Perceptions of the Block Island Wind Farm Process: Perspectives From Those Involved

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE BLOCK ISLAND WIND FARM PROCESS:
PERSEPECTIVES FROM THOSE INVOLVED
BY
JOSEPH DWYER

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ABSTRACT

Renewable energy technologies (RETs), such as offshore wind, are facing the dilemma of relatively strong national support, yet formidable local opposition, especially concerning siting decisions. This research uses the Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF) as a case study example to analyze the public engagement process that led to the BIWF. This study attempts to find rationales for the public’s support or opposition of the project based on certain aspects of the process, rather than solely examining oppositional viewpoints. Through 19 in-person interviews, state officials, the private development team, and public stakeholders were asked about their expectations as they began the public engagement process. Specifically, the interviewees were asked how they perceive their role in the process, as well as the role of the other groups. Attitudinal statements were used to understand if these expectations were or were not fulfilled by the process and how that may impact project support. These statements and thematic coding found that trust, both for the process and the process leaders, was essential for support of the outcome. Without sensing trust, Public Stakeholders formed opposing views of the process in general, which then led to opposition to the outcome. For building trust, the proper incorporation of expectations was key. Also, the use of more informal meetings and trusted community liaisons were beneficial to the process for building support. The need for trust in the process appears essential for project support. Thus, techniques utilized in this case study can be looked to for best practices of reasonably incorporating expectations to build trust, as well as for potentially increasing support for projects.
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PREFACE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................... iii

PREFACE ......................................................................................................................... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... viii

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Problem Statement ................................................................................................. 2
   1.2 Block Island ........................................................................................................... 2

2. Literature Review and Background ........................................................................... 6
   2.1 Public Engagement ................................................................................................. 6
   2.2 Public Engagement with RETs (Offshore Wind) ..................................................... 9
   2.3 Expectations in an RET and OSW Engagement Context ......................................... 14
   2.4 Expectations of Procedural and Distributive Justice ............................................ 15
   2.5 The Value of Expectations .................................................................................... 17
   2.6 Study Context – The Two Engagement Processes ................................................. 19
      2.6.1 The Ocean SAMP ............................................................................................ 19
      2.6.2 The Block Island Wind Farm and Transmission System ................................ 22

3. Methods ....................................................................................................................... 24
   3.1 Sample Selection .................................................................................................... 24
   3.2 Data Collection ...................................................................................................... 27
   3.3 Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 28

4. Results ......................................................................................................................... 34
   4.1 Expectations ........................................................................................................... 34
      4.1.1 Expectation of the Process ............................................................................. 34


# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1. Quantitatively displays the topics from the “Process” and “Project” primary nodes</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2. Gives examples of statements that were coded under the two primary nodes of “Process” and “Project”</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE PAGE

Figure 1. Shows the placement of the 5 turbines (yellow dots). The yellow line connects the turbines to a substation on Block Island and the red line represents the cable bringing power from Block Island to mainland RI on Scarborough state beach. .......................... 3

Figure 2. Displays the Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) designated through the Ocean SAMP process................................................................. 21

Figure 3. Displays the hierarchy of the “Attitudes” node. Groups are symbolized by the 1st letter of the group, followed by the process they are discussing (e.g. P – Developer (WF) is the Public’s attitudes towards the wind farm developer’s process)...................... 32

Figure 4. Shows the hierarchy of "Expectations of Role" nodes within NVivo. “Self” refers to self-perceptions of role (e.g. The Developers view on a Developers role). ....... 33
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Public Perceptions of the Block Island Wind Farm:

Perspectives from Those Involved

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Renewable energy projects can often times face tough local opposition, especially when considering siting decisions (Devine-Wright, 2011a; Wolsink, 2007b). Recent analysis of this opposition has begun to shift away from only investigating those opposed to the project. Instead, there has been a shift in focus towards the public engagement process preceding the project, namely how decisions are made. This new view legitimizes the opinions of those who may not support projects, rather than pejoratively assuming their opposition rationale is selfishly motivated (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007a). Engagement processes are now analyzed on aspects of public inclusion and procedural justice (Ottinger, Hargrave, & Hopson, 2014) to highlight techniques that may be effective in boosting project support. However, the literature is limited with examples of empirical instances of successful public engagements processes, especially with offshore wind in the United States. Scholars advocate for trust and meaningful engagement of the public, but many fall short of addressing demonstrable methods of achieving these goals.

1.2 Block Island

The Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF) will be the first commercial offshore wind project to be constructed in the United States. Block Island, located 12 miles off the southern shore of Rhode Island, is considered by many Rhode Island and greater New England residents to be an ideal tourism destination. During the summer months the Island can see its average winter population of roughly 1,000 residents swell to an additional 15,000-20,000, consisting of mostly day trippers (Block Island Tourism
Council, n.d.). There is also a significant number of seasonal residents that visit the Island annually for as short as a week, to as long as four to six months.

In addition to being a tourist destination, Block Island is revered for its natural characteristics. The Island boasts 365 ponds, 17 miles of beaches, 150 species of birds and iconic and undisturbed ocean views from the 250-foot bluffs (Guevara-Stone, 2015). These and other characteristics led the Nature Conservancy to recognize the Island as one of the “Last Great Places” in the Western Hemisphere. Currently 43 percent of the Island is protected from development (The Nature Conservancy, n.d.). However, this sense of beauty and isolation comes at a cost, especially for full-time residents.

The Island is not connected to the mainland’s electricity grid and must generate its own power through the use of diesel generators; which for many is in stark contrast to the environmental characteristics that underlie the Island’s reputation. Shipping roughly one million gallons of diesel fuel via ferry each year contributes to the Island paying one of the highest electricity rates in the nation (Guevara-Stone, 2015). The combination of strong pro-environmental sentiment and the much higher-than-average electricity costs seemed to make Block Island a prime candidate for an offshore wind power project that promised lower energy costs and the ability to potentially take the diesel generators offline.

Figure 1 shows the placement of the 5 turbines (yellow dots). The yellow line connects the turbines to a substation on Block Island and the red line represents the cable bringing power from Block Island to mainland RI on Scarborough state beach.
Construction of the BIWF began in the fall of 2015 with the placement of the turbine foundations, roughly three miles off the southeast coast of the Island. Set to be completed and online in late 2016, the electricity generated from the five – 6 megawatt (MW) turbines will be brought to both Block Island and mainland Rhode Island through submerged marine transmission cables (Figure 1). The Block Island Transmission System (BITS), along with the turbines and foundations, are funded through a private developer, but construction, operation and maintenance of the cables will be completed by the local public utility company. The 30 MW capacity from the project is expected to be beyond the needs for Block Island (except possibly in summer months), so excess power generation will be transmitted throughout the rest of Rhode Island. This connection also allows Block Island to be powered from the mainland grid in the event the turbines are not operating.

All the preceding characteristics make Block Island a prime candidate for such a project, but they did not guarantee such a project would succeed. Acceptance of the project required a multi-year and multi-faceted public engagement process. In fact, two public engagement processes can be credited for paving the path to BIWF construction. The first was a state-led initiative, known as the Ocean Special Area Management Plan (Ocean SAMP, sometimes OSAMP), which designated an area in Rhode Island’s waters suitable for marine-based renewable energy technologies (RETs). The second engagement process was led by the private developer to site the wind turbines within that REZ, as well as the public utility company’s planning for the laying of the transmission cable on and offshore. While similar in topic, the state-led process and the wind farm siting process are considered two distinct processes in this study, both for the difference
in who is running the process and for the difference in outputs. The wind farm and the transmission cable projects will mostly be considered together due to their inherent relatedness, but distinctions will be drawn when necessary.

This study presents a case analysis of both the Ocean SAMP and wind farm/transmission public engagement processes. The next section discusses the literature concerning public engagement in general and engagement specific to RETs, such as offshore wind. Further background on the two processes is also provided. The Methods section outlines the 19 interviews that were conducted with Developers of the BIWF and BITS, Managers of the Ocean SAMP, and Public Stakeholders, as well as the coding in the NVivo software used to elicit themes among the interviews. Interviewees were asked about their involvement in one or both of these processes. More specifically, how well the publics’ expectations were incorporated into the process was examined. This was done to assess whether meeting or failing to meet expectations influences process and outcome support. The Results section provides examples of the themes found. The Discussion section further analyzes these themes and their importance in this study. Finally, it is argued that striving to meet the public’s expectations in a public engagement process could be utilized by process leaders to boost support for future RET projects.
2. Literature Review and Background

Modern public interest and engagement in large-scale infrastructure projects and decision-making is a product of the environmental movement started in the late 1960s and 1970s (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). Since then, public engagement processes have become a necessary piece of any project with potential environmental and social impacts. This section will briefly outline how public engagement has been researched in the previous decades, including a discussion on why engagement is important in the first place. There it will examine the evolving engagement surrounding renewable energy technologies (RETs), with a specific view on offshore wind. Expectations of a RET process, especially concerning expectations of procedural justice, will be discussed. Aspects of procedural justice will be highlighted as specific indicators that can potentially increase public support for projects if these types of procedural expectations are met or exceeded. Finally, it will detail how understanding and incorporating these expectations can benefit public engagement process leaders.

2.1 Public Engagement

There has been a noticeable rise in public engagement tied to large infrastructure projects (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). However, the first question that should be considered in this discussion is why should the public be involved in infrastructure decisions? Fiorino’s (1990) work on institutional mechanisms concerned with environmental risk most notably addresses this question and has been echoed by subsequent scholars of the subject. (Blader & Tyler, 2003; Collins & Evans, 2008; Fischer, 2000). Fiorino provides three arguments as to why the public should be brought into the decision-making process. The substantive argument asserts that input from “lay” individuals can bring local
knowledge and outside expertise to the process and can strengthen the information used to make decisions. The normative argument claims that only focusing on those with technocratic backgrounds leaves out democratic ideals necessary for people to influence decisions affecting their communities and livelihoods. Lastly, the instrumental argument stresses that the engagement of the public assists in making the process more legitimate in the eyes of the public, which then increases the favorability of the outcome. All three arguments are justified rationales for bringing the public into the decision-making process, but particular emphasis will be given to the instrumental argument as it is claimed in this study that engaging the public and incorporating expectations will increase support for outcomes.

Regardless of the justification, there is little debate that involving the public in policy decisions has led to more diverse views to be incorporated in the decision-making process and perhaps even increased support for projects (Fischer, 2000; Pretty, 1995; Reed, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Thus, there has been a call to improve the ways in which public opinion and concern are brought into the discourse surrounding science and technology decisions (Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2005). There are various ways to engage the public and place various levels of control in the hands of citizens. Arnstien’s (1969) ladder of public participation is a classic example based on the amount decision control the public holds. The ladder ranges from nonparticipation and therapeutic methods, such as manipulation by process leaders, to certain degrees of citizen power that include partnership, delegated power and full citizen control (Arnstein, 1969). There are various methods on the rung of this ladder that can be used by practitioners, such as public hearings, citizen juries, consultation meetings, and so on (Beierle & Cayford, 2002).
Independent of the technique used by process leaders, all good public processes should have similar goals when reaching out to bring public stakeholders into the decisions. Beierle & Cayford (2002) identify these goals as: 1) the incorporation of public values into decisions, 2) improving the substantive quality of decisions, 3) resolving conflict among competing interests, 4) building trust in institutions, and 5) educating and informing the public. These authors utilize case studies to analyze how different participation techniques are able to “score” better or worse in relation to these five goals. They found that more intensive participation, such as consensus-seeking advisory committees and negotiation teams, achieved greater success among these goals (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). However, the authors make clear that this level of intensity is not always warranted for every public decision. In fact, step one within Beierle & Cayford’s (2002) recommendations to properly design a public process, is to determine if there is any need for public involvement based on the topic being discussed. If it is deemed necessary, the amount (i.e. intensity) of involvement depends on the identified goals of that specific process. As part of this goal definition, it is imperative for a process leader to define what is meant when the public is to be a part of a process (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). This means defining what is meant by terms such as “engagement” or “involvement”.

