Changing a Paradigm:
Centralization in a Decentralized System

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Abstract

I examine how an abstract formulation of the organizational design problem is applied to the concrete instance of a particular organization trying to implement a change in its structure. The abstract conception is that of balancing centralization and decentralization in a historically decentralized organization. The concrete case is centered on the change initiated by the Hillel International Center in regard to relationships with local Hillels alongside the organization's 2006 Strategic Plan. Comparing the theoretical and tangible, I examine what organizational theory can learn from Hillel in how an organization applies theoretical ideas and what Hillel can learn from organizational theory to better accomplish its goals. While each story is interesting alone, the dynamic of these two narratives together provides insight into the complexities of organizational theory and the challenges an organization confronts when attempting to implement a theoretical paradigm.

To accomplish this objective, the paper will be structured in four general sections: (I) Setting the Stage; (II) Examining the Confluence; (III) Implications; (IV) Avenues for Future Research; and (V) Conclusion.   (I) Setting the Stage consists of (a) a theoretical review of organizational design in regard to the dynamic between centralization and decentralization; and (b) a historical review of the history of Hillel. (II) Examining the Confluence is composed of (a) methodology; (b) an analysis of Hillel today, specifically examining the local Hillels vis-à-vis the International Center; and (c) conclusions. (III) Implications consists of (a) a discussion of what Hillel can teach about organizational design as an organization dealing with attempting to implement theoretical ideas; and (b) what organizational design can continue to teach Hillel. (IV) Suggests avenues for future research that could provide more insight into the

centralization/decentralization challenge. (V) Ties the discussion together with a brief

conclusion.

I. Setting the Stage

A. Theoretical Review of Centralization and Decentralization

As technology improves, decreasing the cost and time of communicating, and as physical

distance matters less than in the past, organizations spread over a large geographic area must

confront new challenges as well as deal with old challenges in new ways. One classic challenge

all organizations face is that of the balance between centralization and decentralization. Finding

an effective solution for this dynamic is particularly complicated for spatially and functionally

complex organizations that operate in different markets and multiple environments. The

effective solution is not one of isolated extremes, but like Baker and France found in their study

of "centralization and decentralization of the industrial relations function…related to degree and

balance" of these dynamics (Baker, 1954: 17). Each form of organization has various benefits

and costs, depending both on the specific characteristics of organizational function, composition,

and environment as well as based on general trends of these traits associated with these forms.

Organizational theorists often divide organizations into centralized and decentralized

structures and discuss the associated costs and benefits of each type of structure. As Lorsch and

Allen address, however, creating this dichotomy has the potential to oversimplify the dynamics

of the organization and deny "the importance of differing environmental and economic issues

facing various organizations" (Lorsch, 1973: 6). Therefore, it is important to recognize that

although relative norms can be developed from both centralized and decentralized organizational

structure, purpose and action are tightly intertwined and influence the development of organizational characteristics.

Centralization is the overarching term used to categorize an organizational structure where power and decision-making reside at one primary locus. The complex nature of modern organizations, however, means that even in a highly centralized organization, different parts of the organization may have different spheres of authority, clouding the clear theoretical image. Decisions could be made in one central office, leading to a measure of centralization that corresponds with that developed by Hage as "the power to make work decisions" (Hage, 1967: 74). This measure, however, only colors one part of the picture. Following the decision-making process, the implementation process plays a large role in organizational life and results are largely influenced by structure.

The costs and benefits of centralization boil down to similar points. A more centralized decision-making apparatus may lead to less political conflict in determining policy and a more united organization. Political behavior is related to "those activities that…influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization" (Farrell, 1982: 405). Organizations using a more centralized organizational design are more likely to have less opportunity for participants to influence decisions and thus less opportunity for political conflict. A potential result of this type of structure, however, is the potential for disconnect from the various stakeholders that decisions directly impact. As a result, even if decisions are easily made, they may be more difficult to implement, thus hampering this potential benefit of centralization. Baker and France identified this dilemma and found that, "in some cases, the unwillingness of local units to accept wholeheartedly centrally determined policies has prevented proper coordination" (Baker, 1954: 70). This implementation difficulty is

associated with a lack of perception of control over one's decision. Due to the centralization of power, a centralized decision-making process may decrease a perception of ownership or personal efficacy by individuals outside that sphere of authority.

Along with a potential decrease in political complications due to a centralized process, organizational efficiency could increase. With less conflict and less bureaucracy, decisions could theoretically be made more quickly and thus be filtered to the relevant parties and implemented without a great deal of conflict. Although centralization does not guarantee a less bureaucratic structure, Mansfield argues that Weber "implied a negative relationship" between these concepts (Mansfield, 1973: 478). Although ideal bureaucracies are meant to expedite processing information and implementing ideas, the associated "red tape" often muddies this ideal and hampers efficient organizations. Therefore, with less bureaucracy, a centralized structure can quickly determine and implement ideas across the organization. Even with this structure, however, an organization may lag in response to adjusting to change. Once change is attempted, the organization can quickly adjust its strategy and operations due to one primary nexus of information and processing.

Decentralization is not simply the opposite of centralization but rather a type of structure that provides for localized (in terms of both internal and external measures) decision-making and accountability along with a dispersion of implementation nodes. A system under this rubric may more quickly adjust to changing circumstances at specific units but have a more difficult time adjusting as an entire organization due to the potential disconnect between divisions. This characteristic is expanded upon by Wilson, as he hypothesized that "the greater the diversity within an organization, the greater the probability that organizational participants will conceive of and propose major innovations, and the smaller the probability that such proposals will be

adopted (Rowe, 1974: 287). He argued that although a diverse and likely decentralized environment may provide more inertia for the development of ideas that directly affect local decisions, the complexity of this structure entails a difficult process of organization-wide adoption.

Decentralization also has the impact of reducing "the decision-making burden of top management, and to give more time for planning" by management (Baker, 1954: 31). As an organization grows and diversifies, decentralization allows units to focus on the idiosyncrasies of the smaller markets without decreasing time that the upper management can focus on the system as a whole. This structure may result in the development of broad goal setting by top management that then allows for a fully supported process of local benchmarking and strategic development.

Although a decentralized system may lead to greater individual and divisional ownership and feelings of efficacy, it may also lead to a decreased understanding of the organization as a whole and thus facilitate individuals losing focus on the bigger picture. If individuals make decisions for the benefit of their division or geographic area, they may not recognize the larger context and when it is important to focus on the overall organization to the potential detriment of the division. In a comparative study of six industrial organizations, Lawrence and Lorsch found that "members of a subsystem will develop a primary concern with the goals of coping with their particular subenvironment" (Hage, 1967: 8). This type of focus could affect the long-term ability of the organization to recognize a changing environment and adjust as a whole. Although individual units may effectively respond to environmental change, the ability of the organization as a whole to respond is largely dependent on how information is transferred and the relationship between individual units.

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As noted previously, organizations rarely are forced to choose between two extremes. More commonly, as an organization develops a greater understanding of its environment, the organization adapts to its unique situation to best ensure success. The chosen organizational design, however, "is *both* a cause and a consequence of environmental influences" and is commonly an evolving process (Hrebiniak, 1985: 337). This process of change and defining the best fit for different environments is a constant area of study and one that this discussion will further enhance.

B. Historical Review of Hillel's History

1. Organization of the Hillel Network

Similar to Barman's characterization of the layers of the United Way, "Hillel" also refers to "three distinct but interrelated entities" (Barman, 2002: 1197). "Hillel" refers to the 251 local Hillel foundations located on roughly 513 university and college campuses across North America, Israel, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union, along with a number of regional centers serving multiple campuses and urban centers throughout North America[1]. Although Hillel exists around the world, this study will focus on Hillel in the United States and "Hillel" will refer to the organization in the U.S. Like the local United Ways, each Hillel "is an autonomous organization, managed by a board of directors and accountable to its own community" (Barman, 2002: 1197). These organizations are independent 501(c)(3)'s[2] and thus are not directly run by the overarching organization of Hillel. When referring to a local Hillel

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[1] See Appendix 3 for more detailed information on the local Hillel system.

[2] A 501(c)(3) is a designation made by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service to classify organizations exempt from federal income tax. For more information, please see http://www.irs.gov/publications/p557/ch03.html#d0e2875.

foundation, I will refer to it by the name of the campus or region in which it is based (i.e.

"University of Arizona Hillel").

"Hillel" also refers to "Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life" ("FJCL"). This

organization is managed at the Schusterman International Center ("International Center")[3]. This

is a national 501(c)(3), which owns the name "Hillel", provides resources to the local

foundations, and officially accredits each local foundation to ensure a certain series of

benchmarks are constantly met. Prior to being an autonomous entity, Hillel was a part of the

Jewish social organization, B'nai B'rith[4], and known as the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations.

