SAN LUIS OBISPO CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
IDENTITY SYSTEM

BY

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ABSTRACT

This is an extended progress report that touches upon the purpose of the proposal for San Luis Obispo Child Development Center’s new identity system, the research and process that are developed throughout the one quarter of time, and the result of what is learned from this project.
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Chapter I - Introduction

San Luis Obispo Child Development Center is a child abuse intervention program for families, aiming to prevent child abuse and strengthen families through treatment programs. Although the organization has been established since 1971, it lacks a strong presence in the community partly because of its lack of an effective identity and print communications system. For this reason, my senior project is dedicated to redefining the organization’s identity. The new identity system will not only increase organization awareness and clarify the Vision and Values of the organization, but also encourage advocacy and support from the target audiences, thus further reaching the mission that they are trying to accomplish.

The main element in the entire system is the logo, which needs to not only represent the organization, but also work cohesively with the rest of the system. Although no longer being used, the original logo is a wordmark that is accompanied by the organization’s mission statement. The incorporation of a graphic icon in the logo is an appropriate step toward creating an effective graphic system that can be used with or without the extensive name of the organization. The icon serves as both the visual impact that draws in the viewer’s attention, and the formal element that is the key to tying in the entire identity system.

The logo needs to represent the organization on a professional level and express a sense of care that appeals to the children and families that the organization is helping. Through the new identity system, members of the organization should feel more
empowered to strive toward the cause, knowing that they are professionally represented. Volunteers and members of the community should be more encouraged to join and assist, while families should feel more confident to seek aid from an organization that genuinely cares about helping them succeed at work, school, home, community, and life overall.

Because it is a nonprofit organization, there is not really a good budget dedicated to its publicity, and for this reason, the new identity system is designed with cost and ease-of-use in mind. All the pieces can be printed using a two-color printing process or in black and white, and the majority of them can be printed using the organization’s in-house printers. Overall the system is professional, yet easy and affordable to produce and to distribute.
Chapter II – Review of Research

Before any design work can happen, the first most important step is to understand the organization. San Luis Obispo Child Development Center offers many programs and services for children and families at no cost. Their mission is to not only prevent child abuse, but help strengthen families. They have a professional team that is dedicated to carrying out the organization’s objective and goals. It is important to know the mission and vision of the organization because they will be crucial in the research and development stage. The final design has to project in an appropriate image that represents organization professionalism and value.

The next step for the development of the logo is finding the appropriate imagery to use for inspirations. In reading the facts about the organization, it is determined that much of their effort is dedicated to helping children and families succeed at work, school, home, community, and life. Since the main emphasis is on the children and their families, it is appropriate to lean the direction of the research toward images that convey a sense of positive parent-child relationship as well as a loving home.
After collecting the appropriate images, learning from existing logos of similar organizations is also an important step in creating a successful logo. Many of these logos seem to share one common thing, the use of the human form and hands. They prove to be successful at igniting a strong sense of emotion that encourages care and support.

Since the name of the organization is lengthy and extensive, it is certainly helpful to look at successful type treatments of existing logos of similar kind for ways for solutions. Most of the logos are kept in two lines and often accompanied by some sort of graphic icon. SLO Child Development’s original logo is a wordmark that is no longer used. It includes the full name of the organization as well as its mission. The new proposal is to add a graphic icon to the name in place of the mission. The graphic icon can become a recognizable icon that can be later used on its own if desired, and can also add visual impact to the logo.

San Luis Obispo Child Development Center
A Child Abuse Intervention Program for Families
Chapter III – Procedures and Results

After one of the first initial meets with Catherine Trujillo, the current President of the organization, the *Starfish Story* by Loren Eisley became one of the starting inspirations for the ideation process. It is a story that she feels greatly represents the value and quality of the organization, being that it is about the impact one can make in other people’s lives through small changes. It is a story told from a child’s point of view, making it much more personal and heart warming. In this first stage of the ideation process, the time is spent experimenting with the starfish shape and finding ways to combine it with other appropriate shapes to communicate the Vision of the organization. Among the gathered materials from the research stage, images of home and family seem to be suitable graphics that can be incorporated with the star shape. Some of the ideas include turning the star shape into a human figure and a house.
Although the star concept seems to have good potential, further progress on it indicates otherwise. Technically, the rough versions above show that most all of the shapes lose their recognizability when integrated together. *The Starfish Story* is also too abstract conceptually to be represented through a simple star shape, and might not be the most appropriate icon to represent the organization as a whole.