Terms such “public involvement” and “public engagement” are used rather freely, when talking about working with the public. Rowe and Frewer (2005) argue that there is a distinct difference between public involvement and public engagement. Further, that imprecise definitions and improper use of these terms can contribute to a defunct public process that falls short of its intended goals (Rowe and Frewer 2005). Rowe and Frewer’s
(2005) framework states that public engagement encompasses three “engagement mechanisms” that are differentiated based on information flow. First, public communication is the flow of information from the process leader to the public. Second, and conversely, public consultation is a bottom-up approach where the public provides information to the process leader. Lastly, public participation occurs when information is able to flow both ways in an iterative manner between project officials and the public.

Although it is argued, and encouraged, that processes should employ different engagement mechanisms at different times, the difference in definitions are important to note (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). In this study, public engagement will be used as the collective term to discuss information flow to, from, and between process leaders and the public. This section now turns to examine public engagement as it has been used to gain acceptance of RET projects, with a refined focus on wind energy, particularly offshore.

2.2. Public Engagement with RETs (Offshore Wind)

Countries around the world are continuing to set national mandates to reduce carbon emissions or join international coalitions for the larger inclusion of renewable energy technologies (RETs) into their energy infrastructure (Devine-Wright, 2011b). However, there exists a lopsided contribution, both in terms of scale and type of RETs employed. For example, while the United States led the world in onshore wind energy in 2014, there was no offshore production (AWEA, 2014). This pales into comparison to more than 8,000 MW of offshore wind development in Europe (EWEA, n.d.). The reason for the slow crawl of bringing these systems online does not appear to be the based on technological or market constraints (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007a). Instead the blame for
slow growth in this sector has been put on the lacking public support for many of these projects.

Social acceptance of renewables, especially when considering wind power, is becoming acknowledged as the most prominent constraining factor for reaching government targets of RET inclusion into their energy portfolios (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007a). The literature also suggests the negative approval rating of projects and the sluggish national incorporation can be directly linked to local public opposition (Evans, Parks, & Theobald, 2011; Hall, Ashworth, & Devine-Wright, 2013; Wolsink, 2000). So, meeting national energy goals can be thought of as an example of Fiorino’s (1990) instrumental argument for why to involve the public in RET development decisions.

Much attention has now been given to social acceptance and investigating why this local opposition may exist.

When discussing renewables technology, there seems to exist a large general acceptance of their use in theory, but local resistance arises when a specific project is proposed in a community (Bell, Gray, & Haggett, 2005). Bell et. al. (2005) coins this paradox sentiment as the “social-gap”. The social-gap has been of curious interest for wind and other RET researchers in the past decade. Attempts have been made to describe the reason for this gap to exist.

Wüstenhagen (2007) accounts for the social gap by dividing general term of “social acceptance” into three subcategories of: socio-political acceptance, community acceptance, and market acceptance. Socio-political acceptance refers to the general national populous acceptance of RET by citizens and policy-makers, while community acceptance concerns those specific stakeholders in proximity to a project and who would
be the ones facing the impacts of that project in their community. Market acceptance is the will of economic and technical markets to embrace the RET. As the social-gap suggests, there seems to be more of a constraint due to social and community acceptance, rather than technical or market forces.

Before the social-gap was proposed by Bell et. al. (2005), there were previous theories to explain this disparity that exists in many other disciplines as well. One of those theories claims that individuals or a community would be opposed to a project due to a “Not in My Backyard” (NIMBY) mentality. The NIMBY hypothesis asserts that the local public is opposed to project because it may have impacts that directly affect them (Devine-Wright, 2005, 2009; Wolsink, 2000, 2006). Essentially, this claims that opponents of a project are selfishly motivated and are unable to see the greater global benefit of such a project. However, the NIMBY hypothesis has been discounted by many researchers in recent years because it pejoratively discounts the opinions of the opposition and puts full blame on them. (Bell et al., 2005; Bidwell, 2013; Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Ellis et al., 2009; Firestone & Kempton, 2007; Haggett, 2011; Waldo, 2012; Wolsink, 2000, 2007b). Certain aspects of the NIMBY hypothesis certainly do exist as localities can oppose a project due to close proximity; however critics point to other rationales such as place attachment or place identity to better explain the resentment of projects in certain locations (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010).

Another potential explanation proposed for this gap was the deficit-model. The deficit-model claims that the public simply does not know enough about renewable energy and its benefits (Devine-Wright, 2011a). So, if developers, managers and politicians work to educate citizens, the public can trust the developer and would switch
to support of a project equipped with these new facts (Devine-Wright, 2011a). But again, this model of the public being deficient has been discounted for RET opposition, as well as in many other scientific fields (Brunk, 2006; Jones & Eiser, 2009). This hypothesis has also been diminished, finding that the public does care and do understand the project, but can still oppose the project. This model has been criticized for wrongly assuming the public is “stupid”, “doesn’t care” or is “too lazy” to understand the project (Bell et al., 2005). Of course, members of the public may not be fully knowledge about every aspect, but this tends to be more project specific, rather than about RETs as a whole.

While true in part, these two previous models are unable to truly account for the social-gap. What these models share is that the public is receiving the blame for the opposition of projects (Wüstenhagen et al., 2007a), either for being too selfish or apathetic towards RETs. But, as both these models failed to completely address this complex issue, there has been a shift into who should be the focus of understanding this gap has emerged in the literature. Understanding that the public’s concerns are legitimate has caused researcher to begin to examine the process that leads to a RET project, rather than solely the outcome or public opposition. Recently, scholars have shifted perspectives from a knowledge deficit in the public to a democratic deficit in the process and have argued that a greater increase in decision influence for the public could boost support (Bell et al., 2005; Jones & Eiser, 2009; Jones & Richard Eiser, 2010).

With this new focus on the engagement with RETs, many of the more general justifications for involving the public have carried over. Devine-Wright (2011) extends Fiorino’s arguments for general engagement of the public and applies it specifically in the context of RET projects. First, he argues engaging the public helps to step away from
the “decide-announce-defend” model, in which a project developer or manager decides on the characteristics of a project “in-house”, then announces to the public of their intentions, and defends their position and the decisions made. This mode of engagement inevitably leads to social conflict based on the public misunderstanding how the decision was made or possible distrust that the decision was made with the best information or intentions (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Wolsink, 2010). Devine-Wright’s (2011) second point builds on the previous one, stating that allowing the public to participate increases the trust from the public, both the trust of the process and the project (i.e. outcome). Further, when the public has been engaged within a process, there is a greater chance they will believe that the process was legitimate, and thus when a decision is made, this legitimacy boosts the public support of that outcome (Devine-Wright, 2011b; Haggett, 2011). Further, the public may not want to be engaged in a process they believe to already be a ‘done-deal’ and may choose to not engage in the same capacity or not at all (Aitken, McDonald, & Strachan, 2008; Gross, 2007; Ottinger et al., 2014). Keeping people on the outside of a process intensifies the feelings of distrust and that “back-door deals” were made. Devine-Wright’s last justification states that engaging the public in a RET process allows for the public’s expectations to be brought into the process. Public actors within a RET engagement process inevitably come with certain expectations or anticipations in some form for the process and the outcome (Devine-Wright, 2011b). The importance and incorporation of expectations into a RET engagement process will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The separation created by Wüstenhagen (2007) between social and community acceptance and the justifications for engagement by Devine-Wright (2011) have helped
to begin to shed more light on the engagement process of RETs, rather than focusing on the opponents. Other researchers have furthered this focus by examining aspects of the processes in order to find ways to possibly build support for projects. Borrowing from other social disciplines, such as law, economics and psychology, researchers are testing and evaluating processes for aspects such as procedural and distributive justice.

2.3 Expectations in an RET and OSW Engagement Context

As stated earlier, all those involved in a RET public engagement process bring with them certain expectations. These expectations are for both the process itself and the outcome of that process. Expectations for the process can include fairness and logical decision-making (Wolsink, 2006). The public also forms expectations of what they believe their role should be during the process. In terms of the outcome, the public enters a process with at least preliminary ideas of the potential form and impact of the project (Devine-Wright, 2011b). These ideas can be based on expectations of the size, scale and siting of the proposed project. There may also exist an expectation of the public to see tangible benefits to be given to the community (Wolsink, 2007a) perhaps in the forms of subsidies or other contributions.

Devine-Wright (2011) notes that these expectations may precede any type of interaction between the public and the project developer can and are likely based from seeing or hearing about other projects (Devine-Wright, 2011b). So, if it is accepted that these expectations are there before the process begins, how are they being formed? Borrowing from Stern’s (1999) Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) environmental movement theory, this study argues that a person’s beliefs about a process (i.e. also called expectations here) are grounded in their value system. Values concerning ethical,
aesthetic, material, altruistic and environmental principles have already been well studied within offshore wind literature as to how they may influence acceptance. (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Stern, 2000; Waldo, 2012). This value system then flows up into the sets of beliefs and expectations one may hold for a process and outcome concerning offshore wind. Beliefs also play a crucial role in the way an individual perceives a potential wind farm or other RET project based on how the project may impact their values (Bidwell, 2013; Devine-Wright, Devine-Wright, & Sherry-Brennan, 2010; Stern, 2000). This study deviates from the VBN theory in that instead of searching for a norm acted upon by the individual, attitudinal statements were elicited from the respondents. These were cognitive, feeling or action tendency (Waldo, 2012) statements in a positive or negative manner regarding the OceanSAMP or BIWF/BITS public engagement processes or outcomes. It is argued that these attitudes are linked to whether or not the individual perceives that their expectations were met (J. Adams, Berkowitz, & Walster, 1976).

These statements can prove useful for process leaders as they indicate where certain aspects of the process may have fallen short of the public’s expectations.

2.4 Expectations of Procedural and Distributive Justice

Expectations are a prominent theme through the engagement literature. The majority of these analyses focus on procedural and distributive justice and how well these concepts were achieved in the planning process and outcome. The same has been true when examining studies specific to RET and offshore wind projects. And ultimately, as Wüstenhagen (2007) and others claim, a focus must be on improving procedural and distributive justice in the processes to see an increase in community acceptance of RET
Scholars identify several important aspects of procedural justice that can be used to judge a process: the access to information, a lack of bias in the decision-maker, quality of treatment and rights of the participant, and the adaptiveness of the process (Blader & Tyler, 2003; Gross, 2007; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Maguire & Lind, 2003). Further, Leventhal (1976) provides six rules that can be used to evaluate the procedural fairness of a process. These are: 1) the consistency rule, referring to how stable people and information is over time, 2) the bias-suppression rule, addressing the need for neutral decision-makers, 3) the accuracy rule for the information being presented, 4) the correctability rule calling for processes to be adaptive, 5) the representativeness rule stating that the public should have an adequate role in the power to make decisions, and 6) the ethicality rule deeming that all processes should be done with a code of ethics to protect a person’s values and standing. These rules provide important guidelines upon which a process can be judged for procedural justice and were utilized in the analysis of this case. Underlying all of these aspects is a level of mutual trust between the process leaders and the public (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Webler & Tuler, 2006; Wüstenhagen et al., 2007a). Ensuring this mutual trust exists can produce a process perceived to be fair and just by the public (Devine-Wright, 2007; Gross, 2007; Hall et al., 2013; Wolsink, 2007a; Wüstenhagen et al., 2007a). Earning this trust early on in the process can help to acquire trust in the outcome of the process as well if it is well-maintained.

Distributive justice is concentrated on the distribution of outcomes (e.g. externalities) from a decision. This can refer to effects of siting a wind farm to potential
monetary compensation to local citizens in proximity to a turbine. For the distribution to be considered just there must be a fair share-out of rewards and costs (S. Adams, 1966). Adams (1966) writes that when an individual feels as though they have not received a substantial output of rewards (i.e. distribution) for their investment into the process there can be a perception of injustice. In some cases, this perception of deprivation of justice forces individuals to act in opposition (S. Adams, 1966).

Concern for aspects of procedural justice, rather than distributive, are the focus of this case study as they have been found to possibly be more influential on public perceptions of justice than the distribution of outcomes (Cropanzano & Folger, 1991; Gross, 2007; Skitka, Winquist, & Hutchinson, 2003). It is argued that when full distributive justice is not possible, increased procedural fairness can be used to boost perceived levels of overall justice (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). However, since the distribution of outcomes is a direct output of the process, they will also be considered as a part of the whole issue concerning procedural justice.