Much of the current dynamics between the local Hillels and this central organization are

remnants of the relationship that developed during the B'nai B'rith years.

In addition to these specific entities, the term "Hillel" is often used to represent the

concept of Hillel as the entirety of the network of campus-based, Jewish organizations and the

International Center of the FJCL. In this form, it "tends to encompass the totality" of local

Hillels along with the national organization (Barman, 2002: 1197). In this sense, when

discussing the organization as a whole, taking into account the local affiliates and national

organization, I will identify this concept with "Hillel". In the interviews for this research,

individuals often compared the local Hillel of which he or she is or was affiliated with to what he

or she perceives as the "correct" manner of operating. Individuals seem to enter into the

organization with preconceived stereotypes about how the organization is supposed to run and

what subgroups it is meant to serve. As Hillel has developed, these stereotypes have changed

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[3] See Appendix 1 for more detailed information regarding the FJCL and the International Center, including financial and staffing.

[4] B'nai B'rith was founded in 1843 in the United States "as a secret Jewish secular fraternal order dedicated to mutual aid, Jewish unity, and the acculturation of immigrant German Jews. By the end of the 1940s…it had transformed itself from a fraternal brotherhood into a mass-movement service organization with over two hundred thousand members that catered to the entire Jewish community" (Kraut, 1982: 424).

and a major emphasis of the FJCL in the new development strategy is to change the perception

and reality of these beliefs.

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is an international organization, although

mainly based and operating in North America, which describes its primary purpose as to provide

"meaningful Jewish experiences" to Jewish students, as of the 2006 FJCL Strategic Plan[5]. The

organization attempts to fulfill this mission mainly through its local affiliates on and around

university campuses across the country. In addition to the role of the local, campus-based

affiliates, however, the International Center has increased its role in providing complimentary

opportunities directly for students, as well as services to local affiliates. These services include

staff training, financial distribution, HR management, board development, and program ideas.

This strategy of increasing the role of the International Center vis-à-vis the opportunities it offers

directly to students and affiliated Hillels is key to increasing the centralization of a system-wide

mission. These services also serve to provide a platform for further develop of national

programs or to identify local applicability.

2. Hillel: A Historical Sketch

Hillel has not always operated in the current manner. Originating at the University of

Illinois in 1923, Hillel began as an organization to provide students with "a religious, moral,

social, and recreation center, to teach the principles of the Jewish faith, and to cooperate with

other similar agencies in the cultivation of a moral and spiritual life" (Solberg, 1992: 228). The

large Jewish social organization B'nai B'rith soon adopted the organization in 1924, providing a

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[5] The 2006 Strategic Plan is formally titled: "Enriching Lives, Inspiring Commitment, Delivering the Jewish Future: Hillel's Five-Year Strategic Plan for the USA". Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life officially released the document in May 2006. Developed by a Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of International Center staff, Hillel: FJCL Board Members, International Board of Governors members, and local Hillel directors, the plan officially went into effect when approved by the FJCL Board of Directors in 2006.

venue for national expansion, increased oversight, external validation, and substantial infrastructure and funding. The nondenominational design of Hillel fit well into B'nai B'rith's view of itself as "non-factional and the common denominator in American Jewry"[6] (Moore, 1981: 140).

Until 1988, Hillel remained a part of the B'nai B'rith organization. This relationship, although providing infrastructure, also hampered the ability to forecast the need for change. As a result of being subsumed within a larger organization that often placed priority on other divisions, Hillel did not consistently have the resources to recognize the need for change or the tools to implement large shifts in strategy. Additionally, the relationship between the central office and local affiliates became increasingly strained as local affiliates developed a sense of distrust of the national office. This feeling grew over the years as a result of the perception of a disconnection between local and national, and a feeling that not only did the national staff not understand the field, but did not desire to understand the field.

Complicating the relationship between the national office and local affiliates was the flirtation of local Hillels with the Jewish Federations. As resources from B'nai B'rith declined, particularly in the 1970's, Hillel began to look to the "[Jewish] Federations[7] [as] a major source of sustaining support" (Moore, 1981: 162). Tension existed between the Federation system and B'nai B'rith, complicating local relationships with their parent organization. This strain also led to and fed into a lack of external support, providing "both a poor self-image and a poor public image," that hampered the ability of the organization to acquire more resources to change (Rubin, 2000: 308). Due to these factors, Hillel was not prepared for the unstable and changing

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[6] Quoted in *Between Us Jews*, p. 8 in Moore, 1981.

[7] The Jewish Federation is a community chest style organization that is based in local communities. The national organization uniting each local Federation is called the United Jewish Communities.

environment in which it continued to operate in using ideas of a different time. Thus, caught

between a lack of "external legitimacy" and internal disorder, it faced a "crisis condition that

[required] radical change" (Fombrun, 1986: 410). B'nai B'rith finally confronted this crisis

through a top-down, centralized strategy.

In 1988, B'nai B'rith hired a new President for Hillel, Richard Joel, an outsider who

lacked the credentials of the previous holders of this position, namely that of being a rabbi or

someone with previous Hillel involvement. Although beyond the scope of this historical survey,

this dramatic shift in credentials (along with other skills Joel brought to the position) has been

previously attributed as providing the impetus for allowing the large organizational change that

followed. Largely credited with reinventing Hillel, Joel overhauled the organization, with the

culmination of a full and amicable split from B'nai B'rith in 1994. This split transitioned the

B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation into a new, fully independent non-profit, Hillel: The Foundation

for Jewish Campus Life. To accomplish his desired change of a "Jewish renaissance," Joel re-

imagined the structure of Hillel as a national organization and on a local level (Rubin, 2000:

310). He re-developed the focus and purpose of the organization as a whole, championed new

methods, placed a premium on partnerships and new financial resources, and involved the local

Hillel staff to accomplish and further develop these purposes.

This radical reinvention of the organization, however, was not without new stress and

conflict. As Hillel expanded to a greater number of campuses, the organization was often

accused of "watering-down" Judaism to bring it to the masses. This contention, while possible

in some locations based on traditional views of views how Hillel should operate, is likely on a

system level a misinterpretation of what Hillel strove to accomplish during the Joel years. As a

national organization, Joel pushed Hillel to move beyond its often perceived role as a campus

ministry and student membership club to a more expansive and inclusive organization that valued participation over membership. This model of the organization attempted to more directly embrace the concept of Judaism as an identity group that is an amalgamation of religion, ethnicity, and culture. In pushing local Hillels to accept this new framing of purpose, the affiliate agencies often responded with distrust or simply did not respond in a meaningful way.

Although not laid out at the time, the desired "Jewish renaissance" was not the end of the process but part of the continued growth of the organization. Following Joel's 2003 departure, Hillel hired Avraham Infeld, a professional Jewish educator who brought a much different point of view to the organization. Consistent with Joel, however, Infeld continued to professionalize and integrate the field and central office around a united vision. This process culminated in the 2006 Strategic Plan. This plan outlined goals and benchmarks to achieve over the next five years, focusing to a large degree on aligning the interests and strategies of local Hillels with that of the International Center. This step toward centralization was largely a formal articulation of ideas that had been in the pipeline and developed over the previous years. Even as the plan attempts to balance the need for local efficacy with national mission and legitimization, the strategy assumes the importance of setting network-wide benchmarks and instituting programs from the International Center.

Infeld departed in mid-2006, with Wayne Firestone taking the reigns of the burgeoning organization. Firestone has continued his predecessor's focus on having the International Center serve as a resource for the local Hillels while simultaneously providing unique opportunities for the various Hillel stakeholders to interact. In addition to developing a new ideology for the Hillel network to align with, the FJCL has attempted to develop methods to support local Hillels, theoretically without usurping power and authority from the local leadership. While attempting

to bring the local staff and other leadership on board in this process, the historic disconnect

between local Hillels and the International Center still invites conflict.

3. A View from the Field

Throughout this process, the leadership of local Hillels has not always been in agreement

with the International Center. Although examining the organization at-large may yield a largely

rosy picture, the situation on each campus is not always as pretty or as uniform. Although both

the field and the central office recognized these discrepancies, it is only recently that a

substantial focus has been put on finding the desired balance and providing the necessary

resources to improve this alignment. As demonstrated in the four campuses studied here, local

Hillels did not necessarily develop based on a template or timeline constructed by the

International Center. Rather, local Hillels often arise based on students' needs and requests, and

when time and resources are devoted to the effort. While the International Center may assist

with infrastructure development (hiring initial staff and donor identification), much of the early

groundwork often falls to students. In other situations, the International Center may determine

that a campus has an unmet need and take the initiative to develop a program on campus. In both

circumstances, internal campus politics may complicate the development of the institution as

other Jewish and student groups may already exist, each with perceived spheres of influence,

power, and activities. Decentralization and devolution of authority to those on the ground help

address these concerns by developing local leadership that is familiar with campus. However,

this loose structure may also complicate the identification and provision of adequate resources to

further develop the institution and create strong affiliation with the central mission.

