

2013

Evolution and Change in Civic Engagement Organizations: A Life-Cycle Analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters

Nathan J.R. Grant

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/muskie_capstones

 Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grant, Nathan J.R., "Evolution and Change in Civic Engagement Organizations: A Life-Cycle Analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters" (2013). *Muskie School Capstones*. 31.

http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/muskie_capstones/31

This Capstone is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Muskie School Capstones by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.

**Evolution and Change in Civic Engagement Organizations:
A Life-Cycle Analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters**

Capstone Project by Nathan J. R. Grant
University of Southern Maine – Muskie School of Public Service
Academic Degree Candidate – Master of Public Policy and Management
Capstone Advisor – Bruce Clary, Ph.D.
2013

Abstract

The Maine League of Young Voters is an organization involved in educational and political civic engagement activities in the State of Maine. A membership base consisting of hundreds of grassroots members makes up the base of the organization. By studying the life cycle of the Maine League of Young Voters and comparing it to similar civic engagement organizations, the research here aims to increase the body of knowledge available about how these types of organizations evolve and change.

Findings from surveys and interviews indicated that the organization was over-extending the membership, despite a strong grassroots network, and that more delegation of tasks and leadership is necessary. Recommendations are included for improving the ability of the organization to detect and self-assess potential difficulties in the future.

I. Introduction and Background

In 2004, Justin Alford, now Senator of District 8 in Portland, founded The Maine League of Young Voters as the Maine chapter of a larger national organization called The League of Young Voters. Since the beginning of the Maine League, the organization has gone through several executive directors. The Maine League has undergone a strategic planning process to help guide the work of The League under the leadership of State Director Nicola Wells. Organizationally, The Maine League of Young Voters consists of the State Director, a steering committee that serves a similar purpose to a board of directors, and an election committee to handle election-based issues. A leadership team also exists to help promote volunteer recruitment and voter registration efforts.

The Maine League strives to be a 'member run organization,' with input from stakeholders at the grassroots level. One of the central purposes of the organization is to encourage young people to vote in elections. Membership is almost exclusively volunteer, with the State Director and occasionally a local city organizer being the only people serving in paid staff positions. Being a volunteer-based organization presents challenges to the Maine League in terms of volunteer engagement and recruitment.

Recently, the Maine League was involved with an initiative to repeal the passage of a law through a ballot referendum that would repeal a 38-year-old law that allowed Mainers to register to vote on Election Day. The success of the ballot referendum that stopped the repeal of Maine's Election Day voter registration law demonstrates that the Maine League, and organizations like it within the State, can be effective at mobilizing volunteers for social and political causes.

The national League of Young Voters has a presence in eight states, including Maine. Proximity and ability to perform research through direct interaction with members was critical to the decision to study the Maine chapter of the League of Young Voters. Low-income and minority youth are the primary demographic targeted by the League's civic engagement programs. These programs seek to engage young voters in the democratic process, provide civic education, and assisting young voters with becoming active in affecting change in their communities. The core purposes of the League of Young Voters are listed on their website as the following (<http://theleague.com/about>):

1. Engage young people who have been shut out of the political process.
2. Train them to be sophisticated organizers in their own communities.
3. Build multi-racial, multi-issue alliances.
4. Lobby at the local, state, and national level.

5. Organize voters to hold elected officials accountable once they're in office.

The Steering Committee of the Maine League of Young Voters has the authority to set the direction for the organization, with the national League being responsible largely for bookkeeping, information systems support, and general assistance. At the local level, the Steering Committee provides direction on strategic planning, fundraising, and recruitment. Two important subcommittees of the Steering Committee include the Leadership Committee and the Governance Committee. The Leadership Committee determines what races the Maine League decides to enter in the current election cycle and handles voter registration efforts. Issues concerning staff relations or addressing grievances goes through the Governance Committee. Other major committees include the Elections Committee, which creates the voter guide to assist young voters with deciding which candidates and issues to support, and the Development Committee.

The most important aspect of the research is that it will add to the existing body of work on evolution and change in community-based political action groups. Most studies on the life cycle of organizations are on private corporations. Currently, very little literature exists that focuses on how nonprofit organizations similar to The Maine League evolve and deal with crises as they change. Grass-roots civic engagement organizations like the League of Young Voters exist all over the country. Examples include The League of Women Voters, The League of Conservation Voters, The League of Bicycling Voters, The League of Humane Voters, The Latino Voters League, The League of Rural Voters, and The League of Veteran and Military Voters, just to name a few. Each of the aforementioned groups has a distinct target demographic, much like the Maine League of Young Voters. The research presented here will be useful for similar groups dealing with the challenges of organizational change.

Problem Statement

The Maine League of Young Voters has experienced significant changes in leadership since 2004. The Maine League of Young Voters also has a perpetual need to find ways to excite and engage the volunteers to help the Maine League support its brand of political activism. No lack of causes exists for The Maine League to tackle since the current political environment is often not favorable to the core values expressed by the league. Daft (2007) notes in his chapter on organizational size, life cycle, and decline that growth and change within an organization are not always beneficial and can lead to organizational decline. The Maine League could benefit from a life cycle analysis due to the recent changes internally in leadership, the growth in the volunteer base of the organization, and the expanded

range of activities performed by the nonprofit that could potentially result in organizational deterioration or death. Aside from the benefits to the organization, there is a lack of research on the evolution and change of civic engagement organizations. Studying the Maine League will add to the existing literature on organizations involved in civic engagement. Furthermore, a comparison between the evolution and change in the Maine League and other groups will provide some context for understanding how these organizations deal with change through their life cycle.

Objectives of the research involve performing an organizational life cycle assessment of the Maine League and comparing the outcomes of the assessment to the historical life cycle trends in similar organizations. The assessment will also benefit the Maine League by allowing them to assess several environmental performance factors through the lens of the life cycle evaluation. First, an analysis will determine at what stage in the life cycle of the organization the Maine League of Young Voters is currently in relative to the size of the organization. Quinn and Cameron (1983) provide examples of four different stages in the life cycle of the organization:

1. Entrepreneurial Stage – The organization forms with strong central leadership driving the activities of the organization. Innovation and ideas are a focus.
2. Collectivity Stage – An informal structure forms, although the organization is still dependent upon one or two strong leaders. The organization comes together collectively around a core mission.
3. Formalization Stage – Rules and structure become more formal. There is less focus on ideas and innovation. Leadership is more decentralized.
4. Elaboration Stage – Leadership continues to decentralize, with many department heads and leaders, rather than a few. Rules and procedures become very formal. The organization elaborates upon the original mission, expanding the scope of products or services. A call for renewal may come at the Elaboration stage as the organization becomes less adaptable.

According to interviews, William “Billy” Wimsatt, a well-known social activist from the Chicago area, founded the League of Young Voters in 2003. Soon after the founding of the League of Young Voters, a young man by the name of Justin Alford started the Maine chapter of the League in 2004. Justin Alford went on to spearhead such initiatives as Opportunity Maine, which provides a tax break to college students who live and work in Maine (Du Houx, 2011). Changes in the leadership of the Maine League since 2004 suggest that the organization may have already had the crisis of leadership commonly observed when an organization moves from the entrepreneurial stage of development to the collectivity stage.