2.5 The Value of Expectations

Although present before a process begins, it is critical to note that these expectations are not static. The publics’ expectations and assumptions about a project will be continually reshaped through interactions with project managers (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013; Devine-Wright, 2011b). As new information is released or decided upon, the publics’ expectations of impacts and scope of the project may change. For example, if an offshore wind turbine project is decreased from ten turbines to five, one would expect that anticipated impacts by the public may shift. This means the development of the publics’ expectations can be considered an iterative process between
process leaders and the public (Devine-Wright, 2011b). The ability to continually reshape and work with these expectations makes a beneficial characteristic. Process leaders can learn from the public’s thoughts and opinions (i.e. attitude statements) of the process to gauge how well the process is meeting their expectations and feed this information into reworking the process if necessary.

Attitude statements and other actions are insightful into how well beliefs and expectations of the process were met, which can give indication to how well the process was conducted. If a process leader is attempting to provide the best engagement process possible, understanding and incorporating these expectations becomes valuable as they learn how to work with, mitigate, and better meet these expectations. This then hopefully increases the legitimacy of the process and could help to increase support.

Also important to note is that process leaders are entering the process with their own set of expectations (Devine-Wright, 2011b). These are shaped in a similar fashion as the public’s expectations. However, since the process leaders and public stakeholders serve different roles in a process, this may lead to developing different sets of expectations. Authors argue that a difference in role can produce different perceptions of procedural fairness in a process which could possibly erase the trust between the public and process leader (Biddle, 2013; Leventhal, 1976; Renn & Webler, 1994). Similarly, if these expectations of role and their subsequent fulfilment do not align with how process leaders view their role in the decision-making (Devine-Wright, 2011b; Webler & Tuler, 2006), this mismatch could very well compromise a process (Renn & Webler, 1994). Analysis of such mismatches between parties can perhaps highlight how these differences
could be causing unintended and unnecessary negative attitudes towards the process (Devine-Wright, 2011b).

Overall, this study looks to further prove the importance of incorporating public and process leaders’ expectations into a public engagement process surrounding RETs, especially those expectations concerning trust and procedural justice. Then this study attempts to build on past literature by indicating demonstrable techniques process leaders can utilize to better incorporate expectations, boost procedural trust, and win more overall community support for RET projects, such as offshore wind. The previous literature points out that procedural trust is necessary in any public engagement process (Webler & Tuler, 2006), but most works lack the details on how to actually accomplish these goals. Some important questions that are lacking answers are: What are some of the public’s main expectations for a RET public engagement process? What are some ways process leaders can help meet these expectations? How can a process leader really demonstrate that they truly deserve the public’s trust? What happens when there exists a mismatch in expectations between process leaders and the public? This case study attempts to shed light on these types of questions to better aid RET process leaders. Additionally, this work will advocate for more inclusion of expectations to better serve the public through a more trusted and beneficial engagement process.

2.6 Study Context – The Two Engagement Processes

2.6.1 The Ocean SAMP

Prior to the development of the BIWF and the progenitor of its approval was the adoption of Ocean SAMP. Under the authority of the Coastal Zone Management Act, coastal states are encouraged to create SAMPs with the purpose of designating certain
areas that provide natural resources or coastal-dependent industry and merit special protection and management. Rhode Island’s coastal state agency, the Coastal Resources Management Council, has completed several previous SAMPs, but the Ocean SAMP is the most encompassing at 1,500 mi² and the first to cover the offshore environment (Coastal Resources Management Council, 2010).

The Ocean SAMP process began in 2007 when then Governor Donald Carcieri mandated 16 percent of Rhode Island’s electricity generation come from renewable sources by 2019 (ACORE, 2014). This spurred the CRMC to suggest that a SAMP be created to serve as “a management and regulatory tool that would proactively engage the public and provide policies and recommendations for appropriate siting of offshore renewable energy.” (Coastal Resources Management Council, 2010 pg. 14). The Ocean SAMP proposal was submitted to the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation in 2008, which was the followed quickly by a public engagement process during the same year. Formal regulatory meetings were scheduled roughly on a monthly basis from January 2009 until the document was accepted by the CRMC in 2010. Additional follow-up meetings have been held since adoption to review the documents relevancy and adaptiveness over the years since.
As a regulatory tool, The Ocean SAMP awards Rhode Island’s CRMC management authority over ocean uses occurring within State waters as well as a larger defined geographic location descriptor, or GLD (A GLD allows for a State to require federal consistency with their regulations if a connection can be made that an action in the GLD causes a tangible impact to the State onshore). To properly assert authority, a regional assessment of both the natural resources of the context area, as well as the human uses, such as fishing and boating was required. The Council also examined the corresponding impacts or influence those uses may have on a potential zone for renewable energy. Scientific studies examined fishing, transportation, bathymetry, avian flight paths and more in the GLD area. The output of these studies and for the Ocean SAMP as a whole, was the creation of a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) in Rhode Island’s offshore waters (Figure 2). The REZ was an area that could potentially be developed by a marine-based renewable energy technology. This REZ was a location deemed to pose the least amount of impact to the natural habitat and human uses of Rhode Island’s waters (Coastal Resources Management Council, 2010). This would hopefully reduce the amount of pushback from the public since a zone was already established for development.

While offshore wind was the main driver of this REZ because of Gov. Caceiri’s Mandate, theoretically any RET could occupy this zone. More importantly, the Ocean SAMP was not intended to dictate a zone solely for this specific private developer’s use.
In fact, the developer’s permit had not been approved at the time of the Ocean SAMP’s acceptance. Instead, the REZ was meant to be an area where any developer could propose a project. This distinction will become important later.

2.6.2 The Block Island Wind Farm and Transmission System

The BIWF timeline began in September 2008 when the developer was selected by Gov. Carcieri to construct the 30-MW farm (Shuman, 2015). The construction of the jacket foundations began in late summer of 2015 and were finished later that year, with laying and construction of the transmission cables beginning in early 2016 and completion anticipated by that summer (Shuman, 2015). Construction of the first turbine is expected for mid-summer 2016 and after about a month of electrical tests, the wind farm is expected to be operational by the end of that year (Shuman, 2015).

Public engagement aspects for the wind farm and transmission projects were held regularly. Public meetings were held by the private developer on a monthly or bi-monthly basis beginning in late 2008 and early 2009. The wind farm developer would hold meetings both on Block Island and Rhode Island. Topics discussed concerning the cable laying as well as the turbine siting location. Members of the development team would also meet one-on-one with certain constituents to discuss aspects in between the regularly scheduled town meetings. For example, representatives would meet with Block Island’s Energy Utility Task Group to discuss electricity rates as well as the decommissioning at the end of the project’s life. It is important to note that the wind farm developer had hired a liaison who lived had on the Island for many years to better address more of the day-to-day questions and activities of the project. Meetings are still being held as the project enters the major construction phases.
Once the power purchase agreement once signed between the wind farm developer and the public utility company, the public utility company also began to have meetings both on Block Island and in Narragansett, Rhode Island where the cable would come ashore. These meetings were also roughly on a bi-monthly basis. Door-to-door outreach was also conducted with immediate abutters to the construction area for the cable laying in Narragansett in addition to the general town meetings. Flyers and brochures were also distributed to those abutters giving details of the construction dates and activities.
3. Methods

For this study, individuals involved in the Ocean SAMP and wind farm siting engagement processes were interviewed. A qualitative case-study of these engagement processes was deemed an appropriate approach to this study for a few reasons. First, in-person interviews are able to balance the bulk of quantitative, mostly survey work, done by other researchers within this field (Wolsink, 2007a). Also, it has been argued that interviews could garner richer and deeper opinions with substantive justification for forming a link between the process and support or opposition (Firestone, Kempton, Lilley, & Samoteskul, 2012). It was considered unlikely that an understanding of how expectations were formed and subsequently met or not met by the engagement process could be elicited in a more quantitative, survey-like manner. Plus, the ability for the interviewees to clarify their responses, as well as the chance for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions, increases the reliability of the data and validity of the conclusions reached. Some quantitative measures were used in the analysis of the interviews to gauge topics of interest for the interviewees. These will be discussed in more detail in section 3.3.

3.1 Sample Selection

Initial interview participants were identified through documents and reports related to the OceanSAMP, BIWF or BITS processes. The OceanSAMP contained stakeholder lists which served as a starting point for locating individuals involved based on their affiliation. Interviewees were chosen based on their participation in either, the public engagement process for the OceanSAMP, BIWF, BITS engagement processes, or all three. Interviewees were contacted primarily through e-mail, with a few by phone,
asking them to participate in this study based on their involvement. Additional interviewees were identified through a purposive and network sampling as defined by Bernard (2011). Interviewees were asked to identify other key stakeholders from these processes as the end of the interviews. Potential additional interviewees needed to be mentioned by two separate original interviewees to be considered an individual significant to the process.

Interviewees were placed into one of three categories: Manager, Developer or Public Stakeholder. This was done to keep the identity of the interviewee confidential, while still accurately describing their role within one of the public engagement process. For this study, a Manager was defined as someone who worked as a process leader during the drafting of Ocean SAMP. A Developer was defined as an individual within a private, non-governmental or quasi-governmental, company involved with the construction, operation or maintenance of either the wind farm turbines or the transmission project. While Developers were sometimes present at the Ocean SAMP meetings, they were considered a public stakeholder by Managers at that point in time. So, the focus of Developer public engagement activity in this study is based on the “micrositing” of the wind farm within the REZ and the laying of the transmission cables. Since the transmission cable and wind farm are parts of the physical wind farm and pieces of the same project, the Public Utility Company and the private developer are considered together as “Developers”. However, it is important to note that the wind farm developer and public utility did hold separate engagement processes, so delineations will be made when necessary. Managers and Developers will also, at times, be considered together under the term “process leaders” when addressing both the Ocean SAMP and
BIWF/BITS processes collectively. When the processes are considered separately, Managers or Developer will be used according to the process being discussed.

In this study, a Public Stakeholder was considered to be an individual that was in some way involved or affected by the OceanSAMP, BIWF, or BITS public engagement process, but not as what can be considered a process leader. This involvement could include attending public meetings, providing public comments, or more informal meetings with either Managers or Developers. Informal meetings are considered those outside or after publicly posted general meetings. There was no qualifying amount of “involvement” within the process used to validate an interview. This was to ensure varying public definitions of what involvement means, as ascribed by those individuals, could be incorporated. Essentially, if there was communication between the Public Stakeholder and the process leaders, discussing the Ocean SAMP, BIWF or BITS this was considered sufficient for possible involvement in this study. Most of the Public Stakeholders interviews asked to participate acted as representatives for certain groups or interest, but some were part of what can be considered the general public.

In the case of Managers and Developers, choice of respondents was based upon those who had been/are responsible for the public engagement aspects of their organization or company (Waldo, 2012). For the Public Stakeholder group, interviewees were chosen strategically because of their ability to offer certain, distinct perspectives derived from specific expertise (Waldo, 2012). This led to selecting representatives for advocacy and special interest groups, as well as engaged members of general public. Again, lists of possible candidates were accumulated through publicly available comments, network sampling and individual website research into Block Island Wind
Farm and Ocean SAMP topics. To protect confidentiality, the groups and associations of Public Stakeholders are not specified.

It is important to note that it was not the intention of this study to find a “balance” of views within this sample of respondents. Instead, the intention was to provide a wide range of those involved to incorporate the greatest amount of varying expectations and opinions. Also, and equally important, is that the respondents in this study may not represent the larger general public. The focus of this research was on those who actively choose to be involved in a public process and enhancing their quality of involvement. Finding ways to incorporate the uninterested or underprivileged into a process is a separate research question entirely.

Interviews were preferably conducted in-person, at the place most comfortable for the interviewee, usually their office or local coffee shop. Due to time and traveling logistics, four interviews were conducted by phone. Interviews lasted between 20 and 90 minutes. A total of 19 interviews were conducted, consisting of five Managers, six Developers, and eight Public Stakeholders. Public stakeholders represent a larger proportion of the sample for two reasons. First, it was apparent early on, that there was a greater chance of information saturation in the other two labels than with the Public Stakeholders. Second, there was a larger range of involvement that could be placed within the Public Stakeholder group than with process leaders. So, it was determined to be necessary to include more from this group to receive a truer sense of possible expectations and attitudes on the process.