The local Hillels have developed in a relatively ad hoc manner. In addition to the support

and direction of B'nai B'rith, followed by the FJCL, local Jewish Federations provided

assistance in terms of "governance and funding" from the 1960's through the 1980's (Rubin, 2000: 309). This radically differentiated, decentralized, and disconnected system resulted in the gamut of local Hillel variety. The relationship between the Federation, B'nai B'rith, and the local Hillel varied based on location, volunteer and student governance structures differed, a diverse combination of staff compositions developed, and no constant benchmarks of effectiveness or success spread throughout the system. Many local Hillels and previously supporting agencies, such as the local Jewish Federation in given areas, are still adjusting to the centralization of focus of the International Center. This dynamic, in addition to the structural legacy of that time, is another contributing factor toward the difficulty Hillel as a whole faces in attempting to centralize around common objectives and measurements of success.

The entire history of Hillel is important to understand in order to gain a complete picture of the current state of the center-local relationship, specifically how this situation has changed and continues to change. This paper, however, analyzes that relationship on four campuses in order to explore the network dynamics, taking history into account but focusing on the present. Each campus provides a unique situation, operating within a different environment, with different challenges, and with diverse variables that influence how the relationship is structured and has changed over the years.

II. Examining the Confluence

A. Methodology

To develop a better understanding of the dynamic between the center and field, I chose four local Hillels, each operating within different environments and with different variables affecting their development. These specific campuses were identified based on having unique

differences that would introduce effective variables for learning more about how the local

organizations relate to the central office under different circumstances.

Following identification of each Hillel, I conducted interviews with a number of

stakeholders and individuals holding roles in the organization. These interviews included the

Executive Directors, other staff, student presidents, and board members. Interviews lasted

roughly 45 minutes and were generally conducted over the phone[8]. Since these interviews were

conducted in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the organization, questions often varied in

order to develop a clear and full picture of each organization. In addition to interviews, I

reviewed internal documents, including available strategic plans. To gain a better picture of how

the organizations are viewed externally, I reviewed newspaper clippings and available reports

about each local Hillel. Along with the local Hillels, I analyzed information from the

International Center, including the 2006 Strategic Plan, and had a numerous conversations with

various International Center staff over the last year.

Data was analyzed in a descriptive manner. Following the information-gathering stage,

data was reviewed in the context of individual Hillels along with developing a comprehensive

picture of the organization. Examining Hillel in the context of existing theories of centralization

and decentralization provided a thorough analysis of the organization to answer the questions

posed in this study.

B. Hillel Today

As a result of the decentralized, pseudo-autonomous structure of local affiliates vis-à-vis

the International Center, Hillel must balance local needs and focus with the broader vision,

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[8] I also traveled to Los Angeles, CA in November 2006 and gained a first-hand view of Hillel at the Claremont
Colleges through observing programs and having discussions with students and staff on campus.

purpose, and structure of the FJCL. This is not a recent challenge. Hillel has had to manage

national expansion and sparse resource allocation while attempting to best serve local

populations since it became a multi-campus institution in 1925. Similarly, the tension between a

central office with specific ideas as to how the organization should function and branches that

each deal with different local issues is not unique to Hillel, but reflects a strain that is pervasive

across a large number of organizations.

Organizations handle this problem differently and to various degrees of effectiveness.

Strategies differ based on a number of factors, including organizational purpose, importance of

localization, perceived necessity of centralization, and how the organization views itself within

its environment. Hillel has attempted to balance this dynamic by strengthening the role of the

International Center in regard to mission and goal setting while delegating to local Hillels the

specific implementation. As a non-profit, Hillel encounters challenges not faced by the for-profit

organizations that organizational theory generally examines.

1. As a Non-Profit Network

Most studies of organizational form focus on the for-profit, corporate realm. Although

many similarities exist between these different classes of organizations "and theoretical

propositions are viewed as applying equally to all types of organizations," substantial and

influential differences divide these groups and necessitate examining theoretical norms in

different ways based on the organizational identity (Rushing, 1976: 677). In his analysis of

organizational differentiation versus coordination of for-profit compared to non-profit hospitals

in the 1970s, Rushing found that "the results for profit hospitals conform more closely than

results for nonprofit hospitals to expectations based on organizational theory" (Rushing, 1976:

689). This finding then challenges the assumption that general organizational theory applies equally well to organizations based on not generating profit, but generating increased community welfare in some form.

In addition to the primary difference in goals between organizations and how this may affect organizational structure and operation, the overall environment of non-profits also has an effect on the organizational dynamics. Especially in an organization operating in multiple locations and attempting to "please actors guided by one institutional logic, [the organization] can easily violate values that actors adhering to a second logic hold dear" (Alexander, 1998: 275). Unlike a corporation, which even when diversified and spread over an expanse of territory, is primarily concerned with creating the greatest value for shareholders, non-profits have a greater "goal complexity" that cannot be as easily pigeon holed (Alexander, 1998: 272).

The difficulty in assessing goals may be compounded with largely differentiated organizations. Multiple studies have found "that the larger an organization is, the more pronounced (at declining rates) is the…functional differentiation of the organization into divisions" (Mileti, 1977: 214). As organizations grow, they develop and organize in new ways to address the new territory. Most organizational design studies focus on relatively centralized organizations, such as the hierarchical form of firms studied by Mileti, et al., Blau and many other theorists to examine the relation between size and differentiation. Due to how the organization developed, Hillel has never been organized as a strict hierarchy but fits better into the "network form of organization" (Podolny, 1998: 57). This type of organizational structure provides unique challenges in organizational management through a changing environment.

Although they have characteristics of both hierarchies and markets, networks are an extreme example of the decentralization paradigm. Due to the traditionally decentralized nature

of the local Hillels, loose affiliation to an international office aligns with the definition provided

by Podolny:

> A network form of organization [is] any collection of actors (N≥2) that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange. (Podolny, 1998: 59)

This type of structure is relevant both to the historical series of changes that Hillel has undergone

on a national scale along with the more recent sustained interactions between the International

Center and local, affiliated Hillel organizations. A network of this nature is the paradigm of a

decentralized organization. Decisions are theoretically made at a local level, with the "central

office" only influencing the general contours of functioning, developing overarching concepts

that may or may not be instituted as they filter down the pipe. While this may have been the

relationship that existed at Hillel in the past, recent changes at Hillel challenge this premise when

evaluating the continued sustainability of this structure into the future.

Provon further explores types of network organization, focusing on those he labels

"federations". A federation is a subcategory of the network form and is a structure where the

organizations are interconnected to various degrees in purpose and activity but where "affiliated

organizations agree to relinquish control over certain activities to the federation's management"

in return for economies of scale and other affiliation benefits (Provan, 1983: 80). Provan's

description of an "independent federation" provides a window into how the Hillel network could

be structured. Under this model, the "federation management organization" exists as an

independent entity and "affiliates do control the day to day operation of their own organizations

[but] generally agree formally to relinquish the control of one or more issues" to the federation

entity (Provan, 1983: 85). Core to this model is the mutual dependency of the central

organization and the affiliates. The independent center has no legitimacy without the affiliates

and the affiliates gain legitimacy from being a part of a larger and externally validated

organization.

This system attempts to fulfill the balance between centralization and localization by

balancing local autonomy with reduced complexity based on the coordinating abilities of a

central office. As a result of the independent nature of the central office, however, "its own

decisions may not always reflect the best interests of any one or several affiliates" (Provan, 1983:

83). In turn, this disconnect can lead to a devolution of trust and disconnect of cooperation, thus

diminishing the functionality of both the federation and affiliated organizations. An issue not

addressed by Provan is what happens to the various parts of this network when one or more

affiliates attempt to change the relationship between affiliates and the center. How do certain

changes affect how the networked organizations relate to each other and consequently, influence

the effectiveness of centralized and localized decision-making?

Additionally, the classification of Hillel as a network of interconnected agencies is an

important aspect of its changing form. While it may also be a function of Hillel as a diversified

non-profit, classifying Hillel as a network structure fits into how the local Hillel Executive

Directors have traditionally viewed their role within the broader system and how the

organization has operated in the past. While networks are usually conceived of as more loosely

connected organizations, such as the garment industry (Uzzi, 1997) or Silicon Valley in the

1990s, despite different local trends, Hillel also fits into this mold. This structure, then, also

plays a large role in affecting how the organization as a whole is able to cope with a directive

from the International Center to shift approaches, and how local Hillels manage this process.

The introductory hypothesis that decentralized organizations have greater difficulty than

centralized organizations in responding to a central shift appears to be true to Hillel. While some

local Hillels aligned relatively quickly with the reframed mission of Hillel, many campuses, such as Hillel at Claremont Colleges are still lagging on implementation. Additionally, even where the local organization has adopted the new phrasing, aligning all stakeholders to what that entails is not complete. These difficulties are both a result of the differentiated nature of local organizations along with the decentralization that exists between the International Center and the field.

