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Swaney at the Museum:
A Children’s Book about a Transitional Object Overcoming Separation Anxiety

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Abstract

The core of this thesis is an original picture book entitled *Swaney at the Museum*. It communicates the importance of calming self-talk in the face of anxiety. In the story, Swaney, a stuffed dog, experiences separation anxiety when he is left behind in a museum exhibition about nose art. He endures the anxiety by thinking to himself how he will get through it. He is reunited with his girl at the end with a big nose kiss. This picture book is geared for reading aloud to an audience in the range of two to nine years old. Included with the text is original artwork the author created.

The supporting thesis discusses the developmental context of the target age group, emphasizing the child psychology concepts of transitional objects and separation anxiety. There is a discussion of several theorists, how the author envisions the book being used and shared, and a literature review.
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Setting the Scene

My socio-cultural background influenced my choice for this integrative master’s project and the children’s story. Art, creativity, and playfulness have always been important parts of my life. They have been therapeutic and part of my development, from early childhood into adulthood and degree programs. I come from an art background, previously earning a B.F.A. and M.F.A. in painting and printmaking. This influenced my decision to get involved in education through museum education. I have always been interested in art and the sharing of art with children. Along the way, learning about education, developmental theories, and different approaches for different learners has been enlightening and interesting. I found that this new information changed the way I look at the world and the people in my world, hopefully with more understanding.

Three sides of my personality are present in the children’s book: the playful, therapeutic, and creative/artistic sides. The playful side is represented by the character of Swaney, a stuffed animal. Also representative is the idea of an exhibition of nose art in an art museum. The therapeutic side of myself is represented in the thoughts of Swaney as he deals with his predicament. The creative and artistic side shows through in the drawings, the art museum exhibition, and the variety of Swaney’s thoughts.

Following is Swaney at the Museum. It is about a stuffed dog who is left behind on a bench in an exhibition of nose art at a museum. He goes on a bit of an emotional ride, but everything turns out well when he is reunited with his girl at the Lost and Found.
Original Material: ‘Swaney at the Museum’
Swaney at the Museum

By Miriam Berger
A day at the museum, how wonderful. An exhibition of nose art, how wonderful. Swaney loved noses and anything to do with noses.

Swaney thinks:
What a fine nose in the artwork! The light falls on it just so. My, my, what a nose!
Swaney came out of his reverie and realized that he was alone on the bench. His owner, a young girl, his love, has forgotten him and left him there!

He felt so small.
Swancy panics. He is anxious.
I must get back to her somehow!
Why did she forget me and leave me here?
Does she notice I’m gone?
How could she do this to me?
I am mad at her.
She better be upset when she realizes
I’m gone.
Oh, how I miss her!
I hope she comes back right away!
A stranger sees Swaney alone on the bench, and decides Swaney needs to look the other way. He says to Swaney, 'Oh, hello there. Looking at that nose a long time?

You must want to look at something else. I'll turn you the other way. There you go!'
‘Wait!’, Swaney wants to say, ‘Please help me find my girl!’
Instead, the stranger walks away. Swaney is distracted by new nose art.

For a little while, Swaney forgets his troubles.
Oh, what magnificent noses!
Swaney comes back to himself and his distressing situation. He remembers another situation that was similar. He felt anxious then, too.

It was when his girl first went to school. Those first few days were agony: He did not know when or if she would ever come back to play with him. Each morning she would leave.
But his girl always came back to Swaney, played with him, and told him about her day. Swaney could tell she missed him when she was gone, and that made him feel better. He got used to the pattern and relaxed.

Maybe being lost in the museum would end the same way: his girl would notice he was gone, miss him, and come back for him, just like when she went to school. That thought made Swaney feel better.
Just then, back in the museum,
a stranger decides to pick
Swaney up.

She says, 'Oh, my!
Someone loves you very much,
I can tell.
Lost your owner, eh?
Let's see where the
Lost and Found is.'

Swaney thinks, 'Oh good,
Lost and Found!
I know about that.'
Once, in the airport, Swaney was left on a chair. He panicked then, too, wondering if he would ever see his girl again. But it all turned out ok. Someone found him, took him to the lost and found, and the airport worker made an announcement over the loudspeaker. His girl and her family came to get him right away.
Maybe this time would be the same. Maybe this stranger would take him to the
Lost and Found, and his little girl would find him!

Swaney thought,
I've gone through something like
this before. I can do it again.
Swaney relaxed, comforted by his thoughts. They were passing more art. He saw a picture of a nose, but underneath it was written,
'This is not a nose.' Hmm.
It sure looked like a nose to Swaney!
Swaney and the stranger passed a picture of a creature truly without a nose. Swaney read on the label that it was the Sphinx in Egypt. Poor Sphinx! How horrible to hot have a nose! He couldn’t even imagine.
They passed through a hall of marble nose sculptures. A hall of beauty. Each nose was magnificent in a different way.

Swaney thought about the noses and remained calm. He thought, 'I can do this. I can be calm instead of anxious.'
Soon they were leaving the exhibition of nose art. Swaney thought, ‘This is it! We are getting closer to the Lost and Found where she will find me!’
A museum employee directed them to the Lost and Found.

Swaney wondered how long it would be until his girl found him. He had no doubt that she would.
As they approached the Lost and Found, Swaney saw that his girl was already there! She looked upset. When she saw Swaney coming to her, her face changed to joy and happiness. She wanted to run to him, but there is no running in museums. She wanted to shout, ‘Swaney!', but you have to be quiet in museums. Instead, she waited with her arms out.
Swaney was back in his girl’s arms. She did miss him, he could tell.

As if she could read his mind, she said, ‘I will always come back for you, no matter what.’

She gave him a big kiss on the nose.

Swaney was so happy.
Foundational Thoughts

In my children’s book, Swaney is a lively transitional object (stuffed dog), owned by a little girl, whom we refer to as ‘His Girl.’ Swaney and his girl go to an art museum to see an exhibition of nose art. She leaves him behind on a bench in a gallery. The book opens to Swaney looking at a painting and enjoying himself. Then he realizes he is all alone on the bench, which starts up some anxious thoughts. Swaney has an adventure getting back to his girl. Strangers help him, and he has a self-soothing inner monologue. He remembers two instances from their past where he was separated from and reunited with his girl. These thoughts and the nose art help sustain him until he reaches the lost and found, where his girl is already waiting for him. They reunite with a big nose kiss.

Swaney has attached to his girl as if she is a mother figure, and has a secure attachment style, except he is lost or left behind from time to time. This causes him to feel separation anxiety. Separation anxiety on the part of the girl to Swaney is alluded to, but is not the explicit content of the book. Swaney’s separation anxiety is the focus. Swaney copes with his separation anxiety in several healthy ways, such as encouraging self-talk, remembering how he got through other, similar situations, and distracting himself with art in the museum where he is left. He knows that she always comes back for him, but he still has anxiety until they are reunited.

