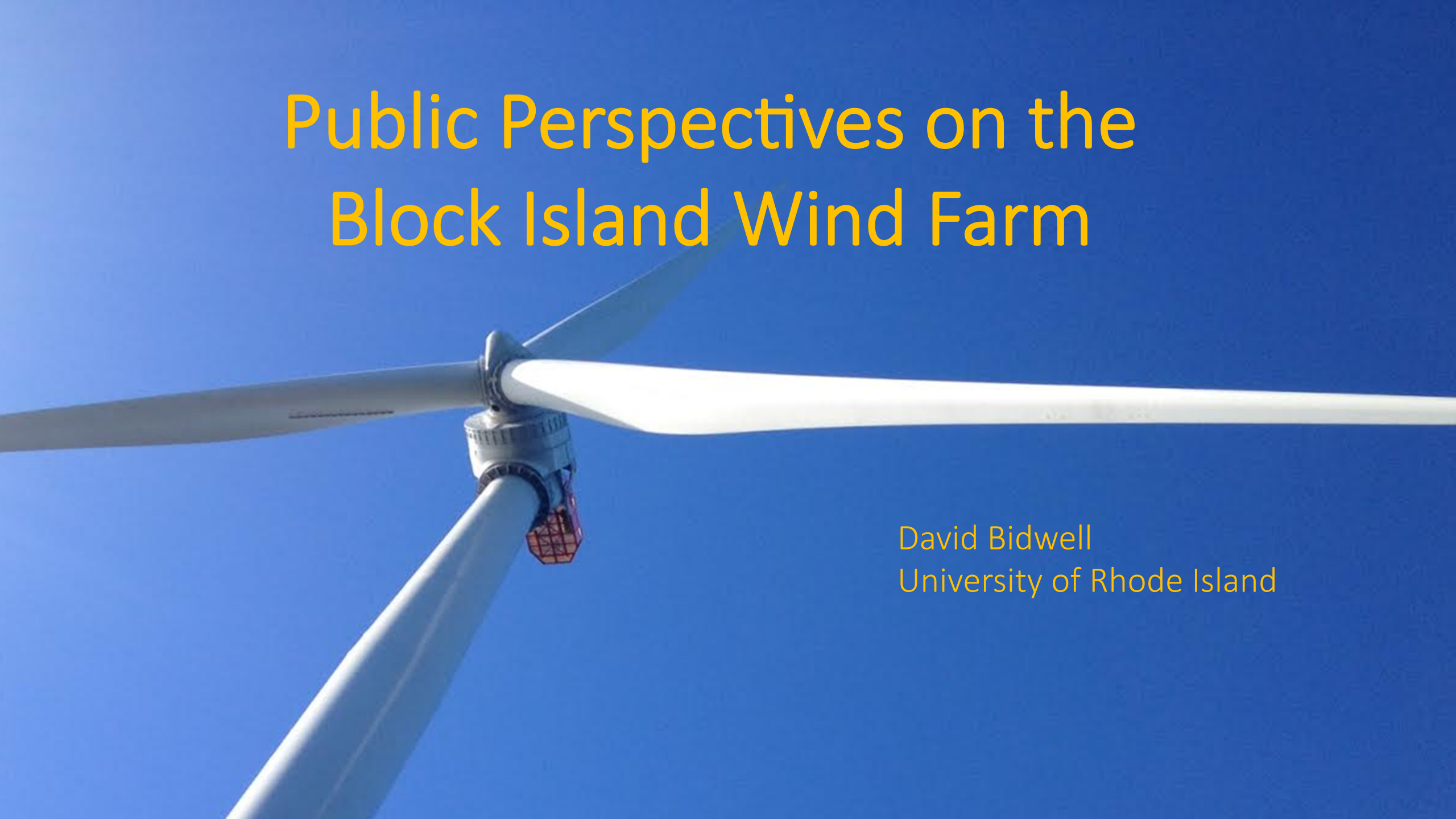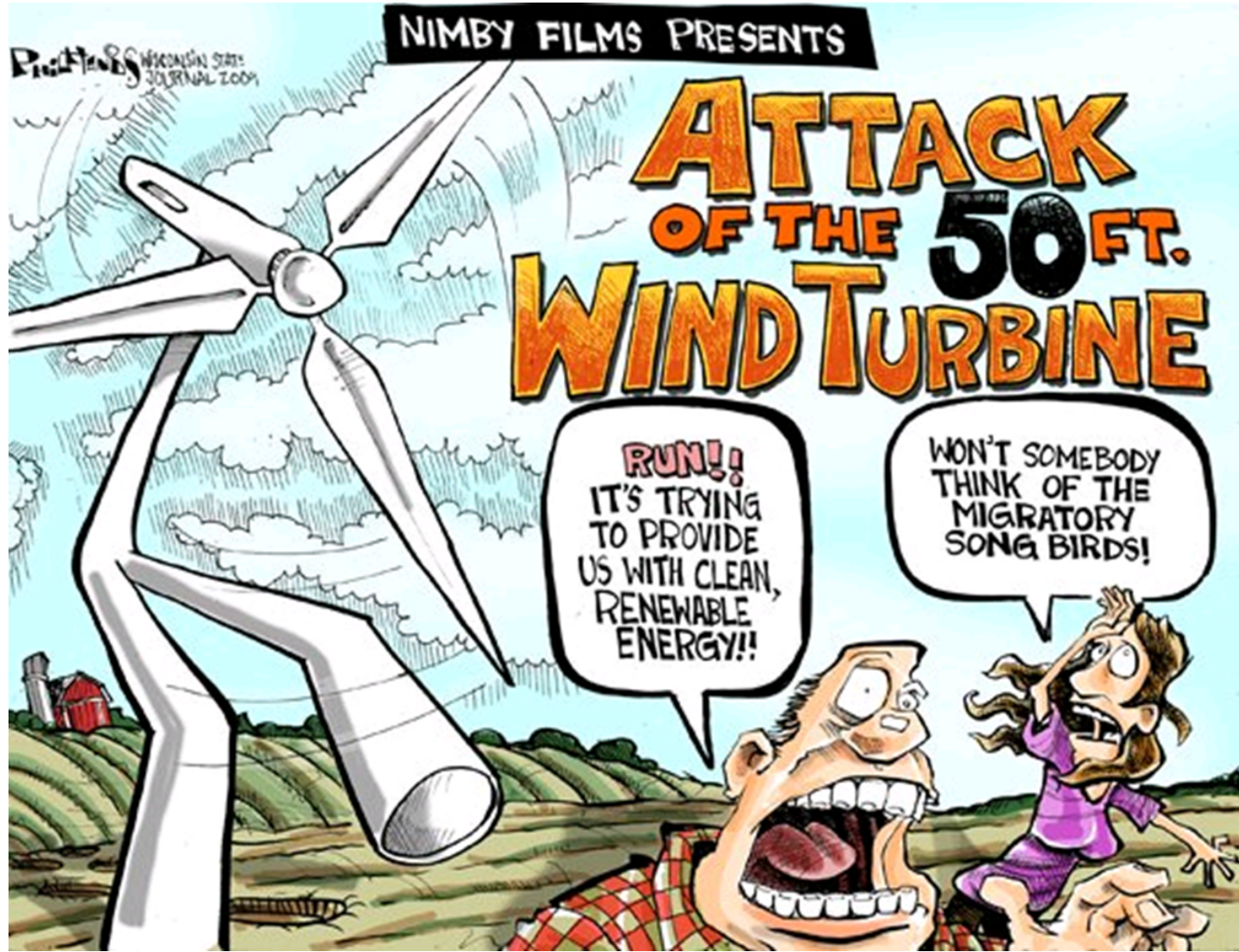