2. Uniting Culture

An important aspect of Hillel that allows for a relatively united identity despite local differences and managerial conflict is the concept of Jewish identity. Hillel's identity is rooted in Judaism and thus, despite the decentralized and diversified organization, commonalities persist throughout the network. Judaism is variously considered a religion, an ethnic group, and a culture. Each description weights a different part of Judaism differently and resonates differently with different sub-populations. Hillel attempts to bridge the gap between these classifications and serve students who ascribe to different understandings of Judaism by providing a large variety of programming. Additionally, perceptions of what it means to be Jewish have changed within the American Jewish community over the course of Hillel's development. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, examining how the age constituency that Hillel tries to serve has viewed Judaism as compared to how Hillel professionals have understood Jewish identity could provide additional insight into the shift in organizational effectiveness and focus.

Despite the different views of Judaism, a general and unifying view of Judaism is that of "a nation" and an ethno-religious fusion that entails a commitment to an ideology that is also

based on a common heritage, both perceived and actual. Viewing Judaism as a common heritage has provided the foundation for Hillel and other Jewish organizations to expand their target audience. Rather than focusing just on those Jews who profess a certain belief, these organizations can also aim for anyone who could be identified as Jewish, even if they do not believe in the religious tenets. Additionally, as a result of this focus as well as multiple and relatively confusing definitions of Judaism, Hillel is externally perceived to be a similar group. Internally, it is knit together through this network of relations and common understanding. The creation of the perception of centralized Jewish identity also allows for a decentralized structure, as the overall commonalities are perceived to unite the different strategies and unique qualities of each sub-population. Therefore, the unifying similarity of the religion and culture across the organization as a whole centralizes general objectives even while supporting differentiated local branches.

3. Environmental Differences and Associated Challenges

Like any geographically diverse organization, each local branch of the organization faces unique environmental challenges. The differences between local environments put pressure on the structure to develop differently and "increases the likelihood of decentralized decision-making structure" when considering Hillel as a national network (Mileti, 1982: 165). In regard to Hillel, environmental challenges can be grouped into four interrelated categories: (1) leadership balance; (2) local history; (3) local resources, and; (4) influence and resources provided by the International Center. Based upon interviews with stakeholders at each local Hillel, focusing on those involved in the decision-making process, the overall picture presents one of the importance of individual relationships and the goals and focus of key individuals.

A consistent theme across the four diverse local Hillels is the importance of the Executive Director in providing long-term goal setting, stability, and vision. While other variables are relevant, a general trend is that a Hillel with a strong Executive Director is able to define sustainable goals and accomplish those goals more effectively than that of a Hillel with a weak Executive Director. The relative strength or weakness of this individual is based on how well he or she is able to align the various stakeholders to the goals of Hillel and enable understanding and action associated with this mission. While the Executive Director provides the greatest correlation with accomplishment, another key aspect is the student leadership. Just as the organization as a whole must balance the diffusion of responsibility across affiliates, local Hillels must balance the authority and responsibility of students compared to staff. This judgment, however, seems to be based on the strength and longevity of the Executive Director. Fractionalization of student leadership and potential student involvement hold only secondary importance. As these factors are relative based on what students and staff perceive to be common standards, I evaluate these dynamics based on the perception of staff and participants.

In regard to impact of the International Center, the centralization program is mainly one of developing a broad change in culture, united around a new brand identity for Hillel, developed by the International Center. Direct involvement between the International Center and local Hillels in regard to getting local affiliates is not fully analogous to the success or lack of success of the local Hillel. This process operates on a different scale; Hillels that are considered "failing" do not necessarily garner more oversight by the International Center. Rather, local Hillels are targeted for additional support based upon the perceived effectiveness of outside support. This determination for direct support is based on either requests from the local Hillel

staff or following an accreditation visit by the International Center, where the Hillel is not meeting benchmarks.

The International Center attempts to provide a broad program of resources to local Hillels. This is attempted through (1) providing increased networking across the system as a whole, for volunteer leaders on the local boards of directors, students, and staff; (2) articulating a broad strategic plan for the next five years, in an attempt to unite the goals of the local Hillels under a common rubric and within a structured narrative that can lead to increased funding from donors and a greater identification of local Hillels with the FJCL, and; (3) staff support in the form of direct consulting, staff placement, and grants. Centralization, therefore, is not isolated to those campuses identified as needing particular support, but is attempted as an overhaul of the entire relationship.

The historic connection between the Hillel network broke down in the 1970s and 1980s, decreasing a sense of unity between campuses and the national office. The new concept is one where specific benchmarks and goals are outlined by the International Center with provisions for local adjustment. Following are a description of the four Hillel's studied, to provide a better picture of the field vis-à-vis the International Center along with laying the foundation for a more comprehensive analysis of the field and the center.

4. Campuses

Hillel at Binghamton University

Hillel at Binghamton University started six years ago. Organized Jewish life at the university existed prior to the founding of the Hillel, however programming was disconnected and not centralized around a comprehensive vision. Additionally, the fate of the program taken

as a whole wavered depending on the commitment of individual students over the years. The

state of Jewish organizations on campus pre-Hillel is summed-up by the Executive Director:

"Students realized that as adventurous as they were, as excited and passionate, often they ended

up programming for their friends, their ability to reach a wider audience was limited in many

ways." Consequently, students requested the creation of a Hillel institution and as a result, the

International Center of Hillel facilitated the development of an affiliated program. The

development of the program consisted of hiring an Executive Director and helping identify initial

donors. Following this step, program development fell to the shoulders of the new Executive

Director.

The current Executive Director, Gary Coleman, has been in his position since September

2001, when the Hillel was founded. Therefore, he has seen how the organization has developed

from the beginning. Although he focused on the contributions of the students throughout, it is

clear from his comments, along with the comments of the involved students, that Coleman has

been instrumental in developing the identity of this local Hillel. From this groundwork,

however, students have worked to implement specific programs, develop the leadership

structure, and determine how the Hillel is envisioned on campus. While Coleman served as the

backbone of the Hillel, students had the primary role of developing programs based on what the

students deemed necessary for campus.

No large Jewish community is located near to Binghamton, hampering the development

of a sustainable Board of Directors. As a result, the Hillel has reached into New York City to

raise funds and develop volunteer leadership. The difficulty in developing relationships and

effective fundraising with a three hour drive required has complicated the further growth of the

Hillel, but is not an unreachable objective.

The role of the International Center has been as a consultant. Although part of the same network, the perception of the International Center staff is without a specific foothold in the day-to-day activities of campus. Therefore, although Coleman invited facilitators from International Hillel to do leadership training, this is more of a periphery activity. While related to how students function and instrumental to the mission of the organization, this does not directly challenge or affect the functioning of the local institution. Although the International Center provided the initial funding and opened the door for the start of the Hillel at Binghamton, involvement of FJCL has been relatively low since 2001. Rather, the FJCL seems to have put its faith in Coleman and viewed its role as providing networking opportunities through staff and student conferences.

The overall classification of Hillel at Binghamton would be one of a sustainable Hillel that has effectively united the previously disparate groups of Jewish students under a common rubric and provides direction and unity for the Jewish community on campus. Challenges include volunteer leadership board development, and continued program growth to involve and expand the role of Hillel across campus and affect unaffiliated populations of Jewish students. Binghamton Hillel, however, seems to be effectively articulating and accomplishing the new goals of the International Center without much direct influence or oversight.

Chart 1. Hillel at Binghamton Statistics.[9]

Staff	6
Program Areas	20 groups; religious, cultural, social, community service, Israel, Jewish learning
Population (Jewish Undergrads/Total Undergrads; Jewish Grads/Total Grads)	3,000/10,167 200/2,653
Building	No (but space provided by University in university building)
Founded/Accredited	2001/Yes
Board of Directors	No

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[9] More detailed campus profiles of all four campuses may be found in Appendix 3.

Information from "Hillel's Guide to Jewish Life on Campus" (http://www.hillel.org/HillelApps/JLOC) and Hillel at Binghamton (www.hillelatbinghamton.org).

Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach

The Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach has a more convoluted history. The recent organizational overhaul and relative centralization of focus is not the first shift in strategy Hillel as an overall organization has undergone. Hillel used to be more decentralized in management than today, with different configurations and partnerships based on how the organization happened to develop in different locales. One reason for this difference resulted from the distance between campuses and the nature of campuses, as well as how the local Jewish Federation distributed funding. The Florida Hillel system existed for 50 years as a regionally divided, statewide agency. Within the past five years, this system drastically shifted with devolution of responsibility to each region as an autonomous "Hillel". Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach serves a 90-mile radius of a number of different campuses with varied types of students, personality, and focus, but under one formal organization.