‘When one is young almost every story begins with and returns to a mother and child’ (Paley, 2004, p. 18). My book about Swaney in the museum is about a basic universal, mother and child, with some twists: his attachment figure loses him, he has to fend for himself, and he gets help from strangers. Along the way, there is some fabulous, humorous nose art divert his attention from his plight.

Two child psychology concepts informed my generation of the themes of the book: transitional phenomena, in this case a stuffed animal; and separation anxiety, experienced mainly by the stuffed
animal being separated from his girl. D.W. Winnicott first called intermediate space objects ‘transitional objects,’ so I read his work and other professional writings inspired by his work. For separation anxiety information, I read Bowlby, and both clinical and parenting books about separation anxiety, the only anxiety disorder diagnosed in childhood and not adulthood.

Throughout this rationale, I will go over various concepts that informed my book, explain them, and relate them back to my book. The majority of the concepts are derived from child psychology, with some child development and other sources. I will generally introduce an idea with a quote, and then I will explain how Swaney, the protagonist of my book, or some other aspect of the book relates to the idea.

**Developmental Considerations**

The intended age range for this book is from very young children, aged 2-3, who begin to use transitional objects, to older children growing out of them and more firm in their self-identities, around 9. The mid-range of this group is 6-7’s, when children are becoming serious students. They are learning about themselves. ‘The concept of identity is ideal . . . our conventional conceptions of “inside” and “outside” or the recognition of I and non-I which is only fully accomplished by the time the child has reached the age of six or seven (Piaget) (Meunsterberger (1978) pp. 10-11). Also at the age of 6-7, first grade, students start to feel like it is babyish to love, hold on to, and need transitional objects like they used to. They may not let go of them yet, but they may become socially conscious that transitional objects are for little children. Of course, they want to be ‘big kids.’

The target children for this book would be continually developing their inner- and outer-relatedness. The transitional object is first created to do or hold on to something the child cannot do alone, then needed very much, then internalized (meaning the child can do for himself what the transitional object
was created to do). The transitional object is then put aside, or ‘decathected,’ as Winnicott would say.

The developmental stage of children for this book is, specifically with transitional objects, the stage when the objects seem real, have personalities and dramas of their own, and can communicate. This age varies, so there is a range of ages for my target audience. Swaney ‘comes alive,’ as it were, in the museum, a place where creativity traditionally comes alive.

From a young age, for example toddlers,

‘The first self-created image leading to the absent need/love-object can be called the first protosymbol. It is par excellence the dimension of connectedness. This is the space for creative symbol-formation, because it is the function of symbols to connect and unite opposites. This transitional space, a space for connectedness, accounts for an order in the world based on an inner relatedness’ (Deri, 1978, p. 50).

Swaney is developing inner connectedness / relatedness like a child would, developmentally, as a consequence of separation from his girl, his attachment figure. Children reading this book can relate to that process.

Transitional objects can be helpful and effective support systems for toddlers on up, including early elementary children. ‘Transitional objects that symbolize self and important others can still be comforting and inspiring to early-grade children who are crossing many bridges to more independent functioning and more performance-oriented schoolwork’ (Koplow, 2008, p. 50). The varying ages will have different levels of connection and understanding of the story.

Koplow (2008) designed a program for early elementary children in which they have classroom teddy bears. The children try to look at things from their bears’ points of view, and to sympathize with the bears. She wrote that it was easier for the children to feel sympathy for the bears first, then their classmates. As my story is told from the point of view of the transitional object, I found it interesting
that Koplow explored this point of view with the early elementary children: ‘The children have a
discussion about how the bears feel when they have to leave the room without them (e.g. to go to the
gym). They talk about ways to help the bears feel comforted when they are out of the classroom’ (p.
53). This shows that children at that age or developmental stage can benefit from being exposed to a
book like mine, one about a transitional object, from that object’s point of view.

Koplow also discusses egocentrism in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders: ‘At this age, children are starting to be less
egocentric and more adept at considering things that are out of the particular current moment of their
own personal experience’ (p. 61). This also shows that it is possible for early elementary children to look
at Swaney and think about his situation, hopefully relating it to their own, but also that they can enjoy
the imaginary situation he is in.

Beidel and Alfano (2011) suggest questions can be used to deal with separation anxiety. Swaney will be
the example. Is Swaney’s fear appropriate for his developmental stage? This book is for young children,
Pre-K to early elementary, and separation anxiety is common in that age range. While there may always
be some degree of push-pull in a child’s relationship with the parent or main caregiver, worries about
separation make sense at this age. Is Swaney’s fear out of proportion to the situation? No. He has a
normal, healthy reaction to being lost and forgotten. It is a common fear, and when it actually happens,
he is right to be upset. Can his reaction be explained or reasoned away? Swaney knows his girl well
enough to understand that she probably did not mean to leave him, but even knowing that, he is still
upset and tries to calm himself down. Understanding his fear does not make it go away, but it may be
less overwhelming. Is Swaney’s anxiety unadaptive? No. It is adapted to the situation well. Being lost
warrants a fearful or anxious reaction, but his past experiences also warrant a comforting, reassuring
memory reaction. If Swaney was not anxious, we would wonder whether he really loved his girl.

Because he is attached to her, he has anxiety from being left behind.
Developmental Theories

In this section, I will lightly cover four developmental theorists’ ideas, and their relations to my children’s book. I will go over Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky, and Bandura (Lightfoot, Cole, & Cole, 2009). While there may be some overlap, each theorist offers concepts and points of value in thinking about my book.

Piaget

Piaget, the constructivist, describes two stages of child development in the target age range for children reading my book as pre-operational followed by concrete operational. In the pre-operational stage, children are egocentric, meaning they can only see things from their point of view, have a tendency to confuse appearance and reality, and do not yet have cause and effect reasoning. My book attempts to share the experience of a stuffed animal lost in a museum. Children could see themselves in the animal, being egocentric, and think of their imagined experiences like his in the book. It is helpful for the children reading the book to confuse appearance and reality, because in the book, Swaney the stuffed animal is alive. In reality he is just a stuffed animal, inanimate. Children’s imaginations at this time help greatly in their ability to live in the story. Lastly, because pre-operational children do not have cause and effect reasoning, they may fail to get the larger message of Swaney’s learning how to take care of himself emotionally. All they will see is that he was delivered back to his girl. That is wonderful, too.

Piaget’s concrete operational stage is mostly described in terms of scientific observational thinking. However, at this stage children have declining egocentrism and are able to begin to conceive of intention behind action, the why, instead of just the action and consequence. These abilities allow for the possibility of different interpretation and understanding of my story. The child could think about things from Swaney’s point of view, think about the strangers helping him, think about his girl, his owner, and her feelings, or any number of things. The world is opening up.
Erikson

Erik Erikson separated the psychosocial development of children in the target age range of my book into four stages. In order, they are: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, and industry vs. inferiority, all taking place in the frame of one’s culture. In trust vs. mistrust, children are learning whom to trust, and whom not to trust. In the book, Swaney does not have much choice. He is at the mercy of strangers. But in his head, he trusts in his bond with his girl and that they will be reunited.