Moving away from the star shape, any objects that seem to communicate happiness and positive growth in children are also explored with for more options.

While revisiting the vision of the organization, the image of the human form comes to mind. The human form seems appropriate not only because the organization is about helping children build healthy relationship with their parents, but it is also about people making differences in each other’s lives. Images that show interaction between the
parent(s) and the child are appropriate in portraying the positive relationship that the organization is aiming to establish. They can be easily understood and related with sentimentally. However, detailed rendering is often required for human figures, making it difficult to read when shrinking down to small scale. While the intention is not to have a heavy illustrative icon, the detailed human figures seem to not be the appropriate direction to go in. The more simplified versions of them can begin to look trivial, and come across as lacking a warm human quality; therefore, this also fails to be an effective icon.

Hands begin to replace the human figures because they project similar feelings, but are much easier to simplify graphically without losing their integrity. They are powerful images for showing a sentimental value that is much easier to relate to for viewers. They have a warm quality, and when shown in contact with each other they can speak louder than words. Since the organization’s goals are not limited to just helping
families prevent child abuse, but also building healthy relationships within them, the hands are appropriate in representing both the staff’s healing hands and those of the families’ they are aiding. Hands are universal and recognizable by people from all cultures and require little or no explanation at all. The house and heart shape are also being incorporated back to further emphasize the idea of family love. Similar to the human figures, the simplified version of the hands is favored over the detailed. Among the variations of the interacted hands, the ones with the adult hand reaching out to the child’s are the most effective because they are not as overly-done as the holding hands, and they show a sense of affection that is caught in the moment. The heart is then used as a framing device to not only frame this precious moment, but to represent a result of the connection. The play with negative and positive space between the heart and the hands make them much more visible and catchy, and unifies them in a nice way. The addition of the stroke in the hands gives it a realistic look without being too heavily illustrative or detailed. The strokes also help create the illusion that one hand is frontal and one is on its back, suggesting that the hands will be clasped together when touching. With the hand connecting to the heart (without the stroke/coming in from the white space), the heart and the hands are unified as one shape rather than two shapes overlying each other. The strokes also help differentiate the adult’s hand from the child’s. The hands are being positioned in an almost vertical/diagonal format to give the illusion that the adult hand is reaching out to grab the child’s hand, reemphasizing the goal of the organization. This could also represent the healing hands of the organization’s staff reaching out to the children.
Now that the main icon has been roughly determined, the next step is to determine a color palette. Earthy and warm color palettes are meant to bring warmth to the hands and to the relationship represented, and also to communicate a sense of professionalism because they are neutral and muted. The playful color palette goes in a different direction, making the icon much more playful and bright, aiming to bring out the childish feeling. Due to the limited budget, the final color palette is narrowed to two so that it lowers printing cost and makes it easier to print and turn into a grayscale when necessary. Since the hands are going to be the positive space, red is picked among all the colors because it’s a warm color that could represent the heart (the negative space) and bring out the loving quality of the connection between the hands. It is also bright enough to not be lost in the background. Previous research on relating organizations that use hands on their logos shows that red is a successful color that works on logos that use hands.
Now that the main icon and the color scheme have been determined, the next step is to do some type study and type placement. Due to the nature of the name, the organization prefers to have it all intact, and no abbreviation is allowed except for San Luis Obispo. The original logo has the name all in one horizontal line, making difficult to read and hard to use visually on applications. The new suggestion has the name broken in two lines, but still keeps information with its appropriate context, meaning the only break that can be made is between San Luis Obispo and Child Development Center. This also works visually because there is an equal balance between the two lines with three words on each. Although Center could also be on its own, it looks strange visually with one word stranded alone on the third line. The goal is to use a font family that is large so that it can provide enough variations for the name visually. Child Development Center needs to be the focus and at the top in hierarchically. Variations in terms of scale, bold, and capitalization are used to give this part more emphasis; this also helps differentiate the two parts, making it easier to read the long text line. Keeping all the text in the same case seems to work the best because it’s much nicer on the eyes and seems to add less heavy weight on the already long name. The left alignment proves to be more effective than the
right or center alignment because it leaves a nice space for the icon to be incorporated in. Although san serif fonts are more professional and clean, serif fonts are preferred because they are much more personal and warm and less corporate and rigid. Among all the serif fonts, slab serif ITC Officina is the final choice because of its large family and its slab quality. Since it has been determined to be a two-color process, the text is kept in black color. Various shades of gray are also tested among other variations to separate the information and add visual interest. Gray works well with San Luis Obispo because it emphasizes the name, making the Child Development Center part more prominent. The incorporation of a thin line is also experimented with to further divide the information and add some visual interest to the text. Because the name is so extended, abbreviated versions are also tested. The one problem with this is that it needs to be all in Caps, making it harder to work with because it looks out of proportion next to the rest of the lowercase letters. To keep the integrity of the name, San Luis Obispo is kept in its full name. This also helps make the organization look more established and trustworthy.