In conjunction with the recent shift by the International Center to more directly influence and affect local Hillels, the International Center has also been instrumental in developing this new structure for the Florida Hillel system. Executive Director Darin Diner views this transition as a method to provide greater accountability to local communities and allow for a greater staff focus and thus better service for specific areas and campuses. This revamping of the organization entailed a total redevelopment of leadership, mission, vision, and implementation strategy.

Developing a united organization has proved difficult for this Hillel due to the multiple campuses under its jurisdiction along with the large variety of students. While staff tends to focus on specific campuses more so than the broader picture, students follow this lead and when

developing ideas base their concepts on their experiences. As a result, a greater amount of

involvement from students is necessary to develop a broader array of effective programming, but

this then entails a more developed infrastructure to focus students in their efforts. In addition to

different campuses, the student populations vary per campus. Some of the campuses have

primarily commuter students while others have a higher percentage of resident students. This

dynamic further complicates the development of a cohesive and coherent identity across sub-

populations.

In this situation, the International Center is taking a direct role in assisting the campus in

this transition and development. In accordance with a reformed department of Campus

Advancement, the director of Campus Advancement will be serving as a consultant for Hillel of

Broward and Palm Beach as it develops new leadership and determines how to best articulate,

accomplish, and impart its mission.

Chart 2. Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach Statistics.

Staff	8
Program Areas	Formal groups vary between campus; event-based more than concept-based; 16 programs
Population (Jewish Undergrads/Total Undergrads; Jewish Grads/Total Grads)	Broward Community Colleges: 1,600/30,000 and N/A Florida Atlantic University: 1,800/23,000 and 300/3,000 Palm Beach Community Colleges: 1,600/21,000 and N/A Lynn University: 350/1,800 and 60/360 Nova Southeastern University: 150/6,200 and 1,200/6,200
Building	Yes
Founded/Accredited	2001/No
Board of Directors	Yes

Information from "Hillel's Guide to Jewish Life on Campus" (http://www.hillel.org/HillelApps/JLOC) and Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach (www.hillelcenter.org).

University of Arizona Hillel

University of Arizona Hillel fits into the mold of what many in the Jewish community traditionally perceive as Hillel. The organization has been around for decades, the majority of students live on or near campus, and the Hillel is considered a strong, developed, and entrenched part of campus. Although staff turnover roughly every two years, the Executive Director, Michelle Blumenberg, has been at this Hillel for 15 years and as she states, is "the institutional memory, because I've been the consistent one who has been here." Additionally, she views staff as "advisors to the student leadership" rather than the impetus to change themselves.

Campus has roughly 6,000 Jewish students, many of whom consider themselves Jewish but with a general inability define more specifically what that entails. Stakeholders on this campus view Hillel as serving diverse subpopulations. Due to the established nature of this Hillel, a challenge is re-branding the organization as necessary to attract new participants. This action is often accomplished through the student leadership, in developing specific programs, affiliated organizations, and reaching out to find new leadership. Similar to the director at Binghamton Hillel, Blumenberg's longevity and personal vision has helped this Hillel develop outside of one individual's micromanagement. Students expressed a feeling of ownership over the institution. This ownership, however, creates the tension between exclusivity and the need and desire to reach out to underserved members of the community.

The International Center does not directly advise this Hillel. Rather, a student and the Executive Director sit on the FJCL Board of Directors, enabling informal two-way communication that theoretically provides greater connection and information transfer between students and staff from the local to the national. As one fifth-year senior stated, "Hillel's national mission rubbed off on us." This understanding of the broader mission is representative of the

situation on this campus. In conjunction with the International Center's 2006 Strategic Plan, the

Executive Director initiated the redevelopment of University of Arizona Hillel's strategic plan to

better align with the new mission of the FJCL.

Chart 3. University of Arizona Hillel Statistics.

Staff	7
Program Areas	21 groups; religious, cultural, social, community service, Israel, Jewish learning, food
Population (Jewish Undergrads/Total Undergrads; Jewish Grads/Total Grads)	3,100/28,400 500/8,000
Building	Yes
Founded/Accredited	1941/Yes
Board of Directors	Yes

Information from "Hillel's Guide to Jewish Life on Campus" (http://www.hillel.org/HillelApps/JLOC) and
University of Arizona Hillel (www.uahillel.org).

Hillel at the Claremont Colleges

Hillel at the Claremont Colleges has not reached the benchmarks of success in correlation

to the other campuses. Unlike the other local Hillels analyzed for this study, Claremont Hillel

has not developed into the comprehensive and cohesive center of Jewish life on campus that the

International Center aims for local Hillels.

With a weakly developed staff structure, students who have been on campus for a number

of years have developed a strong sense of what Hillel can and is unable to accomplish. The

Executive Director is also a Rabbi, creating an image of Hillel as a place for religious students at

first glance. The other staff member is a JCSC, focused on outreach. As a result of the minimal

staff and how they view their roles, as these students have developed the community, this

particular Executive Director tends to sit on the outside. While this could be viewed as the

epitome of student activism and leadership, the lack of a comprehensive direction has led to

political infighting amongst the Jewish community and lack of effective and sustainable program development.

Hillel implies very different meanings for different stakeholders of this seven-school consortium. Each school is labeled as having a slightly different personality and containing students of very different interests. While operating in environments with different groups of students is not an unusual concept for a local Hillel, being located in the midst of seven campuses that see themselves as somewhat separate entities creates unique challenges. These challenges include bringing together student leadership from a potentially fragmented community and developing clear goals for how Hillel can serve this diverse Jewish community. In addition, as a number of Jewish organizations existed on campus prior to Hillel's arrival, many of which have come to view their independence as a sign of legitimacy, integrating Hillel into this network has proved difficult, especially with minimal staff and financial resources.

Chart 4. Hillel at the Claremont Colleges Statistics.

Staff	2
Program Areas	Religious, Jewish education, social, social action
Population (Jewish Undergrads/Total Undergrads; Jewish Grads/Total Grads)	3,500/5,000 100/500
Building	No (but space provided by University in religious center)
Founded/Accredited	1995/No
Board of Directors	No

Information from "Hillel's Guide to Jewish Life on Campus" (http://www.hillel.org/HillelApps/JLOC) and Hillel at the Claremont Colleges (http://www.claremonthillel.org/).

C. Conclusions

1) Classes of local Hillels

The variables that differentiate the four local Hillels studied here are common throughout the Hillel system but do not cover the full range of differences that may distinguish campuses.

Therefore, although these campuses yield a specific picture of the network, one that I believe can be broadened to explain dynamics of the system as a whole, this is not the only method to classify local Hillels. To classify the local Hillels, I focused on those variables that provided the greatest depth into its functioning while also providing a thorough understanding of the complexity of the organization. These factors are broadly defined as (1) leadership balance; (2) local history; (3) local resources, and; (4) influence and resources provided by the International Center. From these variables, I believe each Hillel can be grouped into a certain category that could help the International Center better differentiate relationships between affiliate organizations.

Other possible classification schemes could be based on variables including (a) number of Jewish students on campus; (b) size of campus; (c) age of Hillel; (d) size of local Jewish community; (e) regional versus campus-based Hillel; (f) accredited or not accredited; (g) number of staff; (h) university support; (i) Board of Directors; (j) number of affiliated student organizations; (l) personal relationship between local staff, students, and board members with International Center counterparts. While these are all important factors, based upon interviews and Hillel strategies, I believe that the four categories that I focus on provide the most comprehensive picture of the complex organizations, as they integrate a number of these other variables.

Therefore, based on the variables chosen, the four local Hillels studied yield four classes of local Hillels. (1) Leadership balance takes into account the strength and ability of the Executive Director to became a meaningful part of the institution and the degree of Jewish student fragmentation on campus and in the area served by the Hillel. (2) Local history examines infrastructure, the changing nature of the organization, and recent developments. (3)

Local resources include local community support and legitimacy afforded by the university. (4)

Influence and resources provided by the International Center are based on financial and in-kind

support by the International Center.

The nature of the relationship between each class of campus and the International Center

will thus be inherently different based on the unique needs of the campus. The International

Center has developed an effective relationship with Hillels that no longer need the degree of

support that the International Center is able to provide. It has not yet effectively developed a

strategy to integrate those not meeting standard practices into the larger network. This

categorization would help identify where energy should be focused and subsequent sections will

propose ideas as to how the theory can be better implemented.

Class 1 Hillels are those with high marks for the first three categories, and where the

historical International Center support is relatively irrelevant as local governance and

effectiveness are high and have been for a substantial period of time. This class of local Hillels

is at a point where they are able to effectively manage themselves, determine vision, and develop

programming that effectively engenders campus growth. The role of the International Center

should be to provide networking opportunities and increased interactions between this group of

campuses to instigate additional new and innovative ideas. University of Arizona Hillel is a

good representation of this class.