# Public Perspectives on the Block Island Wind Farm
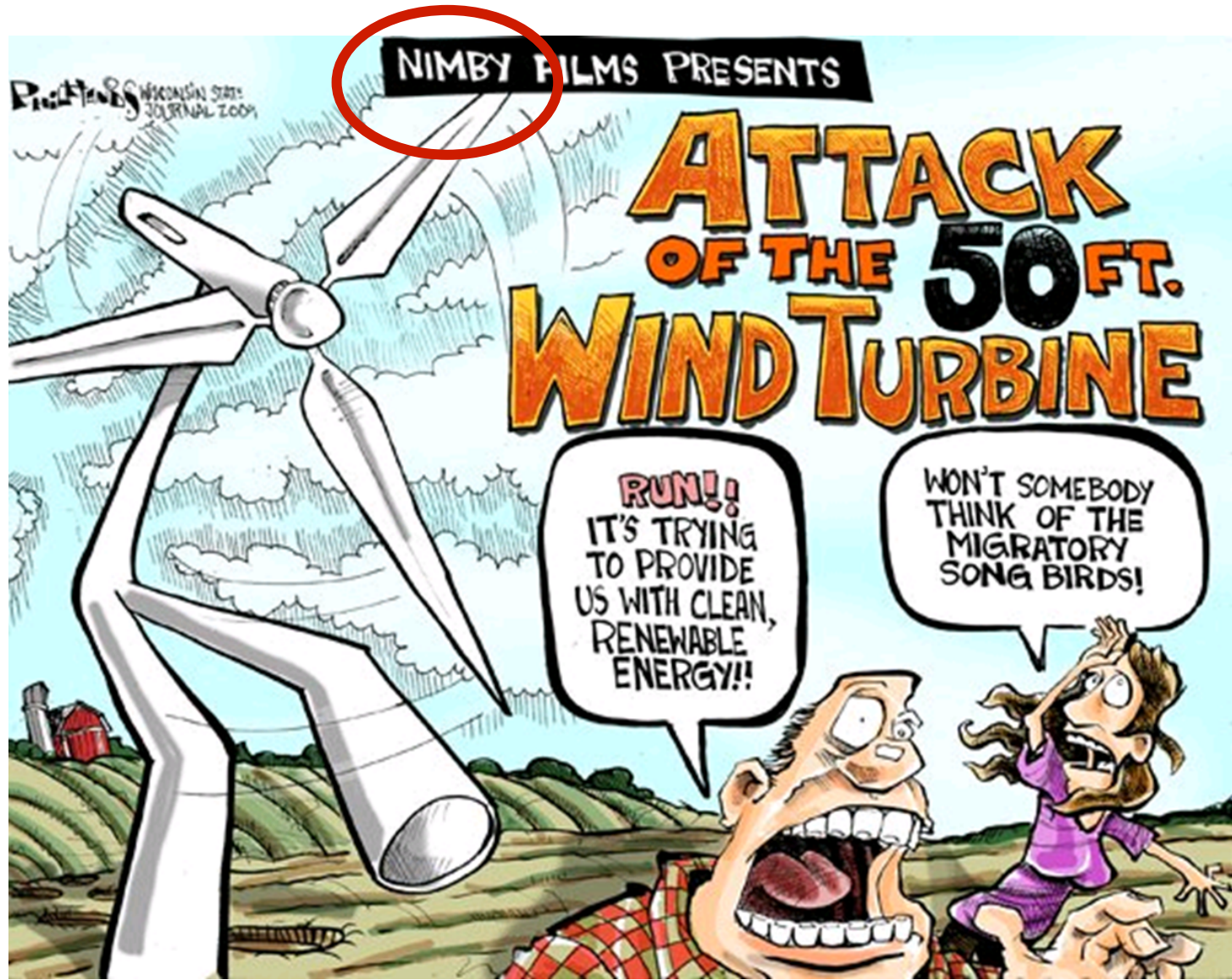
David Bidwell
University of Rhode Island