During each stage, the organization runs into crises where the management must meet challenges. How an organization deals with these challenges determines whether the organization continues to mature, makes major changes to operations, or declines. An essential purpose of the proposed research is to discover where the Maine League of Young Voters falls in the range of life cycle stages and make recommendations based on the information gathered and comparisons to other groups. Greiner (1972) describes several characteristics that organizations have at each stage in the life cycle, which include structure, services, reward and control systems, innovation, goals, and top management styles. Combining the models as proposed by Daft (2007) provides the theoretical structure in this research for analyzing the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV).

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual importance of life cycle theory is that it demonstrates how organizations evolve and change over time. As the literature review will reveal, multiple methods of categorizing the life cycle of organizations exist. The model used by Daft (2007) combines features of both Quinn and Cameron (1983) and Greiner (1972) and is the model used here. Another model is the 10 stage life cycle based on human life-stages by Adizes (1979), which is one of the most complex. Either life cycle analysis model would be applicable. A comparison of organizations across fewer life cycle stages is preferred to the more cumbersome multi-stage model. Determining where the organization falls on the life cycle stage will help with determining the challenges the organization must overcome to advance to the next stage of development, or to avoid decline. Once the life cycle stage is known, using historical information about the development of other organizations will offer a comparison with those organizations when they were at a similar life cycle stage.

Organizational variables in this research consist of the structure of the following as suggested by Daft (2007):

- Structure – organizational structure and the level of formality in rules and policies.
- Services – the mission or services provided by the organization.
- Reward and control systems – ways the organization engages employees and volunteers.
- Innovation – how the organization adapts and changes to external stimuli by single person, team, or formal departments focused on innovation and change.
- Goals – inform how the organization manages in the environment.

- Top management style – the way top management operates.

The structure of the organization consists of the amount of rules within the organization and the level of formalization of the rules. Structure also consists of the organizational chart, showing how the command structure works. Services consist of the overall mission of the nonprofit and the activities pursuant to fulfilling that mission. Reward and control systems can be impersonal, or very personal in nature. It is also important to understand the clarity of responsibilities and staff input into management decisions. The ability of the organization to innovate and change may come from the top management, staff, a group, or some formal institution within the organization. Goals and objectives measure whether the goal of the organization is survival, growth, stability, or expanding reputation. Management styles at the top may be very individual, prescriptive, team-based, or delegated. Each of the variables mentioned fall within the four stages of the Organizational Life Cycle as outlined by Daft (2007).

Daft's adaptation of the models of Greiner and others describes the decentralized nature of small nonprofit organizations like the Maine League of Young Voters in the early stages. The six organizational characteristics from Daft in each life cycle stages that most apply to the organization will help identify the life cycle stage where the organization best fits. Understanding the life cycle stage will provide insights into the challenges and crises that the organization currently encounters, or will likely arise. The nonprofit organization may have special circumstances not covered by the traditional interpretations of life cycle theory, thereby requiring a comparison to similar civic engagement based nonprofit organizations. The Maine League of Young Voters most likely falls into one of the first two stages of the organizational life cycle due to their size and age, suggesting possible crises of leadership or delegation within the organization.

Research Questions

The study of the Maine League of Young Voters seeks to answer the following questions:

- In what stage of the Organizational Life Cycle is the Maine League of Young Voters?
- What problems are restricting the growth and development of the organization in the external and internal environment?
- What can the Maine League of Young Voters do in order to continue to grow and develop?
- To what extent are the findings of the study generalizable to similar organizations?

II. Methods

The first stage of research will use a survey sent to staff and volunteer members of the Maine League of Young Voters. Since the organization consists mostly of volunteers, the number of those surveyed was 250 individuals. The estimated number of individuals comes from the number of staff in the Maine League and the estimated volunteer base that volunteered at least eight hours in the past year. A census, or total population sample, was chosen due to the difficulty of trying to perform a random sample on a population without having direct access to a list of members and to be inclusive to everyone within the organization wishing to participate in the study. According to Nulty (2010), a good response rate for an online survey is around 50 percent of the sample. The choice of a total population was due to a small total population and because most people in the organization are volunteers with a wide range of experiences and responsibilities within the organization, making it difficult to classify individuals into sample categories. A census has the potential for sampling non-response bias. Although there is no way to deal with the problem of less than 100 percent participation, the desired outcome was to have a response rate of roughly half the sample. Since the type of research is descriptive¹ in nature, cross-sectional² and exploratory³, a census is sufficient for generating reliable information about the organization. A census will look at membership in the whole organization at one point in time, allowing for a description of the research subject and an exploration of commonalities with other civic engagement organizations. The survey design is quantitative, with domains that address the six characteristics of the organization necessary for life cycle analysis as noted in the theoretical framework.

Implementing the survey required relying on the organization to deliver the link to the online survey and send out reminder emails. Using this method had the advantage of coming from the organization directly, rather than an unknown external entity. The disadvantage was less researcher control over the sample and reminder emails. Respondents received a follow-up email 72 hours after the initial survey invitation. An additional reminder went out after one week. Following the one-week reminder, an unfortunate event that caused the survey host to go out of business necessitated a switch to another online survey provider. A reminder linked to the new survey provider went out after approximately two weeks from the date of the one-week survey reminder. It is unknown if switching

¹ Descriptive research describes the subject of the research (Babbie, 2010).

² Cross-sectional research looks at a segment of a population at a specific point in time (Babbie, 2010).

³ Exploratory research is a flexible research method intended to explore a subject without the need for a hypothesis or explanation of causation (Babbie, 2010).

the survey provider caused a substantial decrease in response rate, although it is possible. The goal of the survey was to help determine what stage of the organizational life cycle the organization is in and assist with answering the question of the external and internal environmental restrictions on organizational growth and maturity.

Data analysis for the survey compared the variables using descriptive statistics to understand the distribution of responses based on the six variables. No comparison was made between volunteer and staff responses due to the small numbers of staff, which could potentially lead to personally identifiable responses. The analysis of data helped determine the life cycle stage of the Maine League, whether continuing to develop or declining, and if perceptions of the league differed between groups.

The third stage of analysis consisted of triangulation⁴ between the survey, semi-structured interviews, and documents about the Maine League collected throughout the first and second stages. The semi-structured interviews attempted to verify information collected in the survey, while the documents collected complimented the information gathered in interviews and the survey. Each research method informed the understanding of the organization in terms of the research questions and answered the question of whether generalizing the results to similar organizations is appropriate.

III. Ethics

The first stage of research took place in the form of a survey. Names of subjects and personal identifiers were not recorded. All questionnaire contributors consented to participate after reading information about the risks and purpose of the survey. A password and fingerprint scan protected computer provided a secure storage location for survey data. Firewall and virus protection software remained installed and updated at all times on the computer designated for research use. Additionally, files containing research data were password protected individually. An interruption to the online survey occurred when the web-based survey provider shut down; however, the data remained secure and the principal investigator switched to a different online survey delivery system to finish the first stage of research.

