart.

**Rooney: But seeing the professional organizations get a little bit more political is something you've kind of seen shift over the years.**

Gallagher: Absolutely, and not political in the republican/democratic sense but political in the sense that they realize that if they are going to get the resources to do the research and the leadership training and the other kinds of things, then they are going to have to make a case for those resources to state legislators and to Congress and to administrations otherwise those scarce resources will go to somebody else who is arguing more persuasively for them.

**Rooney: And what other kinds of changes have you seen over the years when you look back over your experiences in the fields; I have to say fields because you've been involved in several?**

Gallagher: Well, I'm not sure how to put this. I think everybody who gets older feels more attuned to their own generation and so we're convinced that we were all smarter and more noble and more everything than the next generation that's come along or the next two generations or three generations that's come along. But I do think, in part, it was that we were much smaller and we could form relationships in special education. For example, when I first got into that field there were four universities that were doing work in this area at the doctoral level: Illinois, Syracuse, Teacher's College Columbia, and Wayne State.

**Rooney: Wayne State?**

Gallagher: Wayne State.

**Rooney: Wayne State in Detroit.**

Gallagher: And then when of course the money came from the federal government for all of the personnel preparation money for teachers of the children with disabilities, we've got 150 universities now involved and the faculty members from all 150 universities. Sometimes you look back at the era when there were only four and you say, hey, I knew every one of those people and was on a personal basis with everyone in the field, everyone who was significant in the field and now they are all over the place. And I think probably SRCD, a lot of the older people in SRCD feel the same way. They say, we had a nice cozy group of people who were very academically attuned and thoughtful and so forth and who are all these new people who are coming in and doing all of these strange things? So, I think this is probably more my aging process than it is reality, but I think, in part, the success of the various ventures that we have been involved in means that we have expanded to a point where sometimes it seems to be out of control or out of our influence and control and so we've got to feel like that's a bad thing.

**Rooney: Right, because we are not writing things. Well, how do you feel you yourself have changed over these years, your views about what's important.**

Gallagher: That's a good point because I've often said, you know, if I went back and started all over again what would I be doing and the answer is I wouldn't be a clinical psychologist because a clinical psychologist focuses on the single case and the single person in front of you. This is very important from the standpoint of understanding individuals and case studies and all of that but it's not very important in terms of actually having an impact. The reason is because the context is so important. We're still learning that particular lesson that Bronfenbrenner was right that all of those circles of influence are there and furthermore some of the circles, if you talk about the social dimension and gangs and other kinds of groups out in the neighborhoods and the family, dysfunctional families, they are much more important to that child that's sitting in front of you than you are and if you are going to

do something about it probably you need to leave the child sitting there and try and influence the family, the neighborhood, the society because those are the forces which are really going to impact on that child. So I guess I'd come back as a social psychologist or maybe a politician with some ideas of how to influence public decision making and policy because I think in the end those things will have more influence than the one-on-one relationship between the child and the teacher or the child and whoever the professional is.

**Rooney: Do you see the field moving in that direction?**

Gallagher: Yes, I do.

**Rooney: Like when you look into the crystal ball, what do you see happening?**

Gallagher: Yes, I do see things going in that direction. I think there is much more attention now to the functions of large systems and large organizations and what influence they have on the individuals. Not only within the organization but outside the organization as well. But the coincident aspect of that is that it makes everything so complex that it's very difficult to give simple minded kinds of counsel and advice to people who are always asking you, well how do you straighten out this problem of mental retardation or whatever. And you say, well it's rather a complex subject, if you will give me a few hours I'll try and explain it to you. And they say, I don't have a few hours. Go away and don't bother me. And we've been trained in a sound bite political arena to the point where no problem deserves any more than 30 seconds attention. Unfortunately the problems we are trying to deal with children and families are so involved and so complex that anybody who claims to have an instant solution to them should be immediately dismissed.

**Rooney: Well, and it seems like what you are saying is now with more of the social psychology or scientific approach maybe we will start to move into ways of looking at those complexities and figuring them out. We're not there yet but—**

Gallagher: Oh, I think we will. That means we're going to have to train a new generation of investigators and we've already decided that we've got to be into qualitative analyses because the complexity of the world defeats the simple quantitative approach that we were following when I was a student.