3.2 Data Collection
Interviews took place between August-November 2015. Questions used during the interview directly and indirectly asked the interviewee about their expectations and attitudes of the process. As these may be hard to vocalize directly, some questions focused on their involvement in the process(es), as well as their general thoughts about the engagement process. These questions were pre-screened by peers and advisors for clarity and straightforwardness. The questions were meant to be semi-structured in design. Meaning, there were prompts to initiate dialogue, but no rigid order in which they needed to be asked (Bernard, 2011; Robson, 2011; Waldo, 2012). Interviewees were encouraged to answer freely and talk until they felt they had answered the question to their definition of completion. Probes and follow-up questions to statements made were asked as they arose, for clarification and further explanation (Robson, 2011). The semi-structure design allowed for a same set of questions to be asked to each respondent, increasing validity, but also gave the respondent the opportunity to answer in a more self-representative way based on personal experiences of the public engagement process. The interview instrument can be viewed in Appendix A.

3.3 Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded to assist in transcribing. Transcription was done with the Phillips SpeechExec Transcribe software program and written into a Microsoft Word document. Initial themes were compiled after the transcriptions were complete. This initial set was then peer-reviewed to ensure diverse and definitive themes. The separate Word documents of these transcriptions were then uploaded to the Nvivo software program for further coding. An entire hierarchy structure of the coding can be seen in Appendix B.
The initial peer reviewed themes that were coded were used to create primary nodes within the Nvivo coding software. Primary nodes were large categories that were meant to capture all of the emergent themes found in the first set of coding. These primary nodes were classified as “Process”, “Project” and “Expectations and Attitudes”. Statements or phrases placed under the “Process” node are those discussing characteristics of either the Managers’ or Developers’ process. The “Project” primary node is similar in scope size, capturing those statements specific to the outcome of the process, either the Ocean SAMP and REZ or the siting of the wind farm or transmission cabling system. The “Expectations and Attitudes” primary node contains interviewees’ comments on how these process should be conducted and outcomes expected. There does exist possible overlap between these primary nodes: “My expectations was that they were going to take all the necessary actions to protect environment. And I think the Ocean SAMP is the result of that” (P1). However, those statements under the “Project” or “Process” are more of “catch-all” categories as to ensure that aspects of the process and project were not missed in the thematic coding.

Subsequent readings of the interviews established secondary nodes and in some cases, tertiary nodes, under the primary node categories. For example, “Process” was further divided into “Data”, “Siting”, “Formality”, “Trust”, and three (3) secondary nodes specific to each process labeled “OceanSAMP”, “BIWF”, and “BITS”.

The “Data” node held statements referring to the importance of data in the process to inform the public and to produce decisions. “Siting” refers to phrases that concern the process leading to the siting of the final REZ or BIWF location. Statements concerning the specific area of the siting are placed within this node. The “Formality” node was
created due the frequently stated importance by process leaders of an informal stakeholder process used alongside the required formal engagement by the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

The “Trust” node was the most represented secondary node within the “Process” primary node. In fact, all 19 interviewees mentioned an aspect of the process that concerned trust without this concept being a direct line of questioning. Thus, further attention was given to this particular node and warranted the creation of four tertiary nodes. The first, “Own Project”, refers to statements by Managers and Developers of efforts to assert to the public that they were only representing their own project (i.e. Ocean SAMP or BIWF/transmission respectively) and their own project’s impacts. This was done to display that there was no greater collusion between the two groups. The “Misinformation” node came from mentions relating to the importance of dispelling misinformation and the need to ensure good quality information was presented in the process. “Relationship Trust” was the third tertiary node covering mentions of personal interactions or trust between the process leaders and the public. Lastly, the “Procedural Trust” tertiary node contains remarks about two trust characteristics related to the processes. The first characteristic concerns the public believing, or process leaders dispelling the idea that the process and outcomes were already a “done deal”. The second characteristic is related and concerns how well public information was incorporated into the process contributed to the final outcomes.

The remaining secondary nodes under “Process” are concerned with statements that are directly related to one of the processes (Ocean SAMP, BIWF, or BITS). While examples of statements are given in the Results section, many of these statements can
overlap with the previous “Process” and “Project” nodes, and to prevent redundancy, these nodes will not receive as much attention in the discussion. Essentially these nodes were created as a “fail safe” to ensure comments about the processes were not missed if they did not fit into the previously discussed nodes.

The second primary node “Project” was only comprised of two secondary nodes and had relatively lower mentions. This node was meant to capture statements that were directed towards the outcomes of the processes (i.e. Ocean SAMP’s REZ or the siting of the wind farm/cabling). The secondary nodes were defined as “Place Attachment” and “Socioeconomics”. Place attachment statements were those that encompassed the siting of the REZ, wind farm or BITS. This is similar to the “Process” node “Siting”; however, care was taken to differentiate statements that address the process that led to siting versus statements that address the physical siting concerns. Even still, there is overlap between the “Siting” and “Place Attachment” nodes as many statements address both concepts in the same sentence. Socioeconomic mentions were either related to the overall cost of the project or the specific electricity rate structure that would be imposed once the wind farm project was complete and running.
All of those interviewed were able to offer comments about the third primary node “Expectations and Attitudes”. Specific focus was given to the respondents’ expectations for both a public engagement process in general, as well as their role and other groups’ roles in a process. Expectations of roles were separated from the more general expectations of the process as it was theorized that an individual may have refined expectations as to who should be responsible for meeting those process expectations. And if this expectation of role does not match up with the that idealized person’s self-perception of role, this mismatch could create a process that falls short of overall process expectations. This separation allows for closer inspection into specific aspects of process expectations. Attitudes under this node were statements either in a positive or negative manner that concerned either the process or the project. Attitudinal statements were separated by the group saying the statement and the process or outcome being discussed (Figure 3).
Interviewees were asked about both their self-perception of their own roles within a public engagement process, as well as perceptions of the other groups’ roles. This would include questioning on expectations of role followed by whether or not this expectation of role was met. For example, a public interviewee was asked what they believed their role should be and was during the engagement process. This would then be followed up with asking the role of Managers and then lastly asking the role of Developers during the process. The same format was used for the other two groups. The “Expectation of Roles” secondary node was divided into tertiary nodes for each group, but then further divided into a “self-perception” of role node and another node for how the other groups perceived their role (Figure 4). As fishermen and Native Americans were mentioned repeatedly as significant Public Stakeholders by process leaders, they received their own sub-categories to better separate statements referencing those stakeholders, but will still be considered under the “Perceptions” node of the Public. The following Results section provides examples from the codes described here.
4. Results

This section contains examples of statements by interviewees that were coded under the primary nodes. The two primary nodes “Process” and “Project” are captured in Table 1 to display comments that fell under these nodes. These are displayed in a quantitative manner to provide insight into the focus of the interviewees as to what topics of the process and project were most concerning. Since nodes concerning “Expectations and Attitudes” included all respondents and would provide many redundancies between the “Process” and “Project” nodes, this node has not been quantified in the same manner. Instead, directly quoted and paraphrased statements are provided as evidence of the material coded within the “Expectations and Attitudes” node.

The “Expectations and Attitudes” node has been separated into two categories. “Expectations” has been further divided into expectations concerning the process and those looking into the expectation of roles of those involved. “Attitudes” has been divided into positive and negative statements regarding the Ocean SAMP, wind farm, or transmission system processes (Figure 3).

4.1 Expectations

4.1.1 Expectation of the Process

Expectations towards how a general process should be run or relating to these specific processes were mentioned a total of 144 times, making it the most coded node. With such a large volume it seems best to discuss expectations of the process as stated by each of the separate groups. This separation will provide a framework that can be used in the Discussion section when examining the groups’ expectation of roles in the process.
4.1.1.1 Developers

From their responses, both Developers in charge of the wind farm and the transmission generally held similar expectations for the process so, generally Developers in both these processes can be considered collectively for these expectations. But, a separation will be made when necessary. Developers in charge of both the BIWF and BITS processes were divided in their anticipations of entering these process. Those that have had experience working with the public, whether on infrastructure or environmental topics like this before appeared more confident about what the process may entail. However, it was not lost on them that it would be difficult: “Yeah, I assumed that it would be complicated and that it would take a long a time. And I think my predictions were held up to quite true” (D5). This was especially true with all those Developers in the BITS process as this was considered just another transmission project. On the other hand, those with limited to no experience discussed being more apprehensive and anxious to enter the process. The backdrop of other stalled projects, such as Cape Wind, and the importance of this project were stated as the rationale for some of these apprehensions.

Regarding expectations for the purpose of the process, all six Developers mentioned that it was important to provide information specific to the BIWF or BITS to the public, as well as clear up any potential misinformation circulating. While this touches slightly on the role of the Developer, the statements provided claim this is an inherent purpose of the public engagement process itself. To be ahead of the potential misinformation, four (4) of the Developers stated that this meant starting the engagement process as early as possible. With this, Developers established that the process itself was
needed to provide a venue in which the public could voice their concerns and potentially have them incorporated.

Those experienced with prior engagement discussed different ways to engage the public at these venues in ways that could better allow public voices to be heard. Two Developers favored the “trade-show” style of meetings over more traditional town hall-style meetings. The “trade-show” style was characterized by booths with representatives to address specific aspects of the project that could potentially quicken an interested stakeholder’s ability to have specific questions answered.
Table 1 quantitatively displays the topics from the “Process” and “Project” primary nodes. Secondary and tertiary node divisions are shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grandchild Node</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role (n)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer (6)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager (5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public (8)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (19)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 gives examples of statements that were coded under the two primary nodes of “Process” and “Project”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td>“But how are those data used, how that comes to inform decisions and the process of coming to those conclusions or decisions really should probably should be equal to the time or perhaps even longer to the time that it takes to collect the data” (P3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Siting</strong></td>
<td>“But it seemed short shrift was given to the important conclusions and decisions on the energy zone from the standpoint of the public input” (P3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality</strong></td>
<td>“So, some of those lessons are…I mentioned one about the value of having an informal public process versus just staying with your formal process. That’s so critical” (M3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Own Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…the OSAMP talked about the big picture, it’s our responsibility to talk about our project” (D1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misinformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There was a lot of misinformation. A lot of misinformation. So that was another challenge” (D4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think the person they had [as Developer liaison], was the perfect person for the job for a number of reasons” (P8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedural Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We had to build that trust level and sense of equity within the process so that everybody felt they were being treated the same” (M5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSAMP</strong></td>
<td>“Yeah, well I think the Ocean SAMP was pretty key to setting a baseline for this project” (D5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIWF</td>
<td>“And the public hearings were very passionate” (P1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BITS</td>
<td>“So, that seems to be the way [the public utility] handles the outreach. You know, its early on outreach and then as the project moves into the permitting construction stage, where with better information, we can start talking to the abutters, are getting them just really up-to-date on what’s going on” (D2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>“It’s not just the lighthouse, it’s the context of the lighthouse. The bluffs, the ocean, the land, it’s together. You don’t just pluck a lighthouse and say that’s iconic and the setting isn’t. I mean it’s there for a reason (P2)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
<td>“As I mentioned I am very supportive of the wind farm for a couple of reasons. One of which is that it going to reduce my electric costs by 35-40%” (P1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developers also stated that these public venues were where they needed to establish their distinct role in the process and how that is separate from the Managers’ Ocean SAMP process. The quote for “Own Project” in Table 2 provides a good example of this type of belief. Overall, expectations that the process would be difficult, but possible, and that engaging with the public was an opportunity to stay ahead of misinformation, while also providing correct details of their specific project dominated Developers’ statements of the BIWF and BITS process.

4.1.1.2 Managers

Managers’ expectations of the OceanSAMP process shared many parallels with Developers. Again, those process leaders experienced with public engagement knew that the process would be challenging, but not impossible. When discussing thoughts before entering the engagement process, one experienced manager noted:

“The one [thing] that gets short shrift and is probably one of the most difficult portions to train people in, is the process itself. How do you go about engaging the public? How do you run that? How do you make decisions in a public process? That type of thing. And it’s the one that will either make [the process] or break [the process]” (M5).

Those without hands-on work were again a little more hesitant of what engaging the public may bring, especially with such a potentially contentious topic. Also paralleling Developer statements, four of five Managers specifically stated the importance of involving the public and using the engagement venues to hear their concerns.

Managers differed from Developers in terms of expectations for the purpose of the process. Managers were more explicit in the reasoning for involving the public. Two
Managers explicitly mention that this was because the area of ocean space being considered. One stated:

“The Ocean SAMP area is a public trust area. The Block Island Wind Farm is on state public trust land, so the public has every right to understand and learn about what’s going on, they can object for whatever reason they want, or they can endorse for what every reason they want” (M4).