Second stage analysis took the form of semi-structured interviews with key personnel. All key personnel submitted a signed form proving informed consent. The sample of the individuals was

⁴ Concurrent triangulation, or triangulation, is a research method employed in mixed methods research where qualitative and quantitative information is gathered and compared to find similarities and differences. The goal is to confirm or disconfirm the validity of the hypothesis, or to strengthen the research when either quantitative or qualitative research alone is insufficient (Creswell, 2009).

purposive⁵ due to the need to get specific information. Part of the semi-structured interview sought historical information about the Maine League. All questions were open-ended, where the respondent had the choice of how to answer. The researcher did not collect personal information during the interviews. All questions related directly to the organization. Questions from the qualitative part of the interview attempted to test the veracity of the survey findings. Semi-structured interviews endeavored to reveal problems the organization faces in the internal and external environment in a more in depth way than the survey was able to address. Interviews also helped determine areas of growth and development for the Maine League of Young Voters.

Throughout the research, documents voluntarily provided by the organization expanded the researcher's knowledge of organizational dynamics. All copies of the documents collected had names and other personal identifiers of individuals redacted for privacy considerations. Analyzing the documents provided information to either corroborate or contradict information gathered through the survey and interviews. Document analysis assisted with determining organizational characteristics.

The research design does not pose any ethical problems because of the confidentiality ensured by the process, because personal information is not required of individuals, and because the research subject is the organization and not any particular individual's relationship to the organization. Due to the small number of staff members, direct comparisons between staff and the general membership were avoided in order to preserve confidentiality.

IV. Review of Literature

The purpose of this review of the literature is to inform the development of the research design by looking at the various models related to the organizational assessment of an organization and comparing the life cycle of the organization to similar civic engagement groups. Furthermore, the articles chosen for the literature review represent the viewpoints of some of the foremost thinkers in the field of organizational theory and design. Due to the lack of research regarding organizational models in similar organizations, an opportunity exists to add to the body of work on nonprofit organizations, especially those involved in civic engagement. The literature collected is from a wide variety of online databases, peer-reviewed studies, and articles related to management.

Quinn and Cameron (1983) explore several different models of organizational life cycle and comment upon which ones they found to be most accurate for explaining organizational change. What

⁵ The purposive sample (also known as a convenience sample) is a sample that is not random, but rather purposefully selected by the research in order to meet specific aims of the research (Babbie, 2010).

Quinn and Cameron (1983) found is that organizations generally have four stages in the organizational life cycle; Entrepreneurial, Collectivity, Formalization and Control, and Elaboration. The model in Quinn and Cameron (1983) came from taking nine different life cycle models and combining them into a four-stage model summarizing parts of each by showing how those stages over-lapped with variables in four models of organizational effectiveness; the open systems model, the human relations model, the internal process model, and the rational goal model. The life cycle model noted in Quinn and Cameron takes into account immature organizations, as well as mature organizations, in a simple framework that provides sufficient explanatory power through an Occam's razor approach to life cycle theory. All of the organizational life cycle models have a beginning stage, several middle stages, and an end stage that may or may not result in organizational death. The work presented by Quinn and Cameron was useful in the research to show what similarities and differences exist between life cycle models and to draw conclusions from the literature that would apply to the Maine League of Young Voters.

Where the Greiner (1972) model is extremely useful in this research is in the categorization of the characteristics that organizations in a particular stage of the organizational life cycle share. In the early phases of an organization, they usually have an informal organizational structure, seek to grow, and are driven by top management (Greiner, 1972). Greiner also provides clear justifications for the characteristics chosen for his life cycle model, although a limitation of Greiner's model is that it describes for-profit businesses and may not be well adapted for a nonprofit. The Greiner model has few stages and explains well the characteristics of less mature organizations. Greiner was helpful in the analysis for describing organizations in their early life cycle stages.

Whetten (1987), who focuses on the importance of understanding organizational death and decline in the life cycle, criticized Greiner (1972) for leaving the decline and death parts out of his model. Whetten notes that organizational decline results from decreasing resources or external environmental pressures that cause conflict within the organization (1987). One way to make Greiner's model more applicable to immature and resource constrained organizations is to re-introduce concepts of death and decline. Daft (2007) does include the concepts Greiner was criticized for leaving out in his life cycle model. Whetten's work could be extended to the non-profit world of civic engagement organizations, especially where he notes that resource constraints are a cause for the decline and eventual death of businesses. Resource constraints need not necessarily be financial in the way Whetten intended because the inclusion of time volunteers can give and personnel expertise are major factors for a non-profit organization's success.

Lippitt and Schmidt (1967) posit that crises during the life cycle challenge management to resolve issues that they have not faced before. Management style that is effective at one stage of the life cycle may prove ineffective at a later stage of development because the response may not be appropriate for the situation. In order to combat this problem, managers should reflect upon and study new crises in order to deal with these issues in the future, rather than to act too swiftly (Lippitt and Schmidt, 1967). The research of Lippitt and Schmidt applies to here because it is a critical component of the Daft model chosen. Top management style needs to adapt as the organization matures and needs change. The Lippitt and Schmidt approach was applicable to the research because it described how management needs to change and adapt to evolving situations faced by the organization.

Daft (2007) borrows from several sources to adapt his own version of the organizational life cycle. Among those authors referenced, he draws upon Greiner (1972), Lippitt and Schmidt (1967), and Quinn and Cameron (1983). The elegance of the Daft (2007) lifecycle is that it is only four stages; with maturity, stability, decline, or death occurring depending on the choices made within the organization. In other words, if management does not adequately deal with problems at each stage of development, then decline or death is possible. Greiner's (1972) five characteristics of the organization is used to show what characteristics an organization typically has at each stage in the lifecycle process, with the addition by Daft of a sixth characteristic called Goal. The decision to adopt the Daft (2007) version of the organizational life cycle came from the simplicity of the themes, how well it integrated other conceptual frameworks, and because the way Daft describes the model makes it easier to adapt to a nonprofit organization than the Greiner model. Daft's model can be applied by determining the organizational characteristics of the organization as they apply to each stage of the life cycle; structure, products or services, reward and control systems, innovation, goals, and management style. For example, an organization with many rules and procedures, products and services, and a very impersonal approach to rewards and controls is probably in the formalization stage and may need to tackle problems originating from excessive rules and organizational rigidity.

Limitations to life cycle analysis exist according to Phelps, Adams, and Bessant (2007), who studied the existing literature on organizational life cycle models. Their findings indicate that there is not conclusive proof that organizations go through organizational life cycle processes in a linear way. The significance of their analysis is that it points out potential constraints in life cycle frameworks and addresses concerns for the research under study. A more organic model focusing on the crises that organizations face and potential for returning to a previous stage in the life cycle may address some of the concerns raised by the authors. Phelps (et al., 2007) is important because it demonstrates that

organizations may revert to an earlier life cycle stage, rather than declining or dying; evolution and maturity do not happen in a lock-step manner. The analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters looked at the possibility of a life cycle stage regression into account when examining the organization thanks to the research of the authors.