**Rooney: Boy, that's a big change you've seen too in methodologies.**

Gallagher: Major, major change in methodology. I think also that there may be two separate trains going down different tracks at the same time. One is that we're trying to use what we know to improve the lot of children and families in the society and that's an application. On the other we are trying to stand off and study and understand what these systems are all about and how they interact with one another and so forth. So there may be two different bodies of people that are going to be involved in these areas. Certainly the other thing that we have changed over time is the insularity of the individual disciplines. The more you get into a problem-oriented situation, if you talk about autism instead of talking about motivation, child motivation, or if you talk about poverty and its effect on children. You can't rely on just your own child development specialists or your psychologists or your sociologists or whatever, you've got to have everybody because these complex situations require a multitude of skills and knowledges. And so what we're seeing already are teams of people, you don't have the individual researcher, it's very hard to find the individual researcher who's doing serious research and that's why we've developed these centers and institutes. That's been another major development in higher education is that individual departments, if you handed the money to individual departments they couldn't deal with these complex issues that you want them to deal with. On the other hand, they find it very difficult to operate outside their departments. So if you gave the money to the sociology department you'd find it very difficult to bring in psychologists and educators and others and so the answer has been setting up centers and institutes which bring in people from various disciplines to try and work together to cope with one of these problems. I've been involved in the

Institute for Research for Exceptional Children at Illinois for 13 years, involved in the Frank Porter Graham Center now for some 27 years and I'm convinced that if we are going to deal with these larger social issues on a research basis then we must deal with them on this group research enterprise with individual investigators taking responsibility for significant pieces of the problem working together with the whole group in order to deal with the complexities of the whole issue. That's a very different issue from the mad scientist in his laboratory dreaming up wonderful things like Frankenstein.

**Rooney:** Okay, tell me a little bit about some of your publications. I guess we talked about some of my favorite publications of yours, but what about yours?

Gallagher: Well, one of the things that came out of the six or seven years of work on the gifted because I followed up the four year study with the youngsters with 150 IQ and over with a series of studies on classroom interaction using tape recorders to tape about 100 to 120 classrooms trying to see what the thinking processes were that youngsters were showing, bright youngsters were showing in these special classrooms where they were. We used Guilford Structure of Intellect as the model for developing a coding system for this and so out of all of this came my work on the textbook called *Teaching the Gifted Child*.

**Rooney:** Oh, okay.

Gallagher: And that has been a popular textbook right up to the present time, my daughter is now a co-author with me on that textbook. Again it shows my interest in application rather than going in the other direction of theoretical construction. There was one other dimension that has always seemed to be a part of whatever usefulness I have as a contributor and that is two of these characteristics that I learned about in clinical psychology. One is denial and the other is repression and for some reason that I have never been able to figure out why I'm not very good at either of those things. A lot of people, individually and collectively, can just deny that there is a situation facing them that is dangerous or difficult and refuse to look at it until someone really just forces them to do or they will repress something which is terribly unpleasant which causes them stress and anxiety and so they shut it off. I've felt that perhaps that I can't do that. I have to face the problem, ugly as it is that's in front of me and I guess if there's a talent here the talent is to live with the cognitive dissonance, to live with the fact that you don't have all the answers and to still try and chew away at the issue and try and make sense out of it. That's probably what motivates me as a researcher is that I'm trying to figure out what's going on and I never really quite figured it out but it's really fascinating and interesting and so that's, I think, probably the real motivation for my keeping going in this particular area.

**Rooney:** It kind of explains how you were able to do both the government and the academics pieces. Like when you were in one setting you were still thinking about the other one and vice versa, and I wondered if that isn't something that people, when you talk about that, that people sort of resonate to that. Because I think one of your real strengths is as a speaker, I mean when you go - you must do zillions of plenary speeches and you are always very persuasive, and what's your trick there?

Gallagher: I don't know as there's a trick there; I think what you have to do again is to try and get into the minds of the people in the audience and say, what are they worried about, what is the thing that they are most concerned with. And then to say, okay I may not have any answers for you but at least I can show you that I understand what you are concerned with and that is often enough for a speaker to establish a link with the audience. And they say, well at least this guy knows what I am concerned with and knows what I am trying to deal with and to try and put it on a kind of personal level with examples, individual examples.

**Rooney:** It seems like you always articulate it and then afterwards people continue to quote something out of what you've said. So somehow you put words to it; I think that's your psych background a little bit.

Gallagher: Well, I think it is the psychology background that trying to sensitize yourself to what the audience is going to present. I'm going to present a speech in Brazil in a couple of months and I haven't the foggiest notion what I'm going to say or how well I'm going to be accepted. I've given speeches in Taiwan and other places in which I'm never quite sure how they have been received but it's a different matter when you are dealing with people at the local level here. When you have parents of gifted students, you say I know enough now to know what they are thinking about and I know what they're concerned with, and so it's not hard to give a speech that shows that, number one, you know what they're worried about and, number two, you have some possible answers for them. And that's, I think, all that a speaker needs to get a good reception.