In the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage, children start to have wills and try to control themselves, or be intentional in their actions. Swaney’s physical actions are out of his control because he is just a stuffed animal, but his mental will is very prominent in the book. He experiences doubt that he will find his girl. His internal monologue full of anxiety and hope, along with his joy in the nose art, are the main points of the book.

During the initiative vs. guilt stage, children are becoming independent. They have ideas and want to initiate their own activities. They have negative emotions, such as guilt, when they are unable to be independent. Swaney has definite ideas and goes through his own adventure in this book. He is not as physically independent as fortunate children are, but he is mentally independent.

The last relevant stage of Erikson’s is industry vs. inferiority. This stage lasts beyond the scope of this book. In this stage, children strive to be competent and effective in activities judged to be valued by adults and peers. This relates to Swaney’s ability to contain himself and his emotions. For example, he is upset, but he does not cry or have a tantrum; he acts more mature. Children at this stage want to be more and more mature and effective at living.
Vygotsky

Vygotsky’s view of development involves cultural learning, scaffolding, and the zone of proximal development. To him, culture plays a very important role in what children learn and how they learn it. The values of the culture play a big part in the upbringing and teaching of children. Teaching children involves scaffolding activities for them. This takes place in the ‘zone of proximal development,’ where a child is at one stage independently, but with more knowledgeable peers or adults, he can achieve more than he would on his own. Scaffolding is placing the child in situations where they have the opportunity to reach beyond their current abilities.

My book could be used as a scaffolding tool for children. The adult reading the book to a child would emphasize what the child could learn from the book, for example, the self-talk methods Swaney uses to calm himself. This could be very helpful in a therapeutic setting, classroom, or at home, which I will discuss in the Applications section. My story is set in the cultural space of an art museum, which connects to Vygotsky’s idea of cultural learning.

Bandura

Bandura’s concepts modeling and self-efficacy (similar to but distinct from confidence) inform how the character of Swaney relates to the children reading the book and his environment in the book. Modeling is the name given to the process by which children learn by observation and imitation. Swaney models for children how to think about and stay calm in an anxiety-provoking situation. His internal monologue could be read as instructional, advice, or an example of one way to deal with anxiety. Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy is about how one thinks about one’s own ability to deal with the environment. At first Swaney has low self-efficacy, but gains self-efficacy when he remembers how
he dealt with similar situations in the past. His knowledge that he can get through hard times leads him to have high self-efficacy, or confidence, that he will be successful and survive to see his girl again.

Psychological Concepts

For this thesis, I researched two main child psychological concepts: transitional objects, or phenomena, and separation anxiety. The lead theorist on transitional phenomena was D.W. Winnicott, and the lead theorist for separation anxiety was John Bowlby. Their theories were created in the mid-twentieth century, and are still valid and prominent today. Below I will discuss various concepts from their theories and relate them to the character of Swaney and the story of Swaney at the Museum.

D. W. Winnicott and transitional objects

The British pediatrician and child psychologist D.W. Winnicott was a prominent 20th century theorist of children’s psychological development. He coined the term ‘transitional object.’ A transitional object is a physical comfort object for a child. This objects usually represents the familiar and safe feeling between caregiver and child even when the caregiver is away from the child. In my book, the main character, Swaney, is a transitional object.

Transitional objects can also be blankets, soft toys, pacifiers, or small tokens of the caregiver. They usually appear at infancy, around 1-2 years, and are phased out in elementary school. Of course, there is variation in the ages of onset and declining use. Some people hold on to their special possessions all their lives. I have heard of grandparents who still have their ‘lovis’ from when they were babies. Conversely, some children never use transitional objects. In my book, the girl is around 4 or 5, and she very much loves Swaney, her transitional object.

This is Koplow’s (2008) definition of a transitional object:
‘Toddlers endow a teddy, blanket, or other soft toy with the symbolic capacity to represent the intimacy and protection of the parent-child relationship. This special object, which is called a transitional object, gives toddlers the connection to the parents that they need in order to feel secure until they are able to achieve object constancy (the ability to carry the parent internally in their minds). . . . The invention of a transitional object also demonstrates the child’s capacity to create symbols . . . and to solve problems symbolically’ (pp. 8-9).

The protagonist Swaney is a transitional object for the character referred to as ‘His Girl.’ But the book is not about what he represents to her. Instead, this book is about what she represents to him, and what he does for himself when he is in dire straits. It is the story of a transitional object, from the point of view of that transitional object. He has much love and many coping skills on display. In their relationship, Swaney is the child, and his girl is the caregiver; their relationship represents or is a parallel for parent-child primary attachment.

Here is another description of transitional objects, but here the term is ‘substitute objects.’ Meunsterberger (1978) cites Roheim (1943), stating that substitute objects are ‘a means of assurance, something that is part of the individual and at the same time a representative of the loved person. Hence people ‘will never be left completely alone because failing everything else they have these children of their minds to love.’ The girl in the story has Swaney, a child of her mind to love, and he has her, also a child of his mind to love. In the story, both Swaney and his girl symbolize each other as object attachments and anxiety calmers.

Keeping in mind that Swaney attached to his girl as a mother figure, the following idea sheds light on Swaney’s situation in the book:

‘Temporary absence of the mother (or at least the caretaker) belongs to the expectable events in a baby’s life. In order to avoid renewed exposure to disillusionment, the teddy bear becomes
an inseparable companion … may serve to cover up the anxiety about the mother’s disappearance’ (Meusterberger, p. 8).

In this case, the girl carries Swaney as a transitional object, but what happens when the transitional object itself, personified, is ‘disillusioned’ and needs to ‘cover up the anxiety about the mother’s (or owner’s) disappearance?’ This is explored in my story.

Swaney functions much as a young child would. He works out a variety of emotions, chief among them fear. ‘There is his (child’s) fear of having been left behind. . . He had incorporated her (caregiver)’ (Meusterberger, (1978) p. 8). The theory is that the child (he) can have an internalized version of the absent mother or attachment figure. Before that stage of internalization, there is the transitional stage, or ‘space’ as psychologists call it, where the child imbues the comfort object with caregiver qualities. In the story from Swaney’s point of view, Swaney holds some caregiver qualities of his girl, but for himself. He holds onto his internal image of her to get through being lost.

**D.W. Winnicott and Transitional Space**

Winnicott’s theory of transitional objects grew from his theory of transitional space. Transitional space begins as the space between the caregiver and child. It grows as the child develops to encompass greater and greater physical and mental situations. There is a special concept of ‘space’ within psychological discourse. A patient and therapist have their space, in which they do therapy. This space, as such, does not just connote physical space. It refers more to mental space, the energy one commits to working out a specific relationship. The first meaningful space in a child’s life is thought to be the space given to the relationship with his/her caregiver. This develops into ‘transitional space,’ in which the child experiences and learns independence and growth. Along with transitional space, there are transitional phenomena, among them transitional objects. Transitional space is rich in opportunity for creativity, maturation, and definition of the self apart from the caregiver.
Here is a current day summation of transitional space from Caldwell (2013): ‘For Winnicott, creative work involves the way psychic location and mental space shape relations with self, with others, in memory and in the work of culture. This is part of what the idea of transitional space develops’ (p. xvi). Ideas of self, object relations, and the nature of the environment make up transitional space. Transitional objects are borne out of transitional space. They are physical symbols of the relation between the child and primary caregiver, who inhabit the transitional space. Winnicott’s idea of transitional space included ideas of cultural creativity.