In a similar study of the limitations of life cycle theory, Dart, Bradshaw, Murray, and Wolpin (1996) examined boards of directors for nonprofit organizations to find out if the boards follow a life cycle model. The findings suggest that nonprofit boards structurally follow the life cycle models; however, nonprofit board behaviors and attitudes operate independently of the outline provided by life cycle theories (Dart, et al., 1996). The limitations in life cycle analysis pointed out by Dart and his colleagues suggests that conclusions about organizational behavior may not be drawn from life cycle theory when it comes to small units, such as boards of directors within organizations. Considering a sample of stakeholders larger than just the board of directors is prudent when performing life cycle analysis. Dart (et al.) does not factor prominently in the researcher presented here because the Maine League of Young Voters is far larger than a board of directors or a steering committee, although it may apply to smaller emerging organizations that consists primarily of a nonprofit board of directors.

Schneider (2002) proposed that organizations are evolving from the traditional bureaucracy into a new type of structure called the radix organization. Radix organizations focus on the ground level, or the stakeholders in the organization, rather than on vertical command and control. In the radix, bottom-up and horizontal methods of communication become just as important as top-down decision-making for guiding the organization through challenges (Schneider, 2002). New-form and matrix are also terms that describe what Schneider calls the radix organization. The importance of Schneider's new theory of organizational structure is that it shows that the life cycle does not necessarily result in a bureaucratic organization, but may result in a mature organization with a more organic structure. Performing a life cycle analysis on a mature organization should not automatically assume bureaucracy is a problem. Schneider's observations may be useful when looking at mature comparison organizations to the Maine League. While Schneider intended the radix organization to be a new form of stakeholder driven organization coming from a more bureaucratic organization, there are parallels between nonprofit organizations and his descriptions of the radix organization that apply to the Maine League of Young Voters, thereby expanding Schneider's usage of the term.

Katz and Gartner (1988) scrutinized the characteristics that comprise emerging organizations at the micro level and provided recommendations for how researchers might combine macro theory life cycle models with micro level theories. Emerging organizations usually have intentionality in their

creation and resource constraints as they try to produce capital investments, grants, or donations during the early stages of development (Katz & Gartner, 1988). Emerging organizations have boundaries between themselves and the external environment, where they need to develop collaborative networks with complimentary organizations and establish themselves with government and in the community (Katz & Gartner, 1988). Knowing the characteristics of emerging organizations is useful for determining whether the organization is in the early stages of the life cycle. Organizational exchanges with the external environment are also a challenge for the developing organization as it attempts to build collaborations with complimentary organizations and to conduct transactions that are beneficial within the established external environment (Katz & Gartner, 1988). If the organization has fully developed external relationships, then it may be an indicator that a later life cycle stage is appropriate. As an additional factor, understanding the relationships and partnerships of the Maine League may shed insights into the particular stage and challenges faced by the organization. Because the Maine League is an emerging organization, the work of the authors did not really apply to the organization.

Similarly, Bess (1998) looked at several emerging organizations. The work of Bess (1998) is significant because it explores how emerging organizations fit into existing life cycle theory. Significant differences exist between emerging nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations. Bess (1998) points out differences in life cycle characteristics between nonprofits started by a sole founder and those that emerge out of the actions of a collective group, or nonprofit board of directors. Nonprofits with a single founder driving the organization more closely resemble the description of the entrepreneurial stage while those run by stakeholder groups or by a board seem to take on characteristics of the more advanced stages of the life cycle. Bess is noteworthy because comparing nonprofits of differing origins may present complications arising from differing situations surrounding their founding. In sum, both external relationships and nonprofit origins can influence the perception of emerging organizational characteristics in life cycle analysis. The work of Bess does not apply to the Maine League of Young Voters because it has both a strong director and an active steering committee serving as a local board of directors.

V. – Analysis and Discussion

Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. A comparison of the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews and documents gathered, using a research method known as

concurrent triangulation⁶, provided the means to determine the organizational life cycle stage of the Maine League of Young Voters. A comparison of the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) with the history of similar nonprofit civic engagement organizations provided insights into how the organization might continue to evolve.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Organizational Structure

Based on the structure of the organization, the survey indicated that the MLYV is becoming slightly more bureaucratic, with 53 percent agreeing that there are too many rules and procedures. Comparisons with the interviews reveal that the attitudes toward rules and procedures come from an increasing number of formal procedures, although the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) does not have many formal procedures in place. Document analysis confirms the assertion that the organization does not have many rules. Decisions in large or bureaucratically structured organizations tend to be slow (Daft, 2007, Quinn & Cameron, 1983, Greiner, 1972, et al.). The survey clearly indicated that respondents did not believe the organization to be slow at decision-making, with 74 percent indicating that they disagree or strongly disagree that decision-making is too slow. Similarly, interviews show that decisions are swift and decisive due to the need to respond in a timely manner to policy issues significant to the mission of the MLYV. Responsibilities in large formalized organizations are generally defined better than in smaller organizations due to centralization (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). However, survey respondents note that they agree or strongly agree that their responsibilities are clear within the organization, at 77 percent. Discussions with those in the organization through interviews reveal that clear responsibilities come from good coordination of member resources. The MLYV has a decentralized organizational structure with very few formal rules and procedures, relies on a small staff and a large network of volunteers. The literature points to an early, rather than later, life cycle stage due to the organizational structure.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Services

Services offered by the organization focus on empowering young individuals to participate and educate themselves about policy issues. Many life cycle models (Quinn & Cameron, 1983) indicate that larger organizations tend to offer more products or services. The MLYV has both an educational mission and an advocacy mission pertaining to the engagement of young people in the democratic process. The organization is accomplishing its mission according to 70 percent of valid responses. Individual

⁶ See definition in the footnote on page 8.

responses in the interviews coincided with the survey results. Another indicator from the survey reveals that the MLYV is increasingly taking on too many tasks, with 59 percent of respondents agreeing that the organization is doing too much. In interviews, respondents also indicated that the MLYV is indeed doing too much; revealing that the recent election cycle was the first time that the organization took on as many tasks. When asked if management has too many priorities, responses were split between those that thought too many priorities existed and those that did not feel there were too many priorities, with approximately a 50 percent to 50 percent split. Interviews revealed that pressure to accomplish so many goals caused stress at all levels of the organization, with management pressure on staff felt by the volunteers. The literature indicates that there may be a crisis of delegation in the MLYV, where the need for delegation by management is leading to a crisis of control (Greiner, 1972). Interviews revealed that MLYV strained personnel and volunteer resources to accomplish all of the goals of the organization during the recent election cycle. Even if management is willing to relinquish some control, more active volunteer and personnel resources may be required to accomplish goals.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Reward and Control Systems