Class 2 Hillels are well positioned on campus, have a substantial staff presence in

addition to student leadership but have not yet fulfilled the criteria to place it on par with the

Class 1 Hillels. Hillel at Binghamton is a good example of this group. It has not developed an

autonomous Board of Directors, thus not providing the Hillel with a sustained source of funding

and fundraising. However, the Hillel has identified and acted on a comprehensive set of goals

and is generally well integrated into life on campus. In these situations, the International Center needs to recognize the importance of developing a greater commitment to localization and decentralization. It must balance this need with the desire to come in and tell the Hillel what to do.

Better served but not yet reaching the level of effectiveness that is most useful are those Hillels undergoing a transition and growth, Class 3 Hillels. In this group, infrastructure exists but the importance of identifying local needs and serving the specific community is vital to redeveloping the program and the institution. These Hillels need to be provided with additional resources and support to help with networking amongst the local communities. Hillel of Broward and Palm Beach is a good example of a Hillel in this situation. While it has a new building, well-respected Executive Director, and programming considered moderately effective, the local organization is in the process of finding its place in the context of the recently changed environment. Additionally, the Executive Director does not believe the organization is fulfilling its potential. The community is fragmented between campuses. The International Center has not yet developed a clear strategy to assist Hillels in this position to further develop strategies for success.

The International Center should focus differently on Class 4 programs, such as Hillel at Claremont Colleges. These Hillels have been formally on campus for a number of years but have not been integrated into campus life. In conjunction, they have not done an effective job of consolidating diverse interests and providing resources to inspire and enable student leadership. To better address concerns and needs of this group of campuses, the International Center should develop a program to bring together staff and students from this group of campuses to brainstorm and problem-solve how to more effectively accomplish the goals of Hillel on this sort of campus.

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In addition, Hillel should engage in an aggressive hiring campaign to move the "best and

brightest" to this type of campus, in a position to engineer change, in order to motivate

innovation (2006 Strategic Plan). Coupled with these programs, Hillel should work with the

local leadership to develop a strategic plan and help find fundraising options for these Hillels.

Providing an outsourcing service to handle bookkeeping would also keep costs low.

2) Centralized Objectives

The center point of the International Center's centralizing initiative is the Strategic Plan.

This document develops overarching objectives for which local Hillels should be a part in

achieving, and for some objectives, lays out measurements as to how to reach the goals. The five

primary objectives that the International Center envisions the system to fulfill within five years

are the following:

1) To double the number of Jewish students who are involved in Jewish life and who have meaningful Jewish experiences.
2) To enhance professional recruitment, development and retention.
3) To become an indispensable partner in enhancing the campus community and student life.
4) To enhance organizational effectiveness.
5) To improve the financial strength of local Hillels and the movement as a whole. (FJCL Strategic Plan 2006)

The International Center considers each objective as instrumental in re-envisioning the

organization's success. These objectives can be divided into two main categories. Those that

could be grouped as focusing on organizational management include objectives two, four, and

five. These goals are relatively easy to quantify both at a local level and throughout the system.

While central to the operations of the organization, these objectives are not primary to the vision

of the organization. The operational objectives, however, are a key support in attempting to

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align the entirety of the local Hillels with that of common benchmarks developed by the

International Center.

Visionary objectives include objectives one and three. Both goals are more esoteric in

nature and consequently less easy to measure than the other three concepts. Although the

International Center has attempted to develop measurements for this objective, the metrics are

based on the subjective judgment of the participant. This amorphous measurement creates

another tension in overall organizational centralization. The subjective nature of determining

this objective allows for more creativity on the part of the local Hillel. By providing a broad

concept to achieve along with some specific guidelines as to how to achieve it, the FJCL has

created a dynamic that connects the local to the center while still providing local autonomy of

operations.

At the same time as it is broadcasting these overall goals, the FJCL also is attempting to

communicate standard "best practices" across the network of local Hillels through methods

ranging from indirect and least invasive to direct and invasive. Additionally, although the

International Center has done a better job of attempting to understand local needs and find ways

to serve the different qualities of local Hillels than in the past, the International Center still sends

mixed messages to the field. Consequently, the International Center has not yet developed a

cohesive strategy to best serve and unite the various categories of Hillels.

Although not yet effectively addressing the differences between types of local Hillels, the

FJCL has implemented a number of programs to support the transition of local Hillels to the new

objectives. Methods range from indirect strategies that may have relatively little impact on the

functioning of a local Hillel, to moderate methods that influence those making decisions, to

invasive strategies that directly influence how the local Hillel operates.

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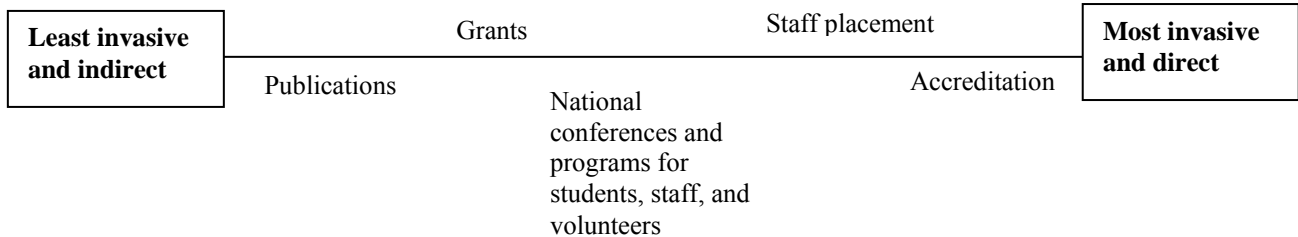| Least invasive and indirect	Grants	Staff placement	Most invasive and direct
	Publications	Accreditation	
	National conferences and programs for students, staff, and volunteers		

Figure 1. International Center Influence Strategies.

As strategies become more direct, the potential for conflict with the local Hillel becomes more acute. Staff placement most prominently involves a program called the Jewish Campus Service Corps (JCSC). This program matches (with the consultation of the local Hillel) young professionals with local Hillel foundations for a one to two year period of service. The JCSC is supervised both by local Hillel staff and International Center staff, thus creating a potential conflict in fulfilling their job if the missions of the two organizations are not aligned. Accreditation is an internal consulting process that aims to "maintain a consistent and objective standard of excellence" for the local Hillels (Accreditation Procedures for Hillel Foundations, 5). The process involves bringing in a team from other Hillels and the International Center, including volunteers, staff, and students. The team then evaluates the Hillel, which is meant to use this as an opportunity for self-reflection and growth. The accreditation process is the most direct way for the International Center to enlist local support for the overarching objectives.

These major objectives and the strategies used to unite the system thus provide a centralizing basis for the continued development of national and local relations. Since local Hillels and the International Center have different visions of their roles, however, the tension

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between centralization and decentralization is a clear example of the internal conflict many

organizations undergo as they attempt to balance the different costs and benefits over a wide-

ranging field. Additionally, while local Hillels may attempt to develop methods to better

understand the larger picture, these strategies are usually in the context of the local Hillel

environment.

3) For-Profit v. Non-Profit Study of Organizational Design

The FJCL's new strategic plan provides a window into how Hillel envisions itself as a

national organization in North America as it grows over the next few years. It sees itself as

having the ability to impact the lives of a larger proportion of Jewish students across the country

in both direct and indirect ways by creating environments where individuals feel comfortable

being Jewish but also bring new ideas as to what this means. This more detailed yet broader

vision, however, entails a degree of centralization that did not exist before. Centralization can

hold many definitions. In the context of the business world, it often refers to the degree of

administrative oversight, centralized resource allocation, strategic planning, and human resources

decisions.

Across the population of non-profits, centralization may imply many similar actions as

that of for-profit organizations. These types of organizations, however, have substantial

differences that entail different characteristics of centralization and decentralization. While

business-speak has seeped into the non-profit lexicon, business terminology still implies different

meanings when applied to these different classes of organizations. Both non-profits and for-

profits decentralize in order to better understand their target populations and more appropriately

and effectively manage local subpopulations. A profit drive, however, influences and structures an organization differently than when the driving force is potentially less clearly defined.

Much of organizational theory is based on the study of for-profit organizations. As a result, even though many theories generally apply to non-profits, the specifics of these concepts may not be relevant for this different class of organization. This tension is the result of a number of factors, including goal definition, management structure, advisory bodies, and legal structures setting the general operating environment. This brief study of Hillel provides insight into the contrast between the for-profit and non-profit realms. In its attempts to develop a more coherent centralized operating strategy, Hillel has to balance local needs along with local governance structures. Additionally, due to how the organization developed, the International Center does not have direct financial or human resources authority over most staff in the field. Therefore, when a local Hillel is not fitting into the broader objectives and staff is to blame, the International Center cannot fire those responsible, but must find other solutions.