Winnicott wrote in 1971 about how transitional space becomes cultural space:

‘Here where there is trust and reliability is a potential space, one that can become an infinite area of separation, which the baby, child, adolescent, adult may creatively fill with playing, which in time becomes the enjoyment of cultural heritage (p. 108).’

Swaney goes through his tribulation in a cultural space, the art museum, which Winnicott would include as a transitional space in the broad cultural sense, for a great number of people. So, Swaney is a transitional object in one relationship (with his girl), in a transitional / cultural space for a whole public. ‘The good transitional object can transcend its original meaning by metamorphosing into broad, intermediate transitional space, where symbol-laden cultural activities and creative, imaginative living take place’ (Deri, 1978, p. 53). I interpret this quote to mean that the useful transitional object represents many things and grows as the child’s conception of the world grows. Swaney is a multifaceted transitional object who travels, inhabits many spaces, and grows with his girl. One day, she will outgrow him, but as of now in the book, they are in happy symbiosis.

**Transitional Space and Creativity**

Meunsterberger (1978) discusses Roheim’s idea of the ‘location of magic’ being that first environment of the baby and mother, and then cites Winnicott (1967) and his idea of “the location of cultural
experience,’ which he designated as potential space’ (p. 9). The idea of ‘space’ used by these theorists seems to be a mental space where development and growing occurs, also imagination and learning, both cultural and playful. The Swaney of the book is a product of this creative, imaginative space in his girl’s psyche. He also has this talent and potential in his own psyche, and it is amplified by his being in the cultural space of a museum. Art, one could say, is the enactment of ‘space’ made manifest by the artists and the culture in which they produce their work. Swaney and the girl inhabit this space easily, as the realm of imagination and creativity is very present to young children.

Winnicott’s idea of ‘imaginative living,’ discussed by Meunsterberger (1978), as done by young children, sometimes with participation of others, is the climate of my book. ‘The child may use toys of any sort as a device for gaining assurance (Meunsterberger (1978) p. 12).’ Creative, cultural experiences happen in museums. Swaney is playing and coping in the museum, and he is a playful object, created through imagination. Milner (1978): ‘It is only in being creative that one discovers oneself’ (p. 41). Indeed, a transitional object is believed to be the infant’s first act of creation. Swaney is creative in finding ways to make himself less anxious, and he can calm himself by incorporating a self that takes care of him and looks out on the world with inner security.

For Winnicott, creativity and play are central and necessary to life itself. Claire Winnicott (his widow) states: ‘The capacity to play is equated with a quality of living. In his [D.W. Winnicott’s] own words, “Playing is an experience, always a creative experience, and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living” (Playing and Reality, p. 50)” (Between reality and fantasy, p. 18). Winnicott felt that creativity made life worth living. Because a transitional object is typically the first independent act of creation of a child, one could follow that creative and imaginative play make life worth living for the young child.
For Winnicott, creativity is a ‘coloring of the whole attitude to external reality. . . . It is creative appreciation more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living’ (1971, p. 65). Creativity here relates to the character of Swaney and his creation itself, as a transitional object, but also his own creativity in helping himself overcome a negative emotional state of anxiety from being left behind. He is in a place that celebrates creativity, an exhibition of nose art, and the works in the show help him overcome his anxiety by distracting him. All in all, creativity is central to the children’s book and the protagonist’s life.

Susan Deri (1978) expands transitional space, both cultural and creative, even further. She quotes Winnicott (1953):

‘This intermediate area of experience [transitional space], unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant’s experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living and to creative scientific work’ (p. 47).

This earliest generation, the creation of the transitional object, leads to the act of generating every things – play, religion, art, science. My book is teaching children, through the character of Swaney, positive and therapeutic generative acts, such as thoughts and attitudes that are comforting, preserving, and successful.

Paley wrote that the work of young children is play, and fantasy play is of utmost importance. Paley states: ‘Fantasy play is the blue that binds together all other pursuits, including the early teaching of reading and writing skills’ (2004, p. 8). Children engage in fantasy when they hear stories, like this one about Swaney in the museum. Children reading or hearing this book would be playing, imagining, and engaging with the fantasy I share. In the realm of ‘what if’s’ of fantasy, there can be embedded lessons.
The whole book is a fantasy, but there are some ideas the child reading or being read to can take away.

The main lessons of my book are about helping oneself through hard or anxious times.

**D. W. Winnicott and the Holding Environment**

There is another idea from Winnicott that has some salience here, the concept of the ‘holding environment.’ This is the safe place a child is in when being securely held by the mother. A secure holding environment contributes to secure attachment. In my book about the transitional object Swaney, his holding environment would be his girl. He was lovingly held by her, and he attached to her. It is her he misses when he is left behind because he is used to being in her arms. The external holding environment prompts the development of an inner holding environment, that of self-regulation. Swaney exercises his self-regulation during the course of the book.

The idea of the holding environment comes first from the physical embrace, but then with the idea of ‘space’ again, the holding environment expands. Babies learn to be content not only when held, but when the mother is nearby, first in the same room. As the child grows, he/she may be able to be relaxed just hearing the caregiver’s voice, maybe in another room. The safe environment expands and the caregiver can be farther and farther away, hopefully with check-ins from time to time. In this way, the child can stand going to school, etc. Optimally, the holding environment becomes internalized, and the child can regulate when away from the physical embrace.

Here is Koplow’s (2008): definition of the holding environment: ‘This term refers to a safe, containing space that allows children to express both positive and negative affects in constructive ways’ (p. 12). This definition extends the holding environment past the actual physical holding of the baby stage to a broader landscape. The holding environment could be in the classroom, with another adult, basically any safe space.
Children hold their transitional objects in imitation of being held securely by their caregivers. They derive comfort from this. Kestenberg & Weinstein (1978):

‘The holding of the transitional object and the illusion of being held by it recreates the feeling of mutual embrace . . . the feeling of support and security derived from holding strengthens his ability to comfort himself. Transient objects are very special possessions, endowed with powers to console and comfort’ (p. 79).

Swaney has the power to ‘console and comfort’ his girl, which we do not see, and also to console and comfort himself, which we do see. He is the transitional object holding himself and his girl internally. He keeps the loving relationship alive while separated.

In soothing himself, Swaney remembers times with his girl. Milner (1978) quotes Winnicott (1971) about remembering and calming: ‘The summation or reverberation of experiences of relaxation in conditions of trust based on experience’ (p. 41). This is what Swaney is doing while away from his girl. He remembers other experiences, with good and bad parts, but all ended well (being lost in other places and reunited). These memories relax him, because they remind him of the trust he has with his girl. Swaney remembers being relaxed in a relationship of trust. His girl always comes back for him, he thinks, and she will again.