According to Daft's (2007) synthesis of various life cycle models, larger organizations have a very informal and impersonal system of rewards and controls compared with their smaller counterparts. MLYV respondents indicated that management did not care as much about how things were done as much as what was done. Results matter more, according to 63 percent of those surveyed, than following a specified process. Respondents demonstrated strong agreement that the MLYV rewards hard work, at 77 percent. Interviews agreed that reward systems at the organization are personal, informal, and depend on an individual's contribution to the success of the group. Overall satisfaction with the operation of the organization, at 58 percent of those answering the survey question, indicates that the organization is stable. Members do not perceive management as out of touch with the organization, with 75 percent of valid responses confirming management involvement. According to Daft (2007), the use of informal and personal reward systems, having management that is in touch with what is happening in the organization, and caring more about outcomes than process are all indicators that the organization is in an early stage of development. Satisfaction with MLYV operations indicates that people feel that their efforts with the organization are worthwhile, and therefore rewarding.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Innovation and Change

The characteristic that best describes how the MLYV handles innovation and change is collaborative, a word that repeatedly came from interview participants. An overwhelming majority indicated from the survey that the grassroots volunteers have many opportunities for input into major decisions, at 81 percent. Likewise, a large majority at 78 percent noted that the MLYV is in a process of trying to change as an organization, possibly indicating that a transition period is coming or recently passed. Respondents also indicated that people outside of management know what is going on, 68 percent saying that management keeps people informed. According to Greiner (1972), evolution in an organization requires communication and self-awareness. Self-awareness and communication are not possible unless management keeps people up to date. Survey results were divided on the question of whether management was trying to change, with a slim majority of 56 percent indicating that management is not undergoing change. Interview responses indicate that personnel turnover and a greater role taken by the Steering Committee are likely responsible for the perceived change in management style. Historically, a strong State Director led the MLYV through organizational changes. Lately, the Steering Committee and task forces like the Leadership Team have taken an increasingly active role in managing the direction of the organization over the past couple of years. Additionally, the organization is pursuing more grassroots collaborations with external organizations. The MLYV has overcome some of the barriers common between an emerging organization and the external environment as noted in Katz & Gartner (1988). Successfully overcoming barriers demonstrates that the organization is continuing to mature and grow. Furthermore, the MLYV displayed characteristics of what Schneider (2002) called a radix organization because the organization is focused on grassroots membership. The MLYV has a collaborative decision-making structure that avoids a strict hierarchy.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Goals

Growth is a clear goal of the Maine League of Young Voters. A majority of respondents, 69 percent, agreed that the organization is growing. The organization added to the staff recently and the number of active volunteers has steadily risen in recent years. The organization spends fiscal resources wisely according to 88 percent of valid responses from members, indicating responsibility with financial resources. Interview responses indicated that funding is not a constraint on growth at the current time. According to Whetten (1987), a major cause of organizational decline is resource constraints that cause internal conflicts and pressures from the external environment. Evidently, the MLYV is not experiencing severe challenges with financial resources or the external environment currently. Survey responses

divided regarding the organization's need for clearer goals and objectives, with a slight majority of 56 percent indicating a need for clearer goals. Interviews with key personnel revealed that goals and objectives are well defined. The disparity between survey responses and interview responses is not very clear. Perhaps those selected for the interviews are more intimately involved with the organization and have a clearer understanding of the goals and objectives than the volunteer members. What the interviews were clear about is the goals of growth in the areas of staff resources, volunteer recruitment and engagement, and funding sources. Another problem faced by the organization is the struggle to survive, with 58 percent indicating that there is a survival struggle. A struggle to survive indicates that the MLYV might be in a state of crisis or decline, despite recent growth. Obstacles to development include the need to get committed volunteers, getting committee members to commit more time to working on grassroots campaigns, and staff turnover. If the definition of resource constraints in Whetten (1987) expands to include volunteer and personnel resources, then the organization may be at a point of crises of delegation.

Life Cycle Analysis Findings – Management Style

Management in a smaller organization usually requires stronger leadership from a single individual, rather than groups as seen in larger organizations, which typically delegate work to departments (Daft, 2007). The survey was not able to answer the question of whether management maintains strict control over the organization due to a split in responses, with 50 percent of valid responses in either direction. The Steering Committee and other governing bodies collaborate with management to direct the broader goals of MLYV. According to interviews, it is necessary for management to handle many day-to-day tasks, indicating that the survey question was not clear enough for respondents. Greiner (1972) notes that emerging organizations often have strict management control of resources due to the entrepreneurial nature of new organizations. Conflicts with management are not common according to 58 percent of applicable responses, indicating that the management style works well with the organization. Interviews pointed out that some conflicts existed in the organization's recent past. Management is very involved in day-to-day activities, according to 82 percent of valid responses. Interviews also confirmed Management's participation with the daily activities of MLYV. The final question on management style tried to determine the level of micro-management, meaning pervasive management control over every aspect of the organization. The survey responses divided equally on this question, with 50 percent in agreement and 50 percent in disagreement, respectively. Interview responses indicated that micro-management is not a problem

within the organization. Due to the small size of the organization and management's involvement in initiatives undertaken, the responses are not surprising. Previous responses indicate that management defers to the Steering Committee on broad objectives and solicits adequate input from members; supporting the conclusion that micro-management is not currently causing significant problems within the organization. The split in responses on questions relating to management style may also indicate that management practices in the past may not be sufficient to meet the challenges of the present. Management seems to be at a point where key management decisions need to revolve around survival, which includes the need to delegate, and stabilization (Lippitt & Schmidt, 1967).

Organizational Comparisons

In contrast to the Maine League of Conservation Voters, the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) has grown rather fast. The Maine League of Conservation Voters (St. Pierre, 2002) went from 1983 until 1998 without building a membership base. The organization took action almost entirely through a volunteer executive director and a board of directors that only met every other year. As noted in Dart (et al., 1996), very little information can be gleaned from the life cycle stage of an organization consisting of a Board of Directors because they do not follow a normal life cycle progression. In 1998, the Maine League of Conservation Voters created bylaws and structurally re-organized, becoming a 501(c)4 with a separate 501(c)3 educational nonprofit by 2000 (St. Pierre, 2002). Similarly, the MLYV is split into a political action oriented nonprofit and an educational nonprofit arm, organized as a 501(c)4 political action section and an educationally focused 501(c)3, respectively. The MLCV developed more formalized rules, less centralization, and increased need for paid staff as noted in the stages of the organizational lifecycle in Daft (2007), indicating a shift from the entrepreneurial to the collectivity stage of the life cycle. Similarly, the MLYV developed from 2004 to 2008 into an organization with a steering-committee to direct organizational activities and a dual political action and education focus. MLCV is now known as Maine Conservation Voters. As noted in Dart (et al., 1996), caution is necessary when trying to assign a life cycle stage to a board of directors. While Maine Conservation Voters (MCV) remained only as a board of directors with a volunteer executive director for many years, they were able to pursue a legislative agenda. The organization did not start becoming large enough to offer multiple services or mobilize a large volunteer base until 1988. From the MCV's founding in 1983 until 1998, the organization remained in the beginning, or entrepreneurial stage, of development. The period following was a collectivity stage. According to Quinn & Cameron (1983), that means the

organization experienced a renewed focus on mission, focused more on expansion, and created a more formalized, yet still overall informal, structure and rules.