Managers also differed themselves from Developers with mentions of expectations concerning the importance of the final outcome. Managers viewed the Ocean SAMP document as a powerful regulatory tool that should not lose importance once it was adopted: “So, the Plan is not the end game, the Plan is…an opportunity to build your relationships with people and to strengthen your policies” (M4). While both Managers and Developers put a strong emphasis on the expectation for the process to include the public, Managers were much more explicit for why and in what ways they could be involved.

4.1.1.3 Public

Public stakeholders tended to be rather consolidated when discussing their general expectations of a process. All Public interviewees stated their expectation was to learn about the projects, with half stating they did not have any expectations other than that. Interestingly, this sentiment seemed to be based on two polar backgrounds. Those with either enough familiarity, or not enough familiarity of the topic or the issues (i.e. marine spatial planning, offshore wind) both stated this led to them having no major expectations. However, when probed later in the interview some expectations of learning
became clearer. For example, some interviewees were interested in the baseline studies being conducted and the conclusions that would come from those. These interviewees were interested in the types and amount of data that would be brought into the conclusions. Others were more adamant about mentioning that their perspectives and opinions of how this data should be included into the collective learning process to produce those conclusions. While some members of the Public simply stated the newness factor of offshore wind and its siting process as the catalyst for joining the process. Of these respondents, some cited a fear of the process going awry if their point was not included or that the process would be missing something without their input. Others stated that they just wanted to see how this type of process would be done. Overall, there seemed to be less in terms of expectations of the process among the Public stakeholders. However, as will be discussed in the Discussion section, Public interviewees had much more to say in terms of attitudes and opinions of the process, which may illustrate that expectations were not truly elicited in full from the interviews.

4.2 Expectation of Roles

This next subsection examines the expectation of role statements provided by the interviewees.

4.2.1 Developers – Self-perceptions

As mentioned in expectations of the process, Developers mention their role as the providers of information about the wind and transmission, specifically how it is different from the Ocean SAMP process. The idea of separating between the REZ siting process and the turbine siting processes was seen as part of this role:
“…it was our responsibility to talk about our project… When are we going to do it? How are going to do it? And how it is it going to impact whichever stakeholders we were in discussion with” (D1).

Building on this, Developers say they saw their role to stay ahead of the potential for misinformation through early and continued engagement. Developers also stated the importance of having certain members of the team perform in the role of trusted liaisons between the community and Developer to provide correct information of management decisions. Liaisons were expected to be able to inform the public of all aspects of the project from legal proceedings to research studies to the archaeology history of the siting zone. Developers were also expecting themselves to consider all public opinions and concerns valid and working to incorporate these points of view into the process to the best of their ability.

4.2.2 Developer – Outside Perceptions

All public interviewees stated that the role for a developer should be to provide information on their project and properly involve the necessary stakeholders. Since Managers were describing the role of the Developer during the Ocean SAMP process, Managers unanimously stated that the Developers were a stakeholder. As part of this Managers made clear during the interviews that: “We told the developer to stay the heck out of it” (M5). Developers were treated as an equal party in the engagement process and did not have access to information before others. Again this was stated as an attempt to dispel the “done-deal” mentality and any notion of mischievous collusion between the two processes.
4.2.3 Managers – Self-Perceptions

Managers’ perceptions of their own role in the Ocean SAMP engagement process mirrors statements by Developers’ during the BIWF and BITS processes. However, Managers more often mentioned the importance of their role in separating between the two. All five Managers made statements regarding the separation of the process, while only half of Developers did the same. Managers claim to have clarified to the public that the Ocean SAMP process was not a wind energy siting process, but an energy zone siting process. Tied with this, was the Managers expectation that they needed to be much more transparent with the public as they moved through the process. Managers were more likely to use words such as “transparency”, “trust” and “honesty” when describing necessary facets of the process. All Managers discussed their ability to be the ones that brought both information and people together for the process. “The whole reason [we] were involved is because we wanted to bring best available information and science to the plan. And we had to make sure of that and in a very robust stakeholder process” (M1). Managers were also more direct about how the public has the role to shape the process with information rather than themselves: “we help craft policy, we don’t develop it.” (M3). Being the collectors, gate-keepers and providers of information dominate Managers’ self-perceptions of role.

4.2.4 Managers – Outside Perceptions

Since the Ocean SAMP process preceded the BIWF and BITS processes, Developers recalled thinking that the Managers’ role was to be the first to discover the issues and concerns of the stakeholders. Managers’ role was to create the regulations that the Developer would have to follow. Managers were viewed as “regulators” (D1) with a
“tough role” (D2) to initially bring the public to the table. Public interviewees also saw Managers as a regulator, but were more explanatory and adamant that their overall role was to serve the public: “I mean I don’t care if you’re a secretary at the [State agency]. You know you are there to serve the common good” (P2). Some interviewees extended this by stating that Managers were charged with protection of the entire ocean environment and human uses of that environment through the regulations in the Ocean SAMP. Public interviews also stated that it was the responsibility of the Managers to create the transparent and honest atmosphere for the process. The public would show up to the meetings, but Managers needed to prove that they were be open and willing to listen to public comment. Whether or not these expectations of role were truly accomplished again divides some of the public attitude comments.

4.2.5 Public Stakeholders- Self-Perceptions

Similar to the other groups, the Public’s expectations of role seem to build off their expectations of the process. Public stakeholders claim to have felt their role was to attend meetings and learn what the process leaders were presenting. They state that they know they had to do their homework on the issues and “participate in good faith” (P2). All eight Public respondents also asserted their role was to transfer the information they gained from the meetings to the special interest groups they were representing or general public through newspapers or online blogs. Half of those extended this by claiming they had a duty to speak up and correct information if they believed it to be incorrect.
4.2.6 Public Stakeholders – Outside Perceptions

Perceptions of the Publics’ role was similar across both groups of process leaders. All Developers and Managers expected them to attend the processes and provide substantive comments that could be utilized in the process for decision-making. Some of the process leaders acknowledged that some members of the public would not take advantage of this chance and that was just a consequence of a public engagement process. One Developer asserted the Publics’ role was to “show up” and expanded that “People have to show up, get informed, be involved in the process, because just sitting on the sidelines and complaining about it, just doesn’t cut it as far as I am concerned” (D6). Half of the Developers and three Managers mentioned how important it was that the public brought their opinions:

“I mean the public was critical to this process. Absolutely. I mean normally any planning process requires public input and participation right? But, this especially this was such a broad comprehensive planning effort with such potential implications for the state’s future that I don’t know if that were a less exciting planning effort that I would have consider the public less important, but they were just critical to this. And so receiving public input at meetings, ideas, considerations, thoughts was critical for us” (M2).

Due to their specific interests in the proposed areas, fishermen and the local Native American tribes received special attention from the process leaders. In fact, interaction with fishermen was mentioned by all process leaders at least once. Native American tribes were only mentioned by four (4) process leaders, but were described as
essential stakeholders to be included. These groups were expected to bring their information to the table, even though it may be sensitive, especially when discussing commercial fishing grounds. If process leaders were expected to be protecting these areas, the fishermen had to be willing to disclose these areas for exclusion from potential siting. “My expectations in working with the fishing industry is I expect them to work with me” (M4). The same expectations for participation in good faith was held for Native Americans and the larger public as well.

4.3 Attitude Statements

All interviewees were able to offer some attitude statement (i.e. opinion) on how well they believe the Ocean SAMP or wind farm and transmission engagement processes were conducted. Some respondents were only engaged with one of the processes and could only speak to that specific process. Others, while only engaged in one process, still offered opinions of how the other processes looked to them on the outside. Some comments provided were in fact neutral about the process, because the interviewee was unsure or did not know. However, for the sake of estimating how well expectations were or were not met, focus will be given to positive and negative attitudes.

4.3.1 Developers’ BIWF + BITS Processes

When considering attitude statements concerning the Developer’s engagement process, it becomes necessary for the differentiation between the wind farm process and the transmission process. As stated earlier, the wind farm and physical transmission cable is being funded by a private development firm, while the operation and integration of the cable into the main electricity grid is being managed by the local public utility company. Again, the connectedness of the work allowed them to be considered collectively as “Developers”, but in terms of fulfilling the expectations of the public, they must be
separated. This will be an important distinction when considering positive or negative comments concerning their separate public engagement.

4.3.1.1 Positive – BIWF+BITS

The majority of Developers’ self-reporting of the wind farm and transmission engagement process was positive. All Developers had good things to say about their own project. Developers in both cases believed that they had provided sufficient opportunities for engagement and had succeeded in properly engaging their necessary constituents.

“We were able to establish a very good relationship with both tribes. And we have a good relationship with the majority of the commercial and recreational fishermen” (D1).

As this type of project was new to the majority of those involved, many of the wind farm Developers felt they were able to convey their message, while also dispelling the “nasties” (D4) of misinformation that potentially could have derailed the process. When pressed further, one Developer followed up by stating:

“I don’t know if there were things I wish I had done differently. But I think there’s always room for improvement, but it’s just a matter of time and resources. To say I wish we had done things differently or regrets? No, absolutely not” (D4).

Again those with more experience in this field were less anxious. For example, the public utility interviewees saw this as just another transmission project, even though this one did have special characteristics. They claimed to know the importance of ensuring they provided excellent public engagement, stating that the town-hall method of engagement was a proven success. Overall, Developers in both the wind farm and cabling processes
were highly in favor of their own work and what the wind farm stood for: “If we introduced this thing in there that does its small part, Block Island’s small part in addressing the [global warming], then it’s a thing of beauty in my mind” (D6).

Positive comments from Managers and Public Stakeholders towards Developers were less abundant and less praiseworthy. Only one Manager stated that the wind farm developer having public meetings was “a positive thing for them to do” (M4). From the Public, only 4 were recorded with statements that could be considered positive. The majority of these statements are claims about how the Developer provided information throughout the process. These range from:

“I think a typical developer, the role and responsibility would be to satisfy all criteria and be truthful in your representation of what you’re trying to do and I think that they did that” (P7)

to statements such as: “You know they had a very dedicated process for informing people and I think that it was sufficient. There was enough” (P8).

4.3.1.2 Negative – BIWF+BITS

The rationale for distinction between the private developer and public utility company is more apparent by the fact that there were no negative comments by any group concerning the engagement by the utility company. There were some negative attitudes focused on the placement of the cable, but since this was decided by the private developer, these comments are attributed to them. The cable landing is even where wind farm Developers began to criticize their own process, claiming they took the landfall “for granted” (D5). They state that newness and complexity of the project warranted that just
as much attention should have been paid to the beach landfall of the cable as it does the placement of the turbines. And that this is a place in the process where they fell short.

Managers had no statements that could be considered negative towards the BIWF process. The statements were neutral or had no comment of the process. However, seven of eight Public Stakeholders had statements that had negative positions on the private developer’s engagement process. All seven respondents had differing and individualized issues for holding these negative attitudes. For example, one was disgruntled that there was not a full Environmental Impact Statement done for the project; another felt there was no meaningful way for the general public to contribute to the process. This continues among the other five Public Stakeholders on topics concerning the cost of project, how the project timeline may interfere with fishing schedules, how the turbines may actually look in the end, and how the Developer could have better communicated about the project details to keep the public informed. These attitude states show that although there appeared to be cohesion in expectations for the Public Stakeholders, their fulfillment was not always met and tended to be caused by various reasons.

4.3.2 Manager’s Ocean SAMP Process

4.3.2.1 Positive – Ocean SAMP

All Managers had positive statements about their work on the public engagement aspects of the Ocean SAMP. Some claim the success was rooted in the transparency of the document and policies, while others point directly to the use of informal meetings and more targeted stakeholder engagement to achieve cohesion. Speaking to their expectations, two Managers state that the process was even harder than they had thought, but in the end say: “I think we did a pretty good job. I really do” (M3) and “We were able
to overcome all those challenges obviously and come up with a successful plan” (M4).
There are statements of issues that could have received more attention, and these will receive some attention in the “Negative” section, but overall Managers assert looking back, they are unable to point to things they would have liked to have done differently at that time.