**Transitional Objects and Internal / External Connections**

Deri (1978) writes of transitional objects coming from an internal place:

‘If the inside is a good place, then it is worthwhile to fill it with good things. The internalized things, which are symbolic representations of outside objects, might also become imbued with the good qualities of the space in which they are stored’ (p. 49).
This quote is a bit abstract, but it connects to the idea that Swaney is a symbol of good internal things, and he has also internalized his girl as a symbol of positivity. This internalization of symbol helps Swaney get through the hard time in the museum until he is reunited with his girl. His hardship could also become an experience that he calls upon later, a symbol of his ability to survive.

Deri (1978): ‘The transitional object is imbued with good mother-stuff and therefore undoes separation’ (p. 52). The girl is Swaney’s attachment figure, and he holds the positive connection while separated from her. Deri continues:

‘Early good transitional objects can do more than open the way to symbolic, creative living in transitional space. They can also lead to an appreciation of the qualities of the objectively perceived real, outside real. Imagine the child playing with his teddy bear, which, while the mother is absent, is fused with the illusion of mother qualities’ (p. 52).

Swaney acts out the functions of a transitional object for himself, with his self-comfort and resilience.

Swaney is a traveler. He explores with his girl. In the book, they begin together, but he goes on to have an adventure without her. ‘The good transitional object can also help to enlarge the child’s objectively perceived real world by serving as a trusty companion to hold onto while entering new territories’ (p. 52). Even though Swaney seems to get lost in new territories (airport, museum), there is trust between him and his girl, as they are always reunited.

Swaney symbolizes ‘secure, affectionate connectedness. This is the necessary matrix for the unfolding of the child’s creative capacities’ (Deri, 1978, p. 56). His girl created him, and he has creative capacities of his own. Deri continues: ‘Active creativity is predicated on the experience of the self containing a rich and fertile inner space’ (p. 57). This children’s story is about creativity, and Swaney is developing his inner space as he goes through the experience. Usually a child would be helped along in his thinking along Swaney’s lines, but Swaney is amazingly able to do it himself. Hopefully this book would be able
to help children develop inner space and their capacity to cope with events by scaffolding in the tradition of Vygotsky.

Kestenberg and Weinstein (1978) write about the emotional state that is the primordial soup from which transitional objects are made: ‘Transitional objects are created in loneliness. They are based on feeling alone, yearning for past intimacy, and the recreation of past togetherness, while weaving into it current wishes and hopes for the future’ (p. 90). This is very true for Swaney, and even he, as the transitional object, feels alone and yearns for past intimacy with his girl. He wishes for a future of reunification, and helps himself get there. He is a transitional object with consciousness who is an example of how to get through a tough time.

In Koplow’s project with bears in the elementary classroom, she writes: ‘They [children] use bears to decrease stress and anxiety and to give themselves a vehicle for addressing unresolved developmental, social, and emotional issues’ (2008, p. 7). Swaney’s girl may use him for that, but what we see in the children’s book is Swaney internally processing his experience. The unresolved issue would be his lost situation at the museum, and he tries to decrease his stress and anxiety. He is doing what he would do to support his girl, but he is doing it for himself.

**Transitional Objects and their Physical Aspect**

Kestenberg & Weinstein (1978) state that transitional objects are

‘the origin of creativity, at first expressed in illusion and play, and later in artistic contributions to culture. He [Winnicott, 1951] pointed out that transitional objects wear away when they lose their usefulness, but that their influence fuses with and spreads into all that is created in the special psychic area lying in the borderland between perceptions of internal and external reality’ (p. 75).
Swaney is illustrated as a worn stuffed animal. He is loved and ragged. (This shows that he has lived, for his girl created him.) If transitional objects are the origin of creativity, then there is a parallel of Swaney, the transitional object of the children’s story, being in an art museum, a hub of documented cultural creative activity.

Swaney is raggedy but strong, a survivor. As Kestenberg and Weinstein (1978) write, ‘Despite the changes in rhythms of playing and rhythms of shapes created by the child, despite the changes in size and texture through wear and tear, the transitional object is capable of retaining its basic characteristics, thus proving itself an indestructible possession’ (p. 89). In the story, Swaney persists and proves indestructible, despite his precarious situation at the mercy of strangers.

**Separation Anxiety**

The other major theme of my book is separation anxiety. Separation anxiety is the only type of anxiety clinically defined as having a childhood onset (Beidel & Alfano, 2011). Other anxieties have adult connection, while separation anxiety is confined to childhood. A child with separation anxiety is unable to hold the attachment figure in his/her mind, and unable to trust that the attachment figure holds the child in her mind. The child may be agitated and wonder if the caregiver is ever coming back, if they are not really loved, and fears they did something to make the caregiver go away or dislike the child.

Even with secure attachment, there can be separation anxiety. Separation anxiety is uneasiness aroused by the absence, or the thought of the absence, of the caregiver. The child may exhibit anxious behavior in inverse relation to the proximity of the caregiver. The child may cry, have a tantrum, hold on to the legs of the caregiver, be made at the caregiver when leaving or upon return. Some children pointedly ignore the caregiver because of fear of being left or abandoned. The child’s inability to understand time does not help. For example, even an adult going to the bathroom with the door closed can bring a state of unbearable heightened anxiety for a child, given his / her sense of time.
Bowlby is the child psychologist who came up with the idea of separation anxiety. Bowlby (1973) explains the basic idea:

‘A situation of that kind [complete confidence], it is suggested, holds between an individual and his attachment figure. Each party is inherently autonomous. Given basic trust the arrangement can work well. But any possibility of defection by the attachment figure can give rise to acute anxiety in the attached’ (p. 94).

This definition of separation anxiety is exactly what happens to Swaney in the book. His girl ‘defects,’ as it were, and he has a very specific resultant anxiety because he is attached to her.

Beidel and Alfano’s 2011 *Child anxiety disorders* was a helpful reference book about anxiety disorders, among them separation anxiety. Although the protagonist in my children’s book does not have a separation anxiety *disorder*, he has some separation anxiety. Swaney exhibits symptoms of the anxiety, but not to the extent that it becomes the disorder. For example, he has distress when separated from his major attachment figure, his girl. He does not worry about being lost very much, but when it does happen, he worries about his situation and hopes for reunification. He does not go to sleep without being near his major attachment figure, but that is because he is her transitional object. These ways he has separation anxiety are mild compared with what some children go through, but he is a hardy soul, as evidenced by how he deals with his situation.

Swaney experiences separation anxiety when he is left behind by his girl. I made his self-talk anxious at first. Then he goes into crisis management mode, where he tries to diffuse and calm the situation. In the children’s story, Swaney recalls his experiences with his girl leaving and coming back for him, and can reasonably and rationally predict a likely outcome to his problematic situation. This comes after his first panicky thoughts, when he calms down a little. Swaney’s self-talk includes points from Pantley’s list below. Elizabeth Pantley has written many books on raising children the ‘No-cry’ way. I wrote Swaney’s
part before I read Pantley, and I was surprised at how well Swaney matched Pantley’s ‘Lessons’ when he used his methods to control his anxiety.