The League of Women Voters rose out of the National American Women Suffrage Association in the 1920's and was based upon a structure that relied heavily on State Leagues and some city leagues with at least one paid staff member (Maxwell, 2007). Similarities exist between the League of Women Voters (LWV) and the League of Young Voters in the formative stages of development. The League of Women Voters soon found itself branching out to work on policy issues that did not exclusively focus on women, such as child welfare, education, public health, and others (Maxwell, 2007). The organization tried to do too much and lost focus on the primary mission of the organization. Financial pressures brought about steep membership declines in the 1930's that nearly crippled the League of Women Voters - leading the LWV to streamline operations and rely more on grassroots campaigns (Maxwell, 2007). Similar to the LWV in the 1930's, the League of Young Voters and the Maine League of Young Voters take cues from the grassroots membership on most issues. Prior to the 1940's, the LWV was organized largely at the national level by a departmental structure (Maxwell, 2007). Changes in the 1940s meant that participation and issues in the LWV were driven more at the local level, rather than by the national LWV (Maxwell, 2007). Changes in the LWV in the 1940 have trended away from bureaucracy and toward a less formally structured organization – the opposite of what might be expected in a typical organizational life cycle. The civil rights issues of the 1960's caused explosive growth in LWV membership and by the 1970's, the LWV had become deeply involved in environmental conservation issues (Maxwell, 2007). By the 1980's, membership was declining and the LWV undertook a long-range strategic planning process for the first time, which allowed the organization to streamline and adapt (Maxwell, 2007). The LWV continues to be a very active organization dedicated to multiple social issues.

On the national level, the League of Women Voters (LWV) has grown into an influential force for both women's issues and social justice. Unlike the MLYV, the LWV inherited a substantial structure from the organization's previous incarnation as a woman's suffrage movement. Nonprofit organizations that emerge out of collective actions like the LWV often appear to be at a more mature stage of organizational development than organizations with a sole founder like the Maine League, as noted by Bess (1998). Caution must be exercised when making a comparison between two such completely different organizations. The LWV suffered a loss of membership in the 1930's and needed to reinvent itself in order to survive (Maxwell, 2007). Similarly, the MLYV has waxed and waned over the years, depending on political climate and the level of engagement of the volunteer steering committee. The

LWV went through a process of change in the 1940's that involved getting rid of individual state-level departments and forming an organization of local grassroots organizing leagues in order to increase member participation (Maxwell, 2007). The MLYV likewise has undergone organizational changes, such as creating a new leadership team as part of their educational mission to determine what races the League is involved with and to assist with voter registration efforts. The MLYV currently has more members than at any other time. The LWV has since become a very large, well-funded grassroots nonprofit organization with multiple chapters in every state. The LWV is an example of an organization in the final, or elaboration stage of development, according to the life cycle model by Daft (2007). The LWV has continually expanded, has gone through processes of decline and renewal, is extremely large and yet decentralized, and has a much more formalized structure, with task-teams in the form of local chapters that do the work at the grassroots (Maxwell, 2007). MLYV is at a similar point to the LWV in the 1940's, except at a much smaller scale. A renewal has occurred, and the organization must now focus on the problems of survival and delegation of responsibilities.

In comparing the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) to the other two organizations, it is important to note that Maine Conservations Voters is a local state branch of a larger organization more comparable to MLYV, while the League of Women Voters is a long-standing national organization. The comparisons would be very different if comparing the national League of Young Voters with the other two organizations. Evaluating relationships between these organizations is limited by a small comparison group due to lack of available internal historical information about grassroots civic engagement organizations of a similar age and size to the Maine League of Young Voters. The benefit of such a broad comparison is that it demonstrates how life cycle theory applies to similar organizations in different life cycle stages.

VI. - Conclusion

The qualitative portion of the survey asked respondents to describe where they see the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) in 10 years. An attempt to understand the overall mood within the organization toward the future revealed that of the 28 open ended responses provided, 15 responses were very positive about the future, 6 were negative about the future, and 7 were either mixed or neutral. Content analysis using key words provided insight into the common themes. Indications that the organization is growing included comments about adding more staff and volunteers, expanding locations to other parts of Maine, and continuing to develop community engagement, education and political efforts. Neutral responses indicated either decline or growth was possible, or did not have a

clear opinion about the direction of the MLYV. Common themes from the negative open-ended responses revealed that staff turnover and limitations to funding are threats to the organization. Some of the response indicated that the MLYV has undergone a process of renewal and decline over the years. Phelps (et al., 2007) indicated that cycles do sometimes happen with organizations, where they decline back to a previous life cycle stage rather than dying. The open-ended responses imply that the MLYV has grown in the past, only to experience a stage of decline. Opportunities for growth noted in the responses include expanding beyond Portland to other areas of Maine and engaging the local community more through outreach by the Maine League.

Survey results suggest that the MLYV is non-bureaucratic, with some procedures, although not many. The MLYV has a core mission to engage young individuals in the political process, however, they also offer services in the form education and training as part of their 501(c)3 nonprofit branch. New initiatives are under-taken by the Steering Committee, with some leadership and definitely day-to-day management provided by the State Director. Reward and control seems to be very personal, recognizing good work when it is accomplished. The goal of the organization is continued growth, with some trepidation about continued survival. Management style appears to be similar to a more formalized organization, where tasks are delegated with some control retained by top management. In the early history of the MLYV, the organization experienced a period of growth. Eventually, the founder left the organization and a period of contraction occurred. Growth again occurred, with added staff and a record number of volunteers. Due to the grassroots nature of the organization, it may cycle back and forth several times before growing into an advanced life cycle stage. Interview and survey results indicate that the organization is in what Daft (2007) would call the collectivity stage of the organizational life cycle. During the collectivity stage, the most common crisis is the need for delegation. Fears of staff turnover and continually engaging volunteers in the work of the Maine League play a prominent role in the current life cycle stage. The organization in the past year tried to do too much according to the measures in the analysis. Growth depends on having the necessary staff and grassroots volunteer commitment to be able to delegate the tasks essential for organizational expansion. Like many nonprofit organizations, the MLYV still needs to seek funding from grants or donors in order to expand or maintain services. Fortunately, the organization does not appear to have any serious funding obstacles at the current time.