Developers also hold high regard for the Ocean SAMP, with no discernable negative statements about the process. Three of six Developers even state that the Ocean SAMP and REZ were crucial to even begin the BIWF siting and engagement process. One interviewee elaborates:

“From our perspective it helped from a public engagement side, it helped identify who the major stakeholders were and identify some of their bigger issues of concern and that served as a baseline for our further engagement” (D5).

Developers also praise the people that the Managers chose to have on their staff, stating: “that shows to me the agency picked the right people to review this project” (D2). The majority of the Public Stakeholders (six of eight) had positive statements of the work done on the Ocean SAMP. Mirroring Developer statements, Public interviewees highlight the comprehensiveness of the Ocean SAMP, finding that “…they did a good job on the baseline studies” (P3), as well as pointing to the selection of the right people to get the job done. One stakeholder puts it: “And it just threw all those people in a meat grinder and spit out this perfect sort of burger of development” (P5). Five of these seven stakeholders also point to the Ocean SAMP as a model of how this type of process should be done in the future, claiming that it sets the path other state planning should look to use.
One common statement among all these Public interviewees was what they were able to learn a lot about Rhode Island and its waters through this plan.

4.3.2.2 Negative – Ocean SAMP

Negative attitudes towards the Ocean SAMP by the Managers were more reflective comments towards what could have been improved in the process. For example, two Managers exemplify social data as an important missing piece of the Ocean SAMP. Information on public perceptions of wind energy and regional ocean planning were not studied. Also, one Manager believes that: “One of the shortcomings I see of the Ocean SAMP is we concentrated too much on renewable energy planning and not enough on some of the additional of the uses that might occur in that area” (M4). But in total there is only one comment apiece for four Managers that could be called a negative attitude towards the Ocean SAMP.

Conversely, the Public had 31 comments across five interviews that could be considered negative. So while Positive comments had 26 statements across six interviews, the negative node was the most abundant in this section. However, over half (18) of the comments came from two interviews and over three-quarters (26) of these negative comments produced were only from three interviews. While in reference to different topics, much of this resentment spawned from a lack of access to or mistrust of the information provided. In reference to the state agency website having direct links to the Developer’s website, one interview said:

“You have an obligation to the public, so you want to talk about a fatal flaw in every element …you know, we’re not in the Dark Ages, with regard to technology and the [State Agency] should have all of their stuff,
all their documents, everything, their minutes, readily available on their website, where they control the content” (P2).

Another interviewee was found to be approving of the process and data that was collected by the Ocean SAMP, but did not agree with where the REZ was eventually sited based on this information. One interviewee particularly concerned with the socioeconomic aspects of the project, felt that their issues and grievances fell on deaf ears during the process. Lastly, two of the Public interviewees describe that the lack of follow-up after Ocean SAMP was adopted to be the most pertinent issue. This is highlighted by one fishermen who puts it:

“I’d say from that first two-thirds of the process on a scale from 1-5, I would give it a 5. After that, I’d give it a negative 1. And that’s only from the commercial fishing standpoint” (P5).
5. Discussion:

Statements of expectations provided in the previous section are insightful indicators that both process leaders and the public come with expectations when entering an engagement process. The importance of incorporating these expectations into an engagement process has been demonstrated in the literature (Devine-Wright, 2011b). So, combined with the attitude statements, one can judge how well these processes incorporated expectations into their engagement process. Essentially, a positive attitude means the respondent felt that the process fulfilled or exceeded their expectations for the process or outcome. A negative comment indicates that the process or outcome fell short these expectations and the interviewee believes more or something else should have been done to better reach their expectations. Further, these positive and negative comments allow for reflection on the processes. Positive comments provide information as to which aspects were perceived to have been “done right”, while negative comments shine light on aspects that potentially deserve more attention to more adequately integrate expectations. Comparing the statements of process leaders to that of the public allows for analysis of how well process leaders believe they are doing to be cross-referenced by the perceptions by the involved public. The following discussion will attempt to use the attitude statements provided by interviewees to highlight common themes among the positive and negative attitudes towards these processes. Further analysis will be given to how process leaders and public expectations do or do not align as well of some the implications spawning from that.

The different engagement techniques and procedures used by the separate processes and process leaders allows for instances to point to where one may have better
met expectations of the public. However, this analysis will not be a compare-and-contrast discussion that decides which process was better at engaging the public. The differences in participants who were engaged, as well as different topics covered by the two different processes makes this type of comparison difficult. Instead, certain techniques and their outcomes of one process will be mentioned, not to say which were better than the other, but rather what worked or did not work in a particular process. This will hopefully provide process leaders with a better understanding of why it is important for an engagement process to incorporate expectations and provide ways to do so in a positive manner. But, first it is important to outline the overarching themes that will be discussed here.

The first overarching theme will be a discussion of participants’ expectations entering the processes. This discussion will cover expectations of the process in general, expectations of role, as well as the expectations for the outcome. The apparent alignment of role expectations was surprising and how this potentially impacted expectations and attitudes will need to be looked into further. Similarities and differences will be highlighted along with the implications of mismatching expectations. Building on this, the second theme will focus on the importance of trust and its expectation within the processes. As demonstrated in the previous section, trust was an important characteristic to all interviewees, and as such deserves special attention in analyzing its role in expectations and attitudes in the processes. Third, policy implications for future RET projects and recommendations for the adjoining public engagement process are argued. Lastly, certain caveats and context to such recommendations are considered.
5.1 Expectations

5.1.1 Expectations of the Process

It has been argued here that the expectations a process leader has when beginning a process are just as important to consider as the public’s (Devine-Wright, 2011b) when analyzing the effectiveness of a public engagement process. This is because their anticipations of the process shape how they organize the engagement, and that seems to hold true in this study. Expectations of the process by both Managers and Developers differed, based on previous experience and knowledge, ranging from nervous apprehension to cautious confidence. One veteran process leader explains: “I just know from [many] years of [experience], as soon as you do that, you’re engaged in a battle from the start” (M5), referring to making a project like the Ocean SAMP public.

Regardless of which end of the experience spectrum they were on, process leaders all had their expectations influence the beginnings of the process similarly. Both Developers and Managers saw a necessary action to boosting support was to engage the public early:

“In my estimation it was absolutely essential that we had boots on the ground from day one of this project. We were involved in public engagement because partial and misinformation can…really be problematic as a developer moves forward” (D6).

This type of mindset is supported in the literature, with some authors calling for engagement to begin even before the announcement of the project (Hall et al., 2013; Wolsink, 2007b). And although this was advocated and done in these processes, there still seemed to be those left behind due to the seasonality of some of Block Island’s residents:
“And I said to her, I’m reading in the paper over the last couple of issues and it appears that the majority of the [town] council has already taken a position and I frankly haven’t been able to get any information on what’s really being proposed” (P2).

Even with early efforts, the feeling of a lack in information created an initial distrust with this interviewee that never seemed to fade as the process went forward, which eventually formulated into negative attitude towards the process and outcome. This was only one Public respondent, and all the others seemed to be indifferent or positive towards the timing of engagement, however it does illustrate that timing does potentially impact perceptions the process.

Public Stakeholders were also solidified in their expectations of the process. When explicitly asked, Public interviewees overwhelmingly claimed their main reason and expectation for engaging in the process was to learn about the project. This was the case for both the Managers’ and Developers’ processes. And overall, these expectations seem to be met in a positive manner. Concerning the Ocean SAMP one Public interviewee states:

“I learned a lot about Rhode Island geographically. All kinds of neat things. They had a lot to say about how Rhode Island, Block Island, was formed. I mean it was a lot of neat things” (P5).

This matches well with process leaders’ expectations to educate the public on through their process. “I think that during the public process we learned how to communicate about this project” (D5), “And so, as the public became more informed and realized that we did…know where we were going and that it was a transparent process” (M3). This
access to information provided by both processes was crucial in establishing the trust needed to move the process forward (Wüstenhagen, Wolsink, & Bürer, 2007b), as will be discussed shortly. The majority of the public was impressed with the information provided in the Ocean SAMP, save for two Public interviewees with specific information complaints. The BIWF/BITS earns less credit from the Public. Those with positive attitudes claim the Developers gave information on a level that “…was higher than what we historically as a country have expected from fossil fuel companies” (P7). Negative statements tended to be more specific to interests of the interviewee, such as the information surrounding socioeconomics of the project and siting.

At a base level the explicit expectations of most of the public when entering the process seem to be satisfied. However, as the interviews went on, interviewees offered up concealed examples of expectations that were not elicited when asked directly. For example, one Public Stakeholder states:

“So, in my mind, the [SAMP] was charged with doing its best to cover every base. Everything. Right down to the Native Americans, including the fishing community. Does that mean it covered everything? No it, we can’t every cover everything. So, that’s why you have things like advisory boards” (P5).

Other Stakeholders mirrored the belief that Managers should conduct baseline studies to gather data for all uses in the area. While still pertaining to information access, this is much larger expectation than simply learning about the process and gets at how important the data being provided was for the public to make a decision on the project outcomes. The expectation that this information would then be released in a transparent manner was
also a concern of some Stakeholders. Much of the Public’s main expectations of learning appear to have been met, but as these were further discussed this fulfillment seemed to wane.

The inability of direct questioning to elicit the Publics’ true expectations of the processes, is more likely a reflection on the question than the interviewee. Perhaps, people are not able to recall their thought process from when they were beginning to engage. More indirect questioning or further probes about topics may have been more effective to tease these out. Or maybe it is true that the Public came in with no expectation, even to their own perceptions. Perhaps the newness and unique quality of this topic was so unfamiliar that the Public really did not know what to expect.

5.1.2 Expectations of Roles

The fact that there appears to be no large mismatches in expectations of roles among the groups was one of the most surprising findings of this research. It was anticipated that, for example, the Public Stakeholders may have held beliefs for the process leaders’ role to be something that they could not simply accomplish, and despite this inability, the non-action would fuel animosity towards the process. However, through direct question of expectations of roles for the other groups in the process, there seemed to be agreement of who should play what roles.

Process leaders saw themselves as the information gatekeepers. It was their job to provide the correct information about their process, remove any “done-deal” notions, as well as discourage any misinformation that could be circulating. While being gatekeepers, being transparent and honest with that information have been discussed as ways necessary to build trust (Eltham, Harrison, & Allen, 2008; Wüstenhagen et al.,
The public mirrored these expectations both for their role and overall for the process. Expressing a desire to learn, the public wanted the process leaders to bring all necessary information to the table, so that it could be analyzed and the public could come to an appropriate decision. Realizing this, the process leaders sought to provide sufficient information in a transparent manner so when procedural decisions were made they did not come as a surprise. This also was expected to allow the public to look at the same information and potentially follow the line of thought by process leaders to reach such decisions.

Proper execution of those roles by process leaders divides the Public interviewees more so than the expectations of role. Managers and Developers strongly stick by the idea that they did all that they could throughout the process to engage the public, save for a few hindsight self-critiques:

“So, I thought about sometimes with this perception that might exist among some folks that this wasn’t the most transparent process…what did we not do? You know, we’ve talked about that as a team. And I honestly don’t know” (M2).

Process leaders assert that through the additional informal meetings and their methods of providing information, there was enough there to satisfy the public.

For the most part, the Public interviewees agree with this assertion. Through attitudinal statements concerning the process, many felt their desire to learn was met in both processes. These interviewees cite the work done by process leaders to meet with the public, explain their piece, and actually listen to the feedback from the public as rationale for feeling that their concerns were heard. However, deviations from this
sentiment are counter to these statements. Those opposed to the process offer statements that they did not believe they were heard out by those in charge. For example one member of the public felt that considering economic impacts was a goal of the Ocean SAMP, yet socioeconomic factors were not considered in the BIWF planning process:

“…there’s several places in the OSAMP document where the socioeconomic impacts are to be considered. And they didn’t even consider them…that’s my problem (P4)”.

There were also Public stakeholders that were disappointed with the outcomes of the process, believing that the process leaders did not properly protect their concerns:

“So, again…this kind of attitude, this cavalier attitude is pervasive at the [State agency]. This is not ‘an oops we made a mistake’, this is how these people operate. And it’s not in the public interest” (P2).

As these two comments illustrate, a lack of trust, either in the process or the leaders, seems to driving this opposition. While, these two Public Stakeholders were the most outspoken, there are others who had complaints. As stated before, one Public interviewee was in favor of the entire Ocean SAMP process, but felt Managers did not fulfill their role of incorporating public input with the designation of the REZ.