Pantley (2010) writes of several life lessons to teach one’s child to cope with separation anxiety. The following are her lessons, all of which Swaney does in the children’s story:

‘-How to find ways to control his emotions in difficult situations
-How to handle his emotions about missing the people that he loves
- How to know people love him even when they are not with him
-How to use positive self-talk to convince himself to do things even when he has worries
-How to persist in unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations despite emotional challenges or fears
-How to use past successes as evidence that he is capable of overcoming fears and forging ahead’

(p. 14).

Swaney incorporated all of these life lessons, especially the last three. His self-talk, his fears, and his rememberance of past experiences all help him succeed.

Bowlby (1973) states:

‘Whenever our attachment behavior is aroused, . . . but for some reason we are unable to find or reach our attachment figure, we are likely to describe how we feel in much the same words. For example, we might say, ‘I was afraid you were gone,’ or ‘I was frightened when I could not find you,’ or ‘Your long absence made me anxious’ ’ (p. 92).

These are similar to the thoughts that run through Swaney’s head during the course of his being lost. But at the end of my book, he does not have to say anything. His girl rushes to kiss him and reassures him that ‘I will always come back for you.’
Development of a Natural Fear in Childhood

Separation anxiety stems from the natural fear reaction children have to being left alone. This reaction can also happen at just the thought of being alone, or the thought of the caregiver leaving. In some situations, it may actually be the child leaving, by going to school, for example. From the child’s point of view, however, it is as if the caregiver is leaving them there, so it is still a sense of the caregiver leaving. This goes back to Kestenberg & Weinstein’s (1978) idea that transitional objects are created out of loneliness.

Swaney is going through something that typically causes anxiety in children that fall in the target age for this book. Beidel and Alfano (2011) state that among the top three fears for the 3-5 year old age group is ‘being alone’ (p. 15). Bowlby (1973) states that being left alone is a situation ‘likely to elicit at least a little fear in a substantial proportion of young children’ (p. 110).

Transitional objects play a specific role in combating fear, as Bowlby states: ‘Fear can be readily aroused in situations that are not, in fact, the least dangerous; and also fear can be readily allayed by actions, such as clutching a teddy bear, that do nothing to increase safety’ (1973 p. 139). They may do nothing to increase safety, but they sure do feel good.

Bowlby (1973) on the potential danger of being alone:

‘Statistically, being alone is less safe than being with a companion. That that should be so during childhood is not too difficult to grasp. . . . In many circumstances still today it is as appropriate to avoid being alone as it is to avoid any of the other natural clues to potential danger. That we should be so constructed that we find comfort in companionship and seek it, and that we experience greater or less degrees of anxiety when alone, is, therefore, in no way surprising’ (pp. 142-3).
I would like to direct the reader to think of the companions mentioned here as transitional objects or attachment figures, as both have relevance in the children’s story. He goes on to state: ‘Throughout life, being alone is a condition that either stimulates fear or greatly intensifies fear aroused in other ways. Concomitantly, being with a companion greatly reduces fear’ (p. 166). What I take from this is that fear is natural, and that it has long been associated with being alone. The children’s book takes this age-old fear and tries to frame it in a way to make it less scary to children. A message from the book is that being alone does not last, it will end, and there are ways to think about it that can make the time alone easier to endure.

Remembering that his girl is Swaney’s attachment figure, Bowlby (1973):

‘It could be argued that an infant comes to learn that presence of mother is associated with comfort while absence of mother is associated with distress. Thus, through a fairly simple process of associative learning, an infant comes to associate mother’s absence with distress, and so to fear her being inaccessible’ (p. 180).

This is what happens, and Swaney is distressed. He works hard to combat his distress with therapeutic self-talk techniques, as referenced earlier in regard to Pantley (2010).

**Anger, Fear, and Distress**

Swaney, in the book, is a good example for children to see a character dealing with fear. Koplow (2008) states that, in relation to her classroom work with bears: ‘Children who have trouble owning sad, fearful, or angry affects may be more inclined to let those feelings be attributed to their bears’ (p. 85). This is a common way for children with transitional objects to cope. Children can identify with the transitional object in the children’s book this way. He (Swaney) has some negative emotions, and he deals with them in the book. Children can identify with his emotional experience because he is a representative, a symbol, for the children themselves.
Why does Swaney have a thought of anger at his girl when he realizes he has been left behind? It is a common fear reaction. Bowlby (1973):

‘The frequency with which anger is aroused after a loss, not only in children but in adults also, raises the question of what its biological function might be. The answer proposed is that whenever separation is only temporary, which in the large majority of cases it is, it may assist in overcoming such obstacles as there may be to reunion’ (p. 247).

As such, the anger fuels Swaney to try to do something about the problem. Because he cannot move on his own or talk out loud to most people (usually transitional objects only talk when their child is around for animation), this is particularly hard for Swaney. He needs to rely on strangers for help, but he still gets a little angry at the girl for hurting his feelings and leaving him in this precarious, frustrating situation.

I gave Swaney a feeling of anger to express aimed toward his girl, when he is first left alone, because it is normal and important to acknowledge that children are often angry or frustrated with their attachment figures. Primary attachment figures are often the first producers of an anger reaction in children.

Bowlby (1973), on frustration:

‘Anger and hostility directed towards an attachment figure, whether by a child or an adult, can be understood best, it is held, as being in response to frustration. There is reason to believe that the motivational systems mediating attachment behavior, are those affected especially when the agent of frustration is, wittingly or unwittingly, the attachment figure himself/herself’ (p. 256).

Swaney has a multi-hued reaction because he has internalized his attachment figure, his girl, and their patterns of being together. ‘Expectations regarding the availability of attachment figures that different
individuals build up are tolerably accurate reflections of the experiences those individuals have actually had’ (Bowlby (1973) p. 359). I thought it best for Swaney to have a variety of feelings towards his girl.

**Coping Self-talk**

A major part of my children’s book consists of Swaney’s effort to comfort and console himself through self-talk. The term ‘self-talk,’ as I have used it, refers to one’s conscious inner monologue. People can have negative self-talk, positive self-talk, or narrative self-talk, to name a few types. It is developmentally and therapeutically important for Swaney to demonstrate self-soothing self-talk for the children reading the book. They are learning to be more independent and to think for and watch out for themselves. At the same time, they may experience anxiety. Swaney’s example illustrates a possible way a child could try to deal with an anxiety-provoking situation.

Kendall, PodeII, & Grosch (2010) state that: ‘Children with anxiety tend to feel they can’t handle stressful situations, yet as a parent it is important to help your child feel competent’ (p. 13) The authors discuss teaching coping self-talk and ‘attitudes and actions I can take to help myself feel better.’ These involve noticing what one is thinking and feeling, and trying to institute more positive self-talk patterns. One thought they encourage is ‘I’ve done this before so I can do it again.’ Swaney thinks this in the book. He has two memories, one of his girl going off to school, and one of being lost in the airport, where he goes through separation / loss, gets anxious, and is reunited with his girl. Things are ok in the end. He got through the tough times. Swaney remembers ‘doing this before, so I can do it again.’