Some strain exists on overall services or activities engaged in by the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV) as indicated in the survey and in the interviews. The organization may be experiencing growing pains typical of an expanding organization that recently emerged from a previous life cycle

stage. My first recommendation is to put in place what Weitzel and Jonsson (1989) call scanning procedures, which will ensure that management is not taken unaware by internal or external threats. Procedures for scanning the environment at the MLYV may include surveys to determine if staff and members feel that the organization is spread too thin, or whether the organization is being consistent with goals and the mission. Current adherence to mission and reward and control systems seem adequate, however, constant environmental scanning will help prevent the organization from being caught in the blinded stage of decline (Wietzel & Jonsson, 1989). Surveys can provide a way for members or staff to submit concerns anonymously without fear of individual or group repercussions. Meetings and focus groups may also provide a way for regularly checking the internal and external environment for signs of problems that may impede performance. Once the organization identifies a problem, it is important for management to take decisive action as noted by Whetton (1987) or face what Wietzel & Jonsson (1989) call the inaction stage of decline. Lippit & Schmidt (1967) recommend that once management and stakeholders understand the concerns facing the organization, then the question of how to resolve the crisis can be asked and a resolution developed.

The next recommendation relates to the previous recommendation, where the organization is doing too much. Results from the survey indicate that the MLYV may be struggling to survive and interview responses, combined with the open-ended survey response, show a theme suggesting that staff turnover and volunteer engagement remain threats to the growth of the organization. The MLYV could benefit from assessing organizational capacity. If organizational capacity needs to increase, then a strategic initiative to implement a plan for increasing capacity should be pursued. Organizational capacity in a nonprofit comes from the knowledge and skills of individuals and the resources that allow the organization to utilize the expertise of individuals (Schuh & Leviton, 2006). The MLYV recently hired another staff person to assist with the individual expertise necessary to accomplish goals and objectives. An ongoing challenge is for MLYV to build organizational capacity within the volunteer member base and within the volunteer member-run committees that provide strategic direction for the organization. Capacity building could involve investments in trainings for volunteer members and professional development. Addressing the concerns voiced in the analysis of the organization regarding capacity will help the MLYV develop the organizational capacity to tackle an ambitious agenda of social and political issues like it faced in the past year. As Schuh and Leviton (2006) recommend, there are many instruments and checklists for assessing nonprofit organizational capacity. It is up to the organization to choose one suitable for their purposes.

The Maine League of Young Voters appears to be in the collectivity stage of the organizational life cycle. As noted in Quinn and Cameron (1983) and Daft (2007), the collectivity stage involves the need for delegation as leadership at the lower levels becomes more capable and seeks to do more within the organization. Often, management has a difficult time letting go of some of the control that was necessary when the organization was in an earlier stage of development. A good manager needs to lead in the collectivity stage with charisma and guidance, rather than top-down control (Daft, 2007). A lack of organizational resources may prevent management from being able to delegate until there is greater personnel or volunteer capacity, therefore it may be necessary to implement these recommendations in tandem. Once it is determined that the resources exist, the MLYV should try to find means to coordinate activities and involvement through delegation.

A surprising finding is that the organization has such a broad range of activities with a very limited number of staff. A tremendous amount of volunteer organizing and engagement goes into making an organization like MLYV function. It is clear that the recommendation to build up staff or volunteer resources to allow for delegation of tasks is important in order for the organization to continue functioning at the current level. The other option is to reduce the number of activities, thereby preventing burnout among volunteers and staff, and preventing organizational decline. The MLYV should assess organizational capacity and continue scanning their environment for potential problems, whether through surveys, meetings, or allowing for anonymous inputs.

The Maine League of Young Voters does not have the long history of the League of Women Voters (LWV), or the central cause of Maine Conservation Voters. What we can learn from the other organizations is that nonprofits like the MLYV do not always follow a linear life cycle progression, unlike most for-profit organizations (Phelps, et al., 2007). Just as the LWV declined in the 1930's and came back as a stronger organization, an organization like the Maine League can survive as long as an engaged core of members remain. Maine Conservation Voters spent over a decade as an emerging organization before expanding, demonstrating that for small nonprofit organizations, time is not necessarily meaningful in life cycle analysis. MLYV's greatest asset is a group of engaged core of members that is likely to continue to advance the mission of the organization, regardless of the life cycle stage. If the Maine League of Young Voters is able to tackle the current challenges inherent in the collectivity stage, it will continue to grow and evolve.

References

- Adizes, I. (1979). Organizational passages: Diagnosing and treating life cycle problems in organizations. *Organizational Dynamics*, (Summer), 3-24.
- Babbie, E. R. (2010). *The practice of social research* (12th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Bess, G. (1998). A first stage organization life cycle study of six emerging nonprofit organizations in Los-Angeles. *Administration in Social Work*, 22(4), 35-52. doi: 10.1300/J147v22n04_03
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). Chapter 10: Mixed methods procedures. In Creswell, J. W., *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.) (pp. 203-225). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Daft, R. L. (2007). Chapter 9: Organizational size, life cycle, and decline. In Daft, R. L., *Organizational theory and design* (9th ed.) (pp. 319-356). Willard, OH: Thomson South-Western.
- Dart, R., Bradshaw, P., Murray, V., & Wolpin, J. (1996). Boards of directors in nonprofit organizations: Do they follow a life cycle model?. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 6(4), 367-379.
- Du Houx, R. (2011). Senator Justin Alford — fighting for a better quality of life for all Mainers. *Maine Insights*, (31). Retrieved August 15, 2012 from <http://maineinsights.com/perma/senator-justin-alfond-%E2%80%94-fighting-for-a-better-quality-of-life-for-all-mainers>.
- Greiner, L. (1972). Evolution and revolution as organizations grow. *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 37-46.
- Katz, J., & Gartner, W. B. (1988). Properties of emerging organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 13(3), 429-441. Retrieved from JSTOR.
- Lippitt, G. L., & Schmidt, W. H. (1967). Crises in a developing organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 45(6), 102-112.
- Phelps, R., Adams, R., & Bessant, J. (2007). Life cycles of growing organizations: A review with implications for knowledge and learning. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 9(1), 1-30. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2007.00200.x

- Maxwell, K. J. (2007). The league of women voters through the decades. The League of Women Voters – Media Library. Retrieved November 12, 2012 from <http://library.lwv.org/content/league-women-voters-through-decades>.
- Nulty, D. D. (2010). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: what can be done? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(3), 301-314. Retrieved January 27, 2013 from <http://www.uaf.edu/files/uafgov/fsadmin-nulty5-19-10.pdf>.
- Quinn, R.E., & Cameron, K. (1983). Organizational life cycles and shifting criteria of effectiveness: Some preliminary evidence. *Management Science*, 29(1), 33-51.
- Schneider, M. (2002). A stakeholder model of organizational leadership. *Organization Science*, 13(2), 209-220.
- Schuh, R.G., & Leviton, L.C. (2006). A framework to assess the development and capacity of non-profit agencies. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 29(2), 171-179. doi: 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2005.12.001.
- St. Pierre, J. (2002). Maine conservation voters history through 2002. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Whetten, D.A. (1987). Organizational growth and decline processes. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13, 335-358.
- Weitzel, W., & Jonsson, E. (1989). Decline in Organizations: A Literature Integration and Extension. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34(1), 91-109.