**Rooney: Well, when you were talking about parents of children who are gifted I wondered how your experiences with your own children have influenced your work and how your work has influenced your relations.**

Gallagher: Well, everybody who is in child development knows the story of the child psychologist who when he had one child was able to say to people, when children are in this situation they will do this. Then when he had two children he said, "Well when they are in this situation they will either do this or that." And then when they had more than two children they would say, "children in this situation will do a wide variety of things!" And that's what we found out by having four children is that they are all very different and they all are different as we now are really beginning to understand because they each seek their own niche. And that rather than compete with one another when someone is older and more mature and so forth and makes it very difficult for a younger one to compete they look for something that will establish them as an individual and as a person. And I'm very pleased that all of our youngsters were able to do that and so they are all doing extraordinarily different kinds of things in their life but each of them are doing very well in their own way and so we are very pleased with it. Somebody once accused me, I have four children that run through the whole textbook called *Teaching the Gifted Child*, Crenshaw, Zelda, Joe, Sam, and someone said, well there's four children and there are three boys and a girl, now don't you have three boys and a girl. Aren't you modeling those kids after your kids, and I said, "Well, not really," but you know you can't help but do something like that. But the thing, having four children gives you a certain amount of tolerance of differences and the realization that everybody is trying to be an individual and you'd better work at trying to help them do that so that they don't end up in major family battles. I think most parents would say, the one thing I want to make sure of is that when I'm gone they won't be at each other throats and so forth and I feel like we are fairly safe on that one. But my wife has been an extraordinary influence on me all through this raising of the four children and she, if the truth be known, has more to do with the raising of the four than I did because I was on the road a lot and I was out of the situation a lot. We had one youngster who had extraordinarily complicated asthma which put him in the hospital about 100 times and we thought he was going to die a couple of times and that brings forth your sense of mortality like nothing else can. I think it also gave us some sense of empathy for parents with kids with disabilities. It's one thing to understand it on an academic level, it's another thing to say, I've been there, I know where you are coming from I understand what you are saying. So that, I think, gave me an understanding of that particular dimension that I otherwise wouldn't have had and my wife as well.

**Rooney: And your daughter, is she the only one who's in the field out of your four children?**

Gallagher: Yes. We have a lawyer, a researcher in physiology and back injuries, and an airplane pilot.

**Rooney: Wow, that is a range!**

Gallagher: And the daughter is currently at University of North Carolina in Charlotte and has, as I said, been a co-author with me on the textbook and is a leader in the field of problem-based learning. So it's kind of interesting, I guess, that the daughter is the one that followed and the boys all went their own way.

**Rooney:** And what's it like now - I mean, I was trying to see if you had applied any of your psychology to your own children. It doesn't sound like it. What's it like now that you are a grandpa and have grandchildren?

**Gallagher:** Well, we are delighted with our four, soon to be five, grandchildren and fascinated with how they are growing up and quite intolerant with the parents who are obviously not doing the right thing! But I've fortunately been able to restrain myself from saying, "I am a child psychologist and I can tell you that that's not the right way to handle that situation." And that has enabled me to keep reasonable relationships with my children!

**Rooney:** Now you are going to have five grandchild, so see now when you do your book next time you are going to have to have a fifth child in your book.

**Gallagher:** Well, one more thing just about my wife, Rami, who has civilized me. She has particular skills and interest in art and I've realized that there was a whole dimension of life that had been totally apart from my experience or my training or my education. I often think about, I'm supposed to have a Ph.D. and supposed to be a knowledgeable person about the world and there is this whole dimension that was never a part of my family, never a part of my elementary school, never a part of my secondary school, never a part of my university training. My wife has introduced me to this field of art, and I find it fascinating and feel like it has rounded me out as a person, as an individual and also help me pursue a little bit on the issue of creativity and where creativity comes from and what the motivation and drive of people are to create.

**Rooney:** So she got you some culture, huh?

**Gallagher:** She got me some culture, that's right! I just want to say I enjoyed this experience. I don't know whether anyone else will ever enjoy it or not but having to do this and reflect back on your life and experiences helps to put a lot of things in context and whether or not it is good for anybody else it is very therapeutic to the person who is doing it. So I congratulate the Oral History Program for their enterprise in this area. Thank you.

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