This aspect of the system is important for determining effective and sustainable models of interaction between the center and the field. The International Center fills an advisory role, more than one of a direct supervisor; but it is often held responsible for actions of the local Hillels due to their affiliation with the FJCL. Developing a system that provides greater local Board of Director oversight and authority along with a greater connection to the International Center on a staff, volunteer, and student spectra would enable a more efficient transfer of central objectives and greater accountability beyond the realm of one individual.

A more general structure problem is that of Board of Director accountability. Very often at Hillel the Executive Director, especially in a new Hillel or if he or she has been in the position for a sustained amount of time, selects the Board. This may result in lack of sufficient oversight

due to the close relationship between the Board and Executive Director. As a result, and due to the weak oversight role of the International Center, a dysfunctional Hillel may appear to operate well despite not fulfilling key objectives. This situation can then lead to a general malaise on the part of the students, if students who want to be involved believe their voices are not taken into account.

III. Implications

A. *Lessons from Hillel*

The tension between centralization and decentralization is evident from the ideas in the Strategic Plan. A number of lessons for refining theories of organizational design are evident, along with practical concepts that other organizations could apply. Both sets of lessons focus on the following areas: (1) identifying key personnel and interpersonal relationships; (2) differentiating aspects and applications of centralization; (3) multiple approaches to and layers of change; (4) recognizing structural and environmental differences when studying organizational design. These concepts have been investigated, however, more work on these subjects would yield greater understanding of how a broader array of organizations apply centralization theories.

1. Identifying Key Personnel and Interpersonal Relationships

Hillel's structure places a premium on local leadership. If the local leadership, particularly the Executive Director, who is in a position to provide history, longevity, and broad focus, does a good job, then the local Hillel generally performs well. When the local staff is not effective in their job performance, it hampers the ability of the local Hillel to align with the national mission as well as of students and other staff to create what becomes necessary change.

Additionally, since the International Center does not hire the Executive Directors, an ineffective individual may remain in the position for a sustained amount of time and inhibit positive growth. My prior research did not prepare me for the degree of importance of key individuals.

Although some previous studies point to the relevance of individuals to organizational dynamics, the larger body of work seems to focus on the macro picture within and between organizations. Greater interpersonal connections between local and International leadership result in more informal communication of information. This additional flow of information increases the likelihood of relevant information being transferred and, with the increased communication from multiple angles, acceptance and eventually implementation. Further examining the role of interpersonal communication and relationships in decentralized organizations would be helpful to determine if there are common structures for this type of communication. Determining whether this parallel channel to formal communication may also increase the likelihood of accepting central messages with less tension would also be a relevant finding.

2. Differentiating Aspects and Applications of Centralization

Centralization and decentralization are not absolute trade-offs, but rather a balance an organization must strike to most effectively operate in its unique environment. One lesson from Hillel is the importance of differentiating potential aspects of centralization, both in regard to top-down concepts as well as between local affiliated organizations. The five main objectives Hillel outlines in the Strategic Plan focus on two primary concepts: structure and mission. While these concepts are intertwined in application, they are very different in how they are developed in the field. Structural concepts are easy to evaluate and relatively simple for local senior staff to

identify how to implement. Changing staff composition, improving training, and increased

fundraising, while potentially difficult to implement, are not core changes to the organization.

Changing how success in the core area of the organization is evaluated, however, challenges

long-held beliefs and norms. Additionally, when the new measurement is based on esoteric and

subjective conceptions of success, they may be discarded as not meaningful or not effective

compared to traditional measures. As these conceptions are likely to be held by staff who have

been involved for a longer period of time, this shows the importance of aligning local leadership

with the centralizing mission.

In addition to recognizing potential differences in how various centralizing ideas should

be shared, understanding the unique environments of the local organization is very important.

As demonstrated with just the four Hillels in this study, the circumstances of local Hillels are

incredibly diverse. Differences include not just current life on campus and in the local

community, but also the historical relationships between various community stakeholders that

still strongly resonate today. Recognizing the differences on the local level and being able to

extrapolate general trends to assist in the development of unique strategies for the different

aspects of centralization is key to an effective overall centralization project.

3. Multiple Approaches to and Layers of Change

Along with recognizing the different aspects of a centralization plan and the garden of

local variety, understanding how to communicate and share ideas across the system is another

lesson. Hillel has developed a number of different tools to address its multiple constituencies.

Ranging from indirect to invasive, the International Center simultaneously uses multiple

techniques to reach different groups. While the effectiveness of different stakeholders varies,

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effectively changing organizational design involves enlisting these various groups to ensure a relatively smooth process. Hillel has developed different strategies for staff, students, and volunteer leaders to communicate and show what the FJCL means. Recognizing the importance of multiple constituencies and detailing different layers of change, based on time, power, and structure, is an important concept.

Further analyzing how local shifts affect other local Hillels could yield interesting data on network organizations and how local affiliates within these decentralized systems interact and influence each other. While I did not examine this aspect of the decentralization paradigm, the moderately direct programs, such as a staff conference, likely yield an exchange of ideas that further develops interpersonal relationships and additional lines of communication. This then has a snowball effect of idea sharing and forming network connections.

4. Recognizing Structural and Environmental Differences When Studying Organizational Design

One of the most apparent lessons from Hillel is the importance of acknowledging overarching structural and environmental differences between organizations when attempting to develop theories for how they develop and operate. Organizational theory is often stated as applying equally well to all organizations. As this study supports, however, not only are there substantial differences between the for-profit and non-profit community, but differences in theoretical applications when the historical grounding of an organization is taken into account.

Hillel's initial affiliation with B'nai B'rith provided an imprint that the organization has not shaken (not that it necessarily should in every aspect). Since it developed as a radically decentralized organization, Hillel has responded differently to centralization attempts than an organization that traditionally had a greater degree of formal coordination. For other

organizations, this example suggests that the initial structure plays a substantial role in longer-term development. This priming quality of the initial structure may vary based on its longevity. I would anticipate, however, that the ability of an organization to centralize from a decentralized starting point, especially when formal tools of coordination and power were historically delegated to the local level, is difficult and will result in different experiences across the organization.

B. Lessons for Hillel

Although this is not Hillel's first foray with organizational change on a national or local level, the Strategic Plan and associated changes have a different focus than in the past. This process is an attempt by the International Center to detail system-wide objectives. These objectives are not to be accomplished by a select number of local Hillels or just the International Center but by the system as a whole. Linking the local Hillels so directly to the International Center and conceiving of all Hillels as more united even while supporting local differentiation is a new development. While Hillel has effectively handled a portion of this transition, it is only in the beginning stages of this process. A number of theoretical concepts and practical ideas would help Hillel better implement the desired change and effectively develop a more centralized relationship between the center and the field. These ideas can be grouped into the following categories: (1) Different Takes for Different Locales; (2) Network Management; (3) Staff Development and Placement; (4) Idea Generation. Operating within a "dynamic [and] heterogeneous environment," this conceptual framework should provide ideas for Hillel in order to perform well through "attaining both high differentiation and high integration" (Lawrence, 1967: 30).

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1. <u>Different Takes for Different Locales</u>

Local Hillels have different needs and consequently require different types of interaction with the International Center. For some Hillels, the initial goal should be to assist the local Hillel to meet the Strategic Plan's objectives. For other Hillels, however, this interaction is necessary simply to enable the local Hillel to just understand the objectives and idea of the larger network. Constructing a system, such as the four classes system developed in this paper, would enable Hillel to generate techniques that could be implemented for these different common circumstances. This would create a more streamlined system to identify complications in the network and develop a common starting point for different Hillels with common variables.

2. <u>Network Management</u>

In addition to recognizing the different approaches necessary for Hillels in different circumstances, grooming the overall network will benefit both the International Center and the local Hillels. This network management can occur in multiple forms. These ideas include regional summits that bring together local leadership of different types of Hillels to exchange ideas. This program would also have the benefit of engaging a cross-section of local leadership within the larger network but on a smaller scale than an international conference. In addition to regional activities, the International Center could organize programs for Hillels that are in similar positions in regard to meeting objectives. This idea is based on a similar concept, but would focus more on uniting groups of Hillels and developing specific ideas for improvement as a "class", likely facilitated by the International Center.

Additionally, the Hillel network could be better integrated through examining the idea of

"'democratic' influence (high influence at lower levels of the organization) [being] associated

with high organizational performance," proposed by Smith and Ari (Lawrence, 1967: 39). This

concept is found to be present in "voluntary organizations where the interests and objectives of

members and leaders are more widely shared, and where decision-making is of a judgmental

nature."[10] Understanding how norms and standards are shared throughout the system would help

Hillel better identify and integrate Hillels by harnessing local idea generation.