Appendix A – Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Project Title: Evolution and Change in Civic Engagement Organizations: A Life-Cycle Analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters

I. Opening

- a. My name is Nathan Grant. I am doing this research as part of a Capstone Project required for students to complete a Master Degree in Public Policy and Management at the Muskie School of Public Service at USM. I would like to ask some questions about your experiences with the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV). The information gathered here will inform my research into the organization for an organizational life cycle assessment. The Maine League and other similar civic engagement groups will likely benefit from this study. The interview should take anywhere from 10 to 15 minutes. May I have a few moments of your time?

II. Body

- a. What is your position with the MLYV (staff or volunteer)?
- b. How would you describe the formality of the MLYV?
- c. Does management make all of the decisions with input, with some input, or with very little input?
- d. How effective is communication between management and staff or management and volunteer members or between each group?
- e. Is the current decision-making system effective? Why or why not?
- f. How efficiently are organizational resources used (time, money, etc.)?
- g. Does MLYV have clear goals and objectives?
- h. What outside groups does the organization collaborate with and what is the nature of those collaborations?
- i. What types of conflicts exist within the organization?
- j. What is the organizational culture like (informal, formal, participatory, management dominant)?

- k. How has the organization grown (or contracted)?
- l. What are some obstacles to change and development?

III. Closing

- a. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share regarding the Maine League of Young Voters? The information provided will help address any challenges faced by the organization as part of a capstone research project. I appreciate your willingness to participate in an interview.

Appendix B – Survey Questionnaire

Project Title: Organizational Performance and Life Cycle Analysis of the Maine League of Young Voters

Please read this form. Your participation is voluntary. You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with The Maine League of Young Voters or the University of Southern Maine. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You will have the option not to respond to any of the questions on the survey by choosing “no opinion.”

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by principal investigator Nathan J. R. Grant, a Public Policy and Management Master Degree candidate from the USM Muskie School of Public Service. The goal of this study is to understand the life cycle of the Maine League of Young Voters for the purpose of helping the organization address challenges as part of the principal investigator’s capstone project.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement with the Maine League of Young Voters. All staff members and volunteers were selected. If you are under the age of 18 years old or do not understand the consent statement, please do not fill out this survey. If you decide to participate, the survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey is designed to be anonymous, please do not include any information anywhere on the survey that may individually identify you or anyone else. There are no known risks if you decide to participate in the research study, nor are there any costs for participating in the study. Data collected will be kept on a password protected computer with a bio-metric fingerprint reader that only the researcher will use. The computer in question utilizes continually updated anti-virus and firewall software for your protection. Additionally, files containing research data will be password protected individually. Results from this research will be available to the public, including the Maine League of Young Voters, as a published USM Muskie School of Public Service capstone project.

The Maine League of Young Voters will benefit from this research by gaining a better understanding of the problems it faces in the stage of the organizational life cycle it is in currently, which will allow managers to respond to the problems and move the organization onto the next stage of development. However, the principal investigator cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Nathan Grant, at phone number (207) 240-0783 or by email at nathan.grant@maine.edu. The address for the Public Policy and Management Department at the USM Muskie School of Public Service is P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104. The faculty advisor for the capstone research is Bruce Clary at phone number (207) 780-4865 or email brucec@usm.maine.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call the USM Human Protections Administrator at (207) 228-8434 and/or email usmirb@usm.maine.edu.

I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.

1. (YES, I understand and wish to participate, NO, I do not consent to participate in this survey – End “Thank you for your time.”)

2. Are you 18 years old or older?

- A. Yes (continue)
- B. No (End of survey. “Thank you for your participation in this survey. Unfortunately, you must be 18 years of age or older in order to complete the survey.”)

3. What is your position with the Maine League of Young Voters? Are you best described as:

- A. Paid staff
- B. Volunteer
- C. Don’t Know
- D. No Opinion

Please use the following scale to answer the questions about the Maine League of Young Voters (MLYV).

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Disagree
- 4. Strongly Disagree
- 5. No Opinion

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Disagree (3)	Strongly Disagree (4)	No Opinion (5)
4. MLYV has many rules and procedures					
5. MLYV management maintains strict control over the organization					
6. MLYV provides adequate opportunity for input into decision-making					
7. MLYV is a growing organization					
8. MLYV is successful in accomplishing its' mission					
9. MLYV tries to do too much					
10. Decisions are made too slowly in MLYV					
11. Money used by the MLYV is spent wisely					
12. MLYV cares more about how things are done than what is done					

13. My responsibilities with the MLYV are clear					
14. People are rewarded for hard work by MLYV					
15. MLYV is trying to change as an organization					
16. I am satisfied with the way the MLYV operates					
17. Conflicts with management are common at MLYV					
18. The MLYV needs clearer goals and objectives					
19. MLYV is struggling to survive					
20. Management is deeply involved in day-to-day activities					
21. Management is out of touch with the organization					
22. People outside of management have no idea what is going on					
23. Management has too many priorities					
24. Management tries to micro-manage everything					
25. Management is trying to change its' leadership style					

26. Where do you think the organization will be in the long-term (10 yrs.)

[Submit]

“Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are appreciated!”

Appendix C – Survey Results

MLYV Survey Results				
% of valid responses	%Strongly Agree	%Agree	%Disagree	%Strongly Disagree
<u>Structure</u>				
Q4. Too many rules & procedures	0.0%	52.6%	47.4%	0.0%
Q10. Decisions made too slowly	4.8%	23.8%	57.1%	14.3%
Q13. Clear responsibilities	13.6%	63.6%	22.7%	0.0%
<u>Services</u>				
Q8. Accomplishing mission	16.7%	53.3%	23.3%	6.7%
Q9. Org doing too much	18.5%	40.7%	40.7%	0.0%
Q23. Mngmt too many priorities	10.0%	40.0%	45.0%	5.0%
<u>Reward/Control</u>				
Q12. How rather than what is done	10.5%	26.3%	47.4%	15.8%
Q14. People are rewarded	19.2%	57.7%	23.1%	0.0%
Q16. I am satisfied with operation	19.2%	38.5%	23.1%	19.2%
Q21. Management is out of touch	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%
<u>Inovation/Change</u>				
Q6. Adequate opportunity input	30.8%	50.0%	15.4%	3.9%
Q15. Org trying to change	17.4%	60.9%	21.7%	0.0%
Q22. Only mgmt knows happening	18.2%	13.6%	45.5%	22.7%
Q25. Mgmt trying to change style	0.0%	43.8%	56.3%	0.0%
<u>Goal</u>				
Q7. Growing organization	31.3%	37.5%	25.0%	6.3%
Q11. Money spent wisely	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	0.0%
Q18. Need clearer goals & obj	29.6%	25.9%	40.7%	3.7%
Q19. Struggling to survive as org	16.7%	41.7%	29.2%	12.5%
<u>Management Style</u>				
Q5. Mgmt maintains strict control	8.3%	41.7%	45.8%	4.2%
Q17. Conflicts w/ mgmt common	5.3%	36.8%	42.1%	15.8%
Q20. Mgmt involved day 2 day	18.2%	63.6%	13.6%	4.6%
Q24. Mgmt mico-manages all	27.3%	22.7%	36.4%	13.6%