Kendall, et. al (2010) also state the importance of challenging anxious self-talk (p. 14). This tends to be negative or catastrophic in nature. They list some challenges, one of which Swaney uses: ‘What has happened before?’ Instead of being frightened and anxious and falling into a negative thinking trap, Swaney pulls himself together by asking himself this question, and another: ‘How likely is it that what I’m expecting is going to happen (found / not being found)?’ Some other coping thoughts include: ‘I
will try my best, and I will be proud of myself if I try.’ Not every one of these thoughts is explicit in my book, but this is the idea of his general mindset as he comes to grips with his problematic situation.

The story of Swaney is an example of a narrative of a problem being solved. Trustram (2013) ‘Painful feelings can be more easily borne if they are carried in a narrative because the narrative gives them meaning’ (p. 193). I wrote this children’s story to help children and others cope with negative emotions. In the story, Swaney’s own sense of self-narration gives his experience an arc that he can see the end of, even if he doesn’t exactly know when he will be reunited with his girl. Nevertheless, he has confidence his story will end that way.

Applications

Storytelling, and how one introduces the story and discusses it after, can make the story approachable for different children, each with different life backgrounds. ‘Whenever we are reminded that there may be a story involved, our minds seem to loosen up and work better’ (Paley, 2004, p. 91). From a child’s point of view, the prospect of being read a story is less stressful than if the child has to read the story independently. With a group or individually, the ‘loosening up’ that we do when we are told stories helps to open up the mind to different perspectives or ways of thinking about things. My book is a light-hearted approach to some more serious themes.

Children from ages 4-8 especially enjoy being read to, according to Chip Wood (1994). Younger ages generally love story time, but may have less understanding, and after 8 they are generally more independent and can do the reading by themselves. As my book is a book to be read with an adult to facilitate and help the reader understand the themes of coping self-talk and dealing with anxiety. The book could also be read alone by the child, to enjoy the art and general fun of a stuffed animal’s adventure in the art museum.
There are three types of settings in which I imagine or intend this book to be read, all children with adults. The first is as a large group in school. The class could be getting ready to go on a field trip to a museum, or have already done so. Because the book describes a little what museum guards do, what makes up a museum, and how to behave in a museum, it could be useful to read before going over rules. The class could also read the book in order to facilitate discussion about feelings of being left behind or left out of things, or anxiety in general.

The second setting I imagine this book being read is at home with family. The same themes could be discussed as in the above setting, but more personal attention could be paid to the child’s questions and thoughts about the book. One might study the pictures of art in the art museum more carefully, or ask what the child thinks Swaney should do in certain parts.

The third setting would be a therapeutic setting. Again, themes discussed in the above two settings could be discussed here. More time would be spent on the internal processes of Swaney and what he thinks, hopefully with the child relating it to him/herself. Many types of leaving or being left alone could influence the discussion, as there are many events in children’s lives that make them feel vulnerable in relation to that idea.

In the classroom and therapy settings, I would hope that the children could engage in dramatic role play inspired by the book. How would they change events? ‘Fantasy play, rather than being a distraction, helps children achieve the goal of having an open mind, whether in the service of further storytelling or in formal lessons’ (Paley, 2004, p. 26). Children could use the Swaney book to inspire dramatic play about being lost and found, overcoming anxious situations, etc., and even beyond what I imagine.
Conclusion

This is the conclusion of my Integrative Master’s Project. It consists of a children’s book about a stuffed animal lost in a museum, overcoming tricky emotions, and an explanation of the thoughts and theories that went into the making of the storyline. Here are some final thoughts.

Each story is a journey. Swaney’s journey involves being ok while trying to find his girl. Milner (1978) writes: ‘The transitional object as the symbol of a journey, it seems really to be a two-way journey: both the finding of the objective reality of the object and to the finding of the objective reality of the subject – the I AM,’ or self. (p. 41). The girl in the story, the owner, has done this in creating her imagined life with Swaney, but that is not the subject of the story. In the story, Swaney finds the ‘objective reality’ of himself (he has a definite sense of self and personality) and his relationship with the girl. He finds trust, has faith, and takes comfort in the knowledge of their relationship due to past experiences.

Bowlby (1973) quote Mahler (1972): ‘We are never completely independent of the need that a trusted helpful person exists and could be called if necessary’ (p. 361). Swaney is a trusted helpful person for his girl, as her transitional object. Strangers in the museum are trusted helpful people for Swaney.

Bowlby (1973) cites two authors who shed light on the unique situation of Swaney. He is a transitional object, a companion who helps his girl deal with her negative emotions associated with being independent from her attachment figure. At the same time, he is attached to her, and has his own feelings about being separated from her. Their relationship works both ways. She is also a companion for him. ‘Valentine (1930) remarks that ‘the presence of a companion is a well-known banisher of fear’’ (p. 119). I also like this idea of Laughlin’s: ‘Laughlin (1956) has proposed a new term, ‘soteria,’ as an obverse of phobia, to denote the intense sense of reassuring comfort that a person may get from a ‘love object,’ be it a toy, charm, or talisman’ (pp. 119-20). This is a perfect definition of Swaney in his
traditional transitional object role. When he is left by his girl, he has to provide the comfort for himself, so he is also a self-soothing transitional object. He can soothe his charge, which we do not see, and he can soothe himself, which we do see. (He is very talented.)
Appendix A: References
References


Appendix B: Literature Review
In the children’s picture book annotated bibliography, I describe 15 books having to do with separation anxiety and / or transitional objects, mainly stuffed animals. There are a couple books that have to do with school anxiety or phobia, but I wanted to select separation anxiety books that were about other separations than school. School phobia books are available in great numbers, so I tried to focus on other separation situations, like going to the hospital, being left behind or lost, and parents leaving on a trip.

My children’s book, about the stuffed dog Swaney getting lost at the museum in an exhibition of nose art, has some qualities that the other books I looked at do not have. For example, the character Swaney has a very complex inner life, full of thoughts, emotions, and remembrances. He has much internal functioning going on, and the children’s books I reviewed featured animals and children who are simpler. In the book Swaney is a stuffed animal, but he can also represent a childlike character with whom young readers can identify.

Much of what makes up his internal dialogue comes from what I have learned about psychology, thoughts, and anxiety in children. I did not find a therapeutic approach in the literature I found. I did find some therapeutic themes that came up here and there, but not overtly.

One of the coping skills Swaney employs is distraction. The hugging hour, in which Drool stays with her Grandma for one night, features distraction. In that book, the grandma and her pet chicken, Kip, distract Drool with all kinds of things (sweets, dress-up, sock knitting), so that she forgets for periods of time that she is anxious her parents have left. Most of the other books focus on having patience and waiting for the attachment figure to return, either to pick the child / animal up at school or after a dance lesson, for example. Swaney also needs to practice being patient and waiting for his girl to find him again, but he uses other coping strategies while he waits.
One of these coping strategies is coping or soothing self-talk. None of the books I looked at feature self-talk. Some of it is implied in the pictures, mostly internal states of apprehension, for example, in Blue Kangaroo at night, or Celestine’s upset and obsessive drawing of her lost green-beaked love, but there are no overt methods of thinking (positively to get through things) shown.