3. Staff Development and Placement

The International Center does not have authority over local Hillel Executive Directors or

volunteer leaders. As a result, when bad decisions are made at the local level, the International

Center has no hierarchical authority to contradict the action. While this does provide greater

local autonomy and freedom to learn from mistakes, it also means that local leadership should be

well trained to manage the local organization. Hillel already has a number of professional

development and mentorship programs. To create more effective staff, however, Hillel should

develop better volunteer board member training. Since the final hire/fire power often rests with

the local volunteer board, enlisting board members to the national mission would assist in

adoption of the ideas along with greater staff accountability.

Hillel could also develop a staff exchange program, facilitating junior and senior staff

placement around the system. The program could be constructed as a mentorship and idea

exchange program. This type of program would likely result in participants developing a greater

affiliation with and understanding of the system as a whole. It would also likely lead to less of a

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[10] C. Smith and O. Ari, "Organizational Structure and Member Consensus," *American Journal of Sociology*, 69 (May 1964), p. 638 in Lawrence, 1967: 40.

connection with specific Hillels. A staff exchange program would decrease longevity at individual locations, but would also be aligned with viewing the system as a whole while supporting local choice.

4. Idea Generation

As Rowe outlines, diversified organizations may have high levels of local innovation but find it difficult to implement these ideas on a broader scale. Developing a method to share local innovations across the system as well as effectively implementing top-down ideas is key to further developing the centralized mission. Both of these processes involve better information sharing. While grassroots innovation has been constant and a primary part of Hillel throughout its history, top-down ideas have not been as successful or as regular. Many local staff view ideas developed at the International Center with an eye of distrust. Not only is the office far from campus physically, but there is a conception that those not dealing with students on a regular basis do not understand students. Overcoming this concern is of primary importance in implementing ideas from the International Center in the field.

All of these categories relate to the others.   As is constantly addressed in organizational theory, recognizing the complex nature of organizations and environments is the first step in developing goals and attaining objectives.

IV. Avenues for Future Research

This study provided the picture of how one organization handled an evolving process of change in regard to relations between a central office and local affiliates. Like many organizations, Hillel has attempted to balance the benefits of centralization and decentralization.

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It has done this through a process of building local Hillels while injecting specified objectives and support from the top-down. Although this study supplies a number of lessons for organizational theory, much more research is needed both in regard to implementing centralization strategies and in regard to organizational design in general.

Specific issues to pursue in future studies would be if an overarching identity helps network organizations succeed, whether they cover large geographic distances or simply in a decentralized structure. Does religion have a different effect than other forms of identity due to historic and social aspects of this connection or as a result of the idea of a shared community that exists beyond the organization?

Along with external influences, a better examination of internal dynamics of network organizations as they undergo change would provide insight into how this type of organization can best structure internal dynamics. For example, do overlapping boards of directors expedite this process or hamper it due to potentially conflicting goals? When managers have worked at multiple organizations within the network, does that streamline an overall transition or bind the organizations to past practices? While much of this is dependent on the particular situation, conducting cross-organizational research would yield useful data.

An examination of the longevity of organizations and whether there is a correlation between longevity and centralization and decentralization would help organizations examine themselves and provide interesting data in regard to the lifecycle of organizations. Development of a clearer picture of why organizations develop in certain ways and how theory is implemented would be helpful to further understanding the multitude of organizational types and purposes.

V. Conclusion

Constructing and managing an organization through change involves continuous adjustment to changing environments and recognition that strategies may not work how there were initially intended. Organizational theory dictates standard norms that apply to organizations meeting certain conditions. However, the lack of research on Hillel provided a unique opportunity to learn more about organizational design in general and about Hillel in particular. Examining how Hillel has implemented the theoretical conceptions of centralization in a traditionally decentralized network has provided additional insight into this paradigm and opens new questions ranging from organizational design to cultural effects.

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Appendix 1: FJCL (International Center and Field Details)

International Center and US Local Hillels
Total Income: $66,459,114
     Contributions and Grants: $37,095,479
     Jewish Federations: $14,962,319
     Program Fees: $10,456,074
     Investment Income: $2,006,479
     Other Income: $1,938,763
Total Expenditures: $66,285,235
     Operating Expenditures: $60,341,151
     Allocations and Grants to Local Hillels: $5,944,084
Total Hillels: 251
Number of Regional and Multi-Campus Hillels: 21

Appendix 2: International Center Details

Hillel International Center Information
Total Income: $25,769,320
     Contributions and Grants: $16,247,748
     Jewish Federations: $1,955,613
     Program Fees: $6,642,558
     Investment Income: $785,582
     Other Income: $137,819
Total Expenditures: $25,695,441
     Operating Expenditures: $19,751,357
     Allocations and Grants to Local Hillels: $5,944,084
Number of Staff: 97
Departments:
- Accreditation
- Administration Services
- Taglit birthright Israel
- The Center for Innovation and Implementation
- Measurement and Organizational Effectiveness
- Campus Advancement
- Communications
- Development
- Finance
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- International Division
- Israel on Camus Coalition

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- Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning
- Office of the President
- Office of the Executive Vice President
- Steinhardt Jewish Campus Service Corps
- Weinberg Tzedek Hillel
- Soref Initiative

Appendix 3: Campus Details

Binghamton University
Program Areas: Arts, Jewish elementary school mentorship, community service, First Year students, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender, Jewish cultural journal, Holocaust education, Inter-cultural affairs, Jewish a cappella, Reform Jewish programming, Conservative Jewish programming, Orthodox Jewish programming, religious programming, social programming, Shabbat, sports programming, Graduate students, Jewish learning

Staff: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Development Director, JCSC Fellow, Program Associate, Office Manager

Student Leadership: Executive Board (President, Executive Vice President, VP of Culture and Education, VP of Public Relations, VP of Finance, VP of Communication), Leadership Council (Program Chairs, at-large members)

University of Arizona
Program Areas: Israel, Diversity Council, First Year students, Greek Jewish society, Holocaust education, IM Sports, Jewish Arizonans on Campus, Reform Jewish programming, Conservative Jewish programming, Orthodox Jewish programming, Jewish women's group, Community service, Jewish outdoors, Shabbat, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender, Grad students, Jewish Law students, Jewish Medical students, Young Jewish Tucson, Kosher Café, alternative break

Staff: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Office Manager, Program Director, JCSC Fellow, Israel Fellow, Bookkeeper

Student Leadership: Executive Va'ad (Student Coordinating Committee; President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Special Events Coordinator), group chairs

Claremont Colleges
Program Areas: Shabbat, text study, lunch with Hillel, social action, social, Darfur awareness, First Year students

Staff: Rabbi/Director, JCSC Fellow

Student Leadership: Co-presidents, Vice President, Social Chair, Ritual Chair, Tzedek Chair, Freshman Rep, Israel co-chairs, Community Liaison, Treasurer

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<u>Broward and Palm Beach</u>
Program Areas: Chat with the Rabbi, Shabbat, Bar nights, movie nights, First Year students, Sick soup delivery, Jewish Greek council, Social Action, Jewish law students, lunch with Hillel, Jewish Association of Health and Medical Students, Jewish Psychology students association, coffee with Hillel

Staff: Executive Director, Director of Boca Raton Programming, Director of Broward County Programming, Assistant Director of Regional Programs/Campus Rabbi, JCSC Fellow, Israel Fellow, Operations Manager, Marketing and Publicity Intern

Student Leadership: FAU (President, Social Chair, Marketing Chair, Treasurer, Tzedek Chair, Cultural and Educational Chair); Palm Beach Community College (no formal structure); Students for Israel President and Treasurer; NSU (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer); Jewish Law Students (President, VP, Secretary), Jewish Association of Health and Medical Students (Co-Presidents, VP, Secretary), Jewish Psychology Students (Co-Presidents, Secretary); Lynn (President, VP, Programming Chair, Cultural and Israel Chair, Treasurer, Communications, Secretary); Jupiter (President, VP of Finance, VP of Communications) [student leadership is campus-based and varies per campus]

Appendix 4: List of Interviews

Binghamton University	www.hillelatbinghamton.org
Gary Coleman	Executive Director
Devorah Serkin	President 2006
Jessica Koss	President 2007
Dave Belsky	Board of Directors 2005-2007
University of Arizona	www.uahillel.org
Michelle Blumenberg	Executive Director
Adam Frankel	President 2006
Eric Freed	President 2005
Erica Solomon	Vice President 2006
Michael Achtman	5th Year Senior
Claremont Colleges	www.claremonthillel.org
Rabbi Leslie Bergson	Executive Director
Lisa Sobel	JSCS Fellow
Eli Winkelman	President 2006
Hannah Crumme	Jewish Peer Mentor Chair
Broward and Palm Beach	www.hillelcenter.org
Darin Diner	Executive Director
Hillel International Center	www.hillel.org

Beth Cousens	Director of Campus Advancement
Aviva Perlman	Communications Associate
Neil Spears	Bittker Fellow