**COOKIES**

*calvin and hobbes*

*TOURIST TRAP*

*Candy Randy*

ITC Officina Serif
The secondary type study is also crucial because it helps determine the appropriate type that will later be used with the logo for various applications. San serif fonts prove to work well with ITC Officina Serif because they create a nice contrast and are easy to read, especially when used in a large body of text.

Univers
Futura
Helvetica
ITC Officina Sans
News Gothic MT

The next step is to incorporate the typography with the icon. The scale of the heart is experimented to make sure that it looks proportional with the text. A problem arises when the icon can’t be shrunken down too small because the strokes get lost and blend in together.
It is now in the finalizing stage with small details needing to be corrected. After critiques and peer reviews, the heart seems to be too centered and generic. As a result, the heart is turned sideways, making it much more dynamic visually and interesting to look at. This also results in the correction of the shape of the arms and their placement. With the hands/arms repositioned at the top and bottom tip of the heart, the heart becomes more discreet and there is a nice flow between the two shapes, ultimately helping unify
them. The curved arms also create a nice swooping motion that leads the eye right into
the name when reading from left to right, thus acting as a directional element. The strokes
between the hands also need minor tweaking and to be slightly increased in weight
because they get lost when shrunken down.

Now that the logo has been finalized, the next step is to apply it to various applications.
The limitation of the budget led to the decision to keep everything in 2 colors, 1-sided,
and with no bleed, making it easy to produce for most of the applications, which are
going to be printed using in-house printers. Business card, envelope, letterhead, brochure,
donation form, and a standard manual are all the applications. Because there is a lot of
color used, bringing back the thin red divider line not only helps separate the information
better, but it also adds a little pop to the applications. The color red is also used
throughout many applications as an accentuator and in order to create hierarchy. The
experimentation using the gray bar behind certain information as well as the italicized
text are meant to add more visual interest due to the plain nature of everything, but prove
to be ineffective and only add unnecessary clutter to the design. For the business card, the
decision is made to incorporate the slogan/tag line with the intention of helping bring
forward the vision and purpose of the organization. This tag line was originally
incorporated in the logo and is still being used, but in a different format. It is in gray and
is smaller than the rest of the text before it, as it is supposed to be an extra element that is not at the forefront of the business card (thus not competing with the important information). Various placements of both the information and the logo are experimented with, but the final decision is made to keep the information left-aligned to be cohesive with the logo. Additionally, this alignment is also carried over to the envelope. The tag line is also incorporated in the letterhead because it is appropriate for an application that is mostly going to be used for professional purposes. The final version has the info centered at the bottom, appearing to be much more balanced as compared to being centered at the top, where it appears to be too heavy. Although information regarding donations is available on their website, they lack an official hard copy of a form that could be mailed or handed out. The addition of this will help gain more support and make them much more established. The donation will hopefully outweigh the cost. The use of the gray bar is appropriate in this case, and is used accordingly. The fact sheet is just an existing application that has been redesigned to be more cohesive with the rest of the graphic system. The final piece is the standard manual. This is to ensure that the organization is clear on how to use the logo, helping maintain its integrity. The format is kept in a way that would unify it with the rest of the stationary system.
San Luis Obispo
Child Development Center
a child abuse intervention program for families

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Chapter IV – Summary and Recommendation

Many valuable lessons have been learned as a result of this project. It is very important to start off the design process with research because it is what will set the stage for ideation. Having a good understanding of the organization and its goal is evenly crucial in setting the direction of the design. Also, this project was an excellent opportunity to work with an extended organizational name, and making it effective as a logo. It is difficult to break up the name because of its integrity while still keeping it compact as a whole. Looking at existing references certainly helps with finding the solution for this design problem. Furthermore, this project provided a great opportunity to work within tight color palette and budget restrictions, providing more room for learning and experimentation. When dealing with nonprofit organizations such as San Luis Obispo Child Development Center, it is very important to keep the limited budget in mind, and be able to work effectively and successfully within it.
Bibliography