A potential mismatch in expectations of role was also hypothesized to potentially impact the outcomes of the process. For example, perhaps the public could hold expectations for a larger role in the decision-making process than the leaders of that process wanted to hand to them and that this would cause tension as important decisions were made. While this did seem to be the case for some individuals who felt their input was not properly incorporated, the majority of self-perceptions by the Public fell in line
with Managers and Developers. The Public knew they needed to do their own research to provide comments and most importantly, they had to show up. Even those opposed in the end, knew that if they wanted to point out where a process went wrong, they had to participate. One point that was intriguing was the idea that some Public Stakeholders saw themselves as personal liaisons, even those not formally representing groups. One general member of the public saw their role, not only to learn the information, but to then pass that along to the broader public through editorials and online blogs. While not a mismatch of role expectation it does provide insight to process leaders as to how information may spread from a meeting.

5.1.3 Expectations of Outcome

The literature surrounding RETs has for a long time tried to characterize those opposed and those supporting these technologies. With NIMBY and deficit-model thinking displaced, the spotlight on the process seems to be justified in this study. Through the use of the attitude statements there does appear to be a direct link between the perceived fairness of the process and the satisfaction with the outcome (Devine-Wright, 2007; Gross, 2007). And there also does seem to be some truth that procedural justice was more important to some than the actual outcome, as many cited their expectations towards the siting process, rather than “I expect the wind farm to be placed here”. Although, when considering opponents’ justification for dissent, the outcomes of the processes cannot be ignored, even though they appear to be more process centric.

For example, place attachment did receive some mentions by a few Public interviewees; though, the real issue seemed to lay in how the process was conducted to determine that place as viable. The same is true with another Public Stakeholder’s
opposition to socioeconomics of the wind farm project. While dissatisfied with this outcome, the majority of the dissatisfaction seemed to be from the fact that they were unable to be heard out on this issue during the process. For example, the Stakeholder concerned with socioeconomics mentions: “I was very surprised at the meeting when they said they were not going to consider the socioeconomic aspects of the project” (P4). Perhaps, unable to feel a real discussion has taken place with their concerns, these individuals felt locked out of the process and thus perceive the outcome as less than legitimate (Gross, 2007). Thus, it does not seem with these two cases that increased procedural justice was able to compensate for perceived distributive injustice as suggested by Brockner & Wiesenfeld (1996), at least for these interviewees. (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Skitka et al., 2003).

When considering the outputs, Bell et. al (2005) showed with the social-gap, siting concerns for RETs, such as offshore wind, can be the largest impediment to project construction. Once the impacts of such projects can be imagined more locally, concerns and issues of the local populations become more plentiful. As discussed above, the concerns can be various and formed for many reasons, but nonetheless, these voices become more vocalized when physical sites are proposed for development. Since there are those who will face impacts no matter the location chosen, this is also when opposition for projects begins. The Developer of the BIWF in this study was undoubtedly shielded from some opposition by the designation of the REZ by the Ocean SAMP.

The Ocean SAMP planning process benefitted wind farm siting in two ways. First, the Ocean SAMP’s was extremely comprehensive in the baseline data that it collected. Since offshore wind was the driver for this Plan, wind studies in RI waters
were part of this to determine the best zones suitable for potential turbines. This and other natural and human use data led to the siting of the REZ. With this designation, the Developer did not need to consider the entirety of RI’s waters for their project, but instead could focus on siting within the much smaller zone of the REZ. With a smaller zone, came a much smaller stakeholder group that would be impacted by the wind farm. Another bonus was that the stakeholders were also pre-identified, so beginning the conversation between them and process leaders was made that much easier.

Managers of the Ocean SAMP recognized this potential to work for a better public engagement baseline for the Developers. This appears to be an extension of their self-perception of role to provide process and regulations that best serve the public interest. One manager explicitly described the need for the Ocean SAMP to be just the first step to ensure the public’s use and natural environment of RI’s ocean space are protected through its regulations. Another even says the wind farm would have been impossible without the Ocean SAMP. A sense of appreciation for the Ocean SAMP is not lost on the Developers. Three Developers state that the Ocean SAMP was crucial for siting and public engagement. For example, knowing which fishing groups fished where greatly assisted the siting discussions between process leaders and those groups. The regional assessment accomplished through the Ocean SAMP was a substantial and crucial step to the Block Island Wind Farm. The Ocean SAMP was able to open the door for the Developer to begin the conversation.

From this study, the expectations of outcome seemed to be rooted within the process. When Public Stakeholders raised concerns about certain outputs from the processes, the real grievance appeared to be more attached to not having a voice on such
matters. Those left out of the discussion to craft those decisions are more likely to be opposed when they are finalized. Additionally, the foresight by Managers to recognize the importance of the REZ and overall Ocean SAMP greatly benefitted the subsequent Developer’s siting (i.e. outcome) process. A crucial part of this was the expectation that the public would work with the Managers to craft a beneficial document to both parties. However, those that expected to have more of a say leading to that outcome, but did not, feel as though their expectations of the outcome were not fulfilled.

5.2 The Importance of Trust

By the far the most prominent feature of procedural justice found throughout this study was the issue of trust. It underpinned all other aspects that are characteristic of procedural justice from the information provided (Hall et al., 2013), to the leaders and liaisons chosen to run the process (Walter & Gutscher, 2010), and to trusting the opportunity to participate in good faith (Gross, 2007). There needs to exist trust for the other parts of procedural justice to be present. There must be trust in the overall process for the participants to trust the information coming from that process (Eltham et al., 2008). The same is true for those process leaders and liaisons providing that information (Hall et al., 2013; Huber & Hobarty, 2010).

Analysis of the interviews found that trust was the main goal of process leaders. In the eyes of the process leaders, purposeful and careful action was taken to ensure and display to the public that they deserved their trust. Both Managers and Developers were steadfast in their separation of the two project, in order to disrupt any idea that the two processes went hand in hand:

“'We wanted to make sure there was a clear distinction between the Ocean SAMP planning process and the BI wind farm. Yes, they’re related, but
this plan isn’t just for the BIWF. It’s a planning process for the State, to plan for this whole big area and manage all the different uses within that area” (M1).

Developers shared this mentality that once the Ocean SAMP designated the energy zone where wind energy would be allowed in the State, it was now their responsibility to discuss their project within that zone. There was even separation between the utility company in charge of the transmission cabling from the developers in charge of the actual wind farm. The connection between all of the processes was not hidden by the process leaders during the process, instead, they insist on the connection, but the process leaders looked to convey to the public that their concern was discussing what their project and their impacts would be on those stakeholders.

There were also other techniques employed by Managers and Developers to maintain this trust throughout. Process leaders were quick to highlight the importance of informal meetings tandem to those required by the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). The APA requires that actions such as the Ocean SAMP and the wind farm construction provide opportunities for public participation, allow for certain formal public comment periods as information is released, and keep the public informed of this information. Process leaders in this case took extra steps to hold more informal meetings with targeted stakeholders groups:

“But there’s others [groups] like the Native American tribes and fishermen and recreation boaters and environmental advocacy organizations. So we have direct conversations with all of those, direct and regular conversations with those stakeholders” (D5).
These direct conversations were asserted as ways to build trust between those stakeholders directly affected by decisions to show that if they were going to face impacts, the process leaders would hear their concerns. This was a beneficial tactic for the process leaders as well for gaining insight into specific issues and helped prevent future issues from causing problems:

“So, the idea of the informal process was again just to get another chance for people say their piece about it. And so that…at the end of the formal public comment period…the goal was that it would be in good shape because we had gotten all the comments early on” (M1).

Lastly, the use of trusted members of the community to act as liaisons between the Public and process leaders was instrumental. Both Managers and Developers appeared to make calculated decisions when selecting these liaisons for engagement processes: “So, we were very thoughtful about choosing somebody outside our realm that had the trust of the stakeholders that would act as an independent chair of the stakeholder process” (M5). In most cases, the liaisons had been members of the community for decades and could be relied upon to be impartial, if not tilted more towards the goals of the community. These third party liaisons can be viewed as symbols by process leaders to illustrate the trust they thought was needed from the public.

Overall, in the discussion with the Public Stakeholders, the trust mechanisms that process leaders put in the process seemed to be effective. This was especially true when some of the Public interviewees reflect the amount and type of stakeholders involved in the processes. One Stakeholder captures this point by stating: “Well, I thought the one group that was surprising to me is the commercial fishermen who normally don’t
participate in this kind of process” (P1). And even though the Public Stakeholders do not directly state the informality was key to their support, they do mention that through one-on-one meetings with process leaders, negotiations and deals were able to be worked out in a positive manner. The use of trusted liaisons was however, a point of emphasis when Public Stakeholders had positive comments towards the processes. Those with positive attitudes extended this praise further and gave recognition to the general process leaders as well:

“The CEO, has been out here numerous times, talking, listening. And that to me is a very good approach, where a lot of developers for projects and especially in real estate or big utilities just ramrod what they want down the throat of the community and that’s not the case here. They really tried to make things…they were open, honest, very transparent and tried very hard and succeeded in letting people know what the true facts are” (P1).

When a sense of trust was perceived by the Public, whether it be procedural or relationship trust, there appeared to be an increased level of support for the process that followed.

Those with negative attitudes towards the process were very much counter-positioned to the statements above. In fact, their opposition seemed to be rooted in the very fact that the trust did not exist between themselves and the process. Two dissenters felt there did exist certain “back-door” dealings behind the Developers and Managers. Further, considered as general members of the public, rather than directly affected stakeholders, they felt left out or restricted to certain information in the process. Perhaps even these targeted informal meetings with others were fueling the notion of behind the
scenes agreements. And lastly, the effect of trusted members of the community to ask as liaisons seemed to be lost on these individuals. One cites that the Developer had a “revolving door” of people both in the community and in the management structure. Throughout their interviews, these feelings of distrust of both people and process seem to provide a direct link towards opposition of the energy zone and wind farm.

5.3 Policy Implications

If, as intended, policy leaders look to this case study for suggestions and empirical evidence of how to operate a successful public engagement process, there exists a rationale to compare the positive statements by the supporters and the negative comments from the opposition. Using the themes from above does support that thought, in part.

From those supporting individuals, the ability to access information, especially through trusted individuals, was essential for building support for the process. Especially since this topic was new to almost all of those involved this trust became even more crucial. Also, the recognition by process leaders that this trust relationship needed to be started early seemed to greatly benefit this goal. Trust is not something easily gained and it needs to be accumulated slowly (Slovic, 1993). And as witnessed through some of the opponents attitudes, the trust can be eroded quickly and may not be able to be rebuilt once lost (Slovic, 1993).

The non-mentions of the trust characteristics by those with positive feelings of the process, but multiplicity of mentions by those who oppose the process should highlight the importance of these characteristics. When trust is part of the process it seems to be accepted as necessary part that garners no extra attention. However, when a public stakeholder senses a lack of trust, this seems to greatly influence thoughts of the overall process and subsequently providing negative opinions. This was especially true with one
Public interviewee who saw the Developers as greedy and solely profit-driven, which has been known to be a creator of negative attitudes (Zoellner et al., 2005).

When analyzing these processes in the context of the literature there does appear to be difference in the justifications made for engagement among the groups. Developers seem to fall more in line with an instrumental argument to push the progress forward. While, Managers and Public interviewees appear to cite for of a normative and substantive rationale. This is how the groups self-described their motives, but it is hard think that Managers did not also have instrumental reasoning for their engagement process.

Both processes, appear to match well with Beierle & Cayford’s (2002) goals for public participation. While this would be disputed by the opponents, both processes looked to at least establish the goals of incorporating the publics values both to improve the decisions made and resolve potential conflict (Beierle & Cayford, 2002). Doing so proved to be pathways to increasing the trust of the process leaders and also educating the public.

Public attitude statements prove that the accomplishment of these goals and following the rules of procedural justice set by Leventhal (1976) was relatively done better by Managers than Developers, but this can most likely be attributed to both experience and overall goals of the processes. Managers had a responsibility to provide an excellent public engagement process to best serve the public’s interest because of their role at that state agency. While Developers had an interest in providing an excellent public engagement process to best serve pushing the project towards construction. This is not mean to say that the Developers were selfish and manipulative in their process, but
the siting of the turbines was their outcome goal and that hinged on proper public engagement process. This again looks back to Fiorino’s arguments for public engagement and illustrates how these different arguments influence a different set of goals for a process. It also provides some insight as how state officials and private development firms may construct these arguments and goals.