Swaney also thinks and remembers that he can get through this tough situation, because he survived something similar before. Most of the books do not feature memory, or using memory to make oneself feel better. One exception is Barney is best. That is the book where the boy needs to go to the hospital and chooses to take Barney, a favorite stuffed animal. In the book, the boy remembers other hard times Barney helped him get through. I wonder why memory is so rarely featured in these books. Maybe it is because of the target age of the children? Younger children do not have access to reliable memories very readily.

Of all the books I read for this literature review, the one with most similarities to my story is Corduroy. In it, a bear has internal thoughts and feelings and talks himself through an adventure in a department store. He begins on the shelf wanting a home, and ends with a little girl, who saw him once, coming back for him to take home with her. Separation, reunion, narrating one’s journey through a public space, even being handled by an employee back to where he belongs: all of this happens to Corduroy and Swaney.
Appendix C: Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Picture Books

A boy has to get his tonsils out at the hospital, and chooses to take his older brother’s transitional object, Barney the elephant, instead of a newer stuffed animal. The boy remembers other times when Barney helped him get through hardships, like Swaney remembers other times he had been forgotten. With the help of Barney the transitional object, the boy remembers and talks himself through hard times to deal with what is currently. (14 double pages)


A little girl named Lily has Blue Kangaroo, loves him and sleeps with him in her bed. He feels secure. One by one she gets new stuffed animals, which make him feel insecure, and each time, Blue Kangaroo is pushed closer and closer to the edge of the bed. One night he is pushed out of bed. He goes down the hall to her baby brother’s room and gets in bed with him. The next day, Lily is upset, and wants Blue Kangaroo back. Her mother says she has to share. Lily says her brother can have all the rest of the stuffed animals, but not Blue Kangaroo. So, Lily gives him all her new stuffed animals, and it is back to just Lily and Blue Kangaroo in bed. Blue Kangaroo is content. (15 double pages)


Otto is a bear that lives in a storybook. When the family he was living with moves, he searches the city (London), looking for a new home. He, like Swaney, is left behind. Eventually he finds his way to the library, meets other book animals, and finds a place in a new story. His journey begins with uncertainty, and ends with Otto having lots of new readers. (14 double pages)


Zoran’s mom has to go to New York for a business trip. They are both having a hard time, so his mother has the idea that Zoran can choose ‘the perfect something special’ that he can give to her to take with him. The son creates a transitional object for his mother. He searches and searches, finally settling on a drawing that says ‘I love you, Mommy.’ (14 double pages)


Baby llama has separation anxiety upon going to school. He takes a transitional object stuffed animal with him, and holds him the whole time (only illustrated), until he starts having fun and participating. He misses his mama very much. She finally comes back for him at the end of the day, and he is overjoyed. (15 double pages)


In anticipation of his father going away for two weeks, Abe and his father talk about how Abe will be able to know when his father is due to come back. His father describes the phases of the moon to Abe, and says that he is leaving during a crescent moon, and will be back when the moon is full, two weeks. The boy will draw the moon each night the father is away. They set up a coping system for the boy. (10 double pages, text heavy)

**Corduroy** is the classic tale of a teddy bear named Corduroy. He has green corduroy overalls with a missing button, and he lives in a department store. He wants to be someone’s transitional object. One day a girl wants him, but her mother says he is missing a button and she spent too much money already. That night, in the empty store, Corduroy explores looking for a button. He has an adventure and talks himself through his wanderings. A night watchman spots him and carries him back to the toy shelf. The next morning the little girl comes back with her savings and buys him. She brings him home. He thinks that this must be home, and that he always wanted a home. He says she must be a friend, and he always wanted a friend. The girl says, ‘Me, too.’


This book is ‘Dedicated to children who wait.’ Jessie’s mom is late to pick her up after her first day of dance class. Jesse feels forgotten as she watches all the other children get picked up. The teacher and Jessie call her mom, who the reader knows through illustrations is having car trouble, and no answer reinforces the feeling Jessie has of being forgotten. Her mother shows up, and all are happy. This book has few words per page, sometimes none, and is mostly told through the drawings. (13 double pages)


A little girl named Drool experiences her first sleep-over at her Grandma’s house. She wonders if her parents are ever coming back, and calls herself an ‘abandoned orphan.’ Her grandma and her grandma’s pet chicken, Kip, distract Drool, but throughout the book she longs for her parents. They finally come for her, and Drool is happy. She asks to go to Grandma’s house again next weekend. (14 double pages)


Told in the first-person by a little boy, we learn of one night when he and his stuffed animals were planning on having a party. Just as they are about to start, his father comes in to read a bedtime story. The father falls asleep in the middle of the story, and they decide to have the party anyway. They play with balloons, ride a toy train, and go downstairs to the kitchen to get something to eat. The sleeping father comes with them, conveyed by the big stuffed elephant. At the end they deposit the father into the room he shares with the mother, then continue their party. Throughout, the stuffed animals are exuberantly alive. (14 double pages)


A heart-warming story about Chester the raccoon going off to overnight school. He does not want to go, but his mother tells him about the ‘Kissing hand,’ in which one person kisses the other person’s palm. When the other person presses his or her palm to their cheek, the kiss goes through his body and right to his heart. Chester’s mother does this for Chester, and then he does it for her. This memento, or body-specific transitional phenomenon, helps both with the parting for school. (13 double pages)

Celestine is an animal who has a transitional object with a green beak named Gideon. During a walk with Ernest, who is a parental figure, she drops Gideon in the snow. She despairs. Ernest buys many new toys, but Celestine misses Gideon. She draws Gideon for Ernest, and he makes a new Gideon. Celestine is happy, and they have a party wherein other children get the toys Celestine didn’t want. (12 double pages)


Rosie is four years old and has a new younger sibling. She talks to her mom about her ‘babies,’ two transitional stuffed animals (a rabbit and a bear). Her mom asks questions and Rosie recounts their adventures and hijinks. When the real baby sibling goes to bed, Rosie says she does not want to talk about her babies, because they also went to bed. Her mother asks her what she wants to talk about now, and Rosie says, ‘Me!’ (10 double pages, crowded with words and illustrations)


This is a separation and reunion story about a little dog at school waiting to be picked up. All the other parents come to pick up their respective animal offspring. The dog gets worried, but is picked up in the end, tail wagging. (17 double pages)


Trixie, who has yet to speak in intelligible words, loses her transitional object, Knuffle Bunny, in the wash at the Laundromat. She gets very upset, but her dad does not understand. When they get home, her mother notices that Knuffle Bunny is gone. They all go back to the Laundromat and find Knuffle Bunny. ‘Knuffle Bunny!’ are Trixie’s happy first words. (15 double pages)