5.3.1 Caveats

Although it is beneficial for future process leaders to learn where this case “succeeded” and “failed” with some Public Stakeholders, certain caveats specific to this study must be explored. For example, the use of trusted liaisons has been repeatedly stated as one of the keys to gaining public support in these processes. These liaisons had localized expertise through either living or working in these communities for decades. However, how an individual is able to become a trusted member of these smaller communities is more understandable when one takes into account the size of Block Island and Rhode Island. If this project were to be scaled up to say, California, a process leader would be hard-pressed to find someone trusted, or even known, throughout the entire State.

Additionally, the size of Rhode Island and the dedication of government officials to embrace the “Ocean State” mentality through funding streams to marine and ocean based research, may not be matched elsewhere. One Manager alluded in their interview that without Rhode Island’s Senator Sheldon Whitehouse pushing for funding, the Ocean SAMP may have been impossible. In other states whose average resident may not have the same connection with the ocean as those in Rhode Island, this type of effort may not seem as pertinent of an issue. Thus, there would not be such an imperative to place as
much resources into ocean energy regulations that Rhode Island has done, which would then not provide as smooth of a process for an incoming developer through potential lawsuits.

One last point on size that is important to mention, is the resident population on Block Island. When considering opposition this is important because, even though they may seem non-unified in their complaints, this could be based on a small full-time population on the Island. One public interviewee stated that they believed Block Island had been taken advantage of because of its size: “…you know [the Developer] never came to Block Island. Because there’s only a 1000 people who live on the Island in the winter and out of that 125 are kids. I mean it was despicable” (P2). The size of this population most likely contributed to the appearance of the opposition seeming uncoordinated. Again, perhaps if this project was scaled up, there could more backing behind those disjointed negative attitudes. This theory can even be observed when considering the initial beach landing of the transmission cable on Narragansett Beach. Opposition groups in Narragansett were able to group together and effectively change the landing site to a different beach. Perhaps, Narragansett town members were more uniformed in their opposition, but this may be a connection that the larger the population, the greater chance for substantial opposition through coalescence on issues.

Even with certain opposition groups existing, there was no debate among process leaders that starting the engagement early was critical. But defining when is the right time is highly dependent on a process leader’s available information. Further, process leaders can find it to be a difficult task to keep tabs on what information is made available to the public and when. Four Managers mentioned during their interviews that even before the
Ocean SAMP was being fully considered, the Rhode Island Governor’s office had reached out through a wind task force to commercial fishermen with hypothetical proposals for potential wind farm locations to ask how these locations may impact fishing. However, with no actual proposals in the pipeline and no data to support their impact assessments this only created an atmosphere of distrust between State officials and fishermen. Ocean SAMP Managers state this was worsened by a lack of proper engagement by the task force. Managers cite that they had to fight through this atmosphere throughout their own process, even when actively attempting to separate themselves. And two Managers say that this feeling still exists even after the Ocean SAMP was accepted.

Lastly, a major caveat when it comes to considering the opposing opinions, is that pragmatic process leaders must decide what deserves their focus. Shown by negative comments in this study, the public can be opposed to various aspects of a process or outcome. Eventually, process leaders must consider what opposition concerns are most pressing. This is not to discount the beliefs and expectations that some members of the Public are bringing to the table, but for a process to be successful it must have an outcome and that means moving the process forward. With every outcome there will be winners and there will be losers (Thibaut & Walker, 1978). Calculated and sometimes risky decisions will need to be made by process leaders, which will inevitably create opposition. However, this brings in Brockner & Wiensenfeld’s (1996) assertion that enhanced procedural justice may be able to compensate for displeasing distributive justice as people care more about a fair process and being heard, than they necessarily do about getting what they want (Cropanzano & Folger, 1991; Skitka et al., 2003; Walter &
Gutscher, 2010). While this was not directly examined in this study, there does seem to be evidence for and evidence against such a theory. Providing discussion and practical rationale directly to those stakeholders may display to them that they are not being ignored and cast off and that their ideas are valued. Now, this may not switch their opinion to positive, but will hopefully establish that the process was fair and their expectation of being heard was met which could drop them from full opposition. As noted before, this was not the case for two of the Public Stakeholders, but the others in support seemed to attribute these positive feelings towards being able to speak their voice during the process.

Much of this article has focused on how process leaders can sway public opinion to more of a supportive one concerning RET. However, it should be noted that in many cases, those with strong opposition stances may never switch to full support. Instead, what may happen is a sense of acquiescence or acceptance develops among those opponents (Huijts, Midden, & Meijnders, 2007). These opponents may never begin advocating for such projects, but perhaps proper engagement can stop outright opposition, such as lawsuits. Future research definitely would benefit in analyzing how expectations incorporation into a process may stunt such strong opposition measures.

In the end, the Ocean SAMP was adopted and the Block Island Wind Farm is moving towards completion by the end of 2016. Through these interviews, there does seem to be overall support for these projects, and processes in general. This matches well with other similar analyses focused on the stakeholder engagement of the Ocean SAMP (Nutters & Pinto da Silva, 2012; Payne, 2010). This the first report that analyzed engagement in both the Ocean SAMP and BIWF processes. There does seem to be more
existing resentment towards the Developers rather than the Managers. This may be rising from the expectation that developers are only in it for the money, rather than state officials who are tasked with serving the public (Gross, 2007; Zoellner et al., 2005).

Some of the negative attitudes do support this theory as the basis for the lack of trust; though this is countered by some positive statements praising the Developers’ outreach effort.

Overall, most dissenting opinions are fully polarized from the positive attitudes. The polarization seems to hinge on the two main themes discussed here of meeting expectations and displaying trust. Those who engaged in the process and felt their expectations had been meet found the process more trustworthy, which consequently built more trust in the outcome. For example, some Public Stakeholders felt their expectations of learning were greatly exceeded by both process and this trust in the data being presented led to trust in the decisions being made. Those who found the information lacking, or did not feel their concerns influenced the decisions enough, found the processes less trusting and helped to fuel opposition. Yet, in this case study the positive attitudes outweigh the negative, even when only considering the Public interviewees.
6. Conclusions:

This case study was an analysis of how an individual’s expectations prior to an engagement process and the subsequent fulfillment or lack of fulfilment of these expectations impacts support of a process outcome. Expectations of roles for both process leaders and the Public Stakeholders were taken into consideration to highlight any potential mismatches that could have created animosity between the public and process leaders. The in-person interviews and following coding analysis revealed certain themes that seem to have been beneficial to both of these processes. While some of the nuances of these themes are endemic to Rhode Island, the general conclusions of successful techniques should be headed and utilized by future RET process leaders.

Both Fiorino’s (1990) and Devine-Wright’s (2011) justifications for inclusions of the public into these debates are further substantiated here. The public did have a helping hand, in part, to shape the decisions that come from being engaged in the processes. The inclusion of their local knowledge into the data was crucial in finalizing siting decisions for the REZ and wind farm. This inclusion and added informal meetings also helped to greatly build the trust between those engaged and the process leaders by illustrating that the stakeholders were not being involved simply as an afterthought, but that their inclusion was instrumental. Lastly, the incorporation of expectations into these processes was found to be extremely beneficial.

While, it makes sense that process leaders would incorporate their own expectations into the process, also bringing in the public’s proved to be key. And the best way to determine the Public’s expectations was to begin talks early and often. The use of informal meetings was deemed essential by both process leaders as a way to fully
understand what the public expected to gain from the process. This type of dedication, especially with certain Stakeholder groups, would then feed back into the process to better address these concerns that may have been missed without such targeted and refined outreach. Additionally, the process leaders could also learn the role that was expected of them as well as what role the public expected to have in the process.

Surprisingly, there was no mismatch in expectation of roles. This could be attributed to one’s previous experience with these types of processes. Those with much experience may understand that the public must show up and a process leader’s role is to inform the public of the process. Similarly, those without much previous background experience expect to gain such experience by showing up and having the process leaders educate them on the process. However, the execution of the roles divided some of the public interviewees. The mismatch in execution, rather than expectation of roles circles back to issue of trust. If a process leader began to fail to fulfil a Stakeholder’s expectation of role, this spawned negative attitudes towards both the processes and the outcomes. Those holding these attitudes seemed to allude back to the lack of trust they felt for the process leaders and the process itself.

Trust and its importance in both of these processes made itself apparent in every interview. The Public Stakeholders expected it and the process leaders understood that they needed to display they deserved it. The use of long-time members of the community to act as liaisons between the process leaders and public seemed to be effective. Additionally, the use of informal and targeted stakeholder meetings appeared to be a useful tactic for process leaders to show that they were listening to those concerned and valued their opinions. From both the positive and negative attitudes produced by all
interviewees, trust was the main background theme to most statements. Process leaders must take careful actions to gain the public’s trust. This takes time and effort but, as shown here, pays off. Also, care must be taken to not lose this trust, which can happen quickly and with one action, also shown in this case study.

Through this study there appears to be a connection between expectations when beginning a process and attitudes towards the outcome at the end of the process. An expectation of role for all parties becomes expectations for the overall process. If it is perceived that an individual or entire group failed to meet their expectations of role, the process becomes defunct. A defunct process is then not expected to produce a credible outcome, increasing opposing views towards that outcome. Underpinning the fulfillment of these expectations was the trust that was established. Those in support trusted the process leaders were fulfilling their role and producing an effective process, which then produced support for the outcome. Those who felt roles were not fulfilled by process leaders perceived the overall process to be untrustworthy and ultimately formed an opinion of opposition.

With caveats addressed in mind, future RET public engagement processes should take note of how expectations were incorporated and how trust was established for both of these processes. While previous literature has demonstrated the importance of trust, this case study sheds light on demonstrable actions that can be utilized by process leaders to build and keep this trust, which could prove as factors that can be utilized to increase support for RET projects. Informal meetings and the use of trusted liaisons were proven techniques that displayed to many of the Public Stakeholders that their opinions and concerns were valued and worth being heard. Expectations have been discovered to exist
before the process begins for both process leaders and the public, meaning process leaders should consider the public’s expectations when beginning a process and advocate working with them. Shown here, the incorporation of the Public’s expectations of RET public engagement process can greatly enhance the trust needed to increase project support.
Appendix A. Interview Instrument

Process Involvement
1) To begin and gain some background, can you tell me how long and in what ways have you been involved with the process surrounding the development of the Ocean SAMP or BIWF siting? *(Time with project, how were they involved. Separate between Ocean SAMP and BIWF.)*

Feelings before
2) Why did you want to work on/be involved with this topic? *(What was the call to action, factor(s), long term vs. short term, was it forced or interest?)*
3) What were your expectations when beginning your involvement with the process? 
   a. Did the process meet your expectations? Why or why not? 
   OR
   a. Are you able to give me an example(s) of how the process met these expectations? 
   b. And are you able to give me an example(s) of how the process may have fallen short of these expectations? *(What did you look to accomplish?, What did you expect to gain/give input on? Ex. Was there some expertise you felt only you could offer the process?)*

Feelings during
4) What did you see as your role or contribution to being involved in the process? 
   a. What did you see as the role of the (public/developer/managers) within the process? 
   b. What did you see as the role of the (public/developer/managers) within the process? *(Do you see them as a separate entity? Or all a collective working towards a common goal?)*

Feelings after
5) Is there anything you would have like to have seen done differently throughout any aspect of the process or your involvement? Do you believe the process missed or left out any important aspects? 
   *(Can you give me an example of how you like to see “X” done? Do you think “X” will be possible?)*
   *(Can you elaborate on why you think X being left out was so important?)*

6) As you know the Block Island wind farm project to is the first to begin construction offshore in the United States. If more projects look to spring up and begin development, what are some take-aways from this process that you believe may be beneficial for other public engagement processes to take into account?
(Can you elaborate on why you said why X is important?)
(If missing from this....how do you think not having X affected this process?)
(If included....how do you think this benefitted the process?)

Wrap-up
I seem to have covered everything I need to ask but,
7) Is there anything else you would like to mention that we have not covered yet?
Appendix B. NVivo Coding Theme Hierarchy

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86