Lessons

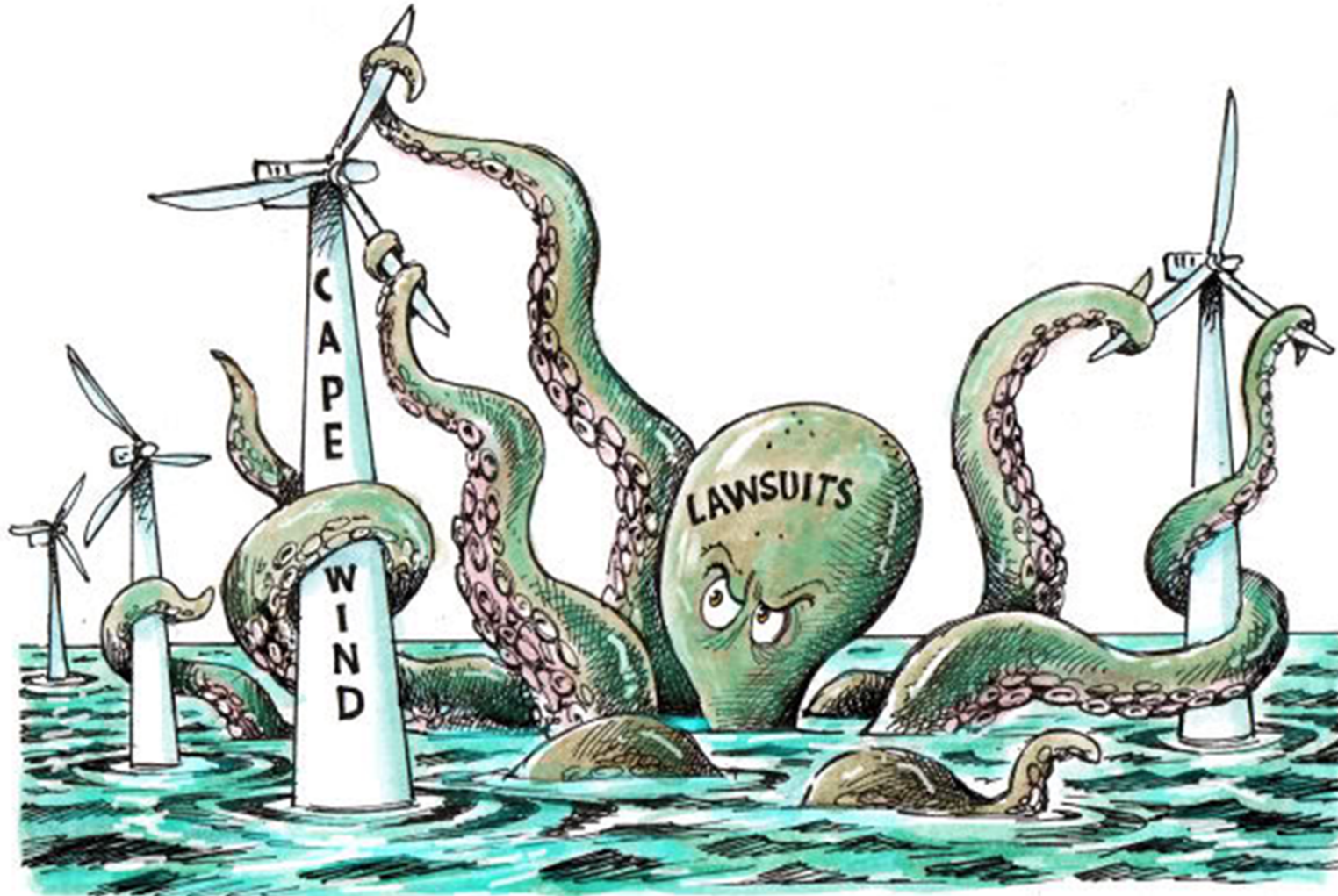- The "Public" is not monolithic

- Symbolism matters

- Values and beliefs matter

- Anticipation might be worse than reality

Public Acceptance Literature

- Self Interest (NIMBY)

- Democratic Deficit

- Conditional Support

- Place Attachment and Protection

- Values and Symbolism

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Coastal Residents Perspectives

Photo: Deepwater Wind

Methods

- Project led by Jeremy Firestone (Delaware)

- Mail and internet surveys to three strata: Block Island, Border Ocean, and Near Ocean

- Two wave survey
  - Construction: Summer 2016 (676 completed)
  - Post-Completion: Spring 2017 (420 individuals)

- Weighted results for descriptive statistics; unweighted for regression analysis

Findings

- Substantial support for the project. Greater than 80% support or lean support in all strata.
- Strata bordering ocean increased support from construction (56%) to operation (73%).
- Opponents disagree that turbines "fit" the landscape and dislike turbines' appearance.
- Symbolic meanings are important ("progress towards clean energy" vs. "loss of something intangible").

Findings

Description	BI		Coastal RI	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Impressive	68.5%	15.9%	42.7%	2.0%
Too Big	8.5%	20.1%	1.6%	34.1%
Attractive	29.4%	1.9%	16.0%	0.0%
Unattractive	3.8%	43.5%	6.5%	39.1%
Beautiful	35.9%	7.5%	6.1%	0.0%
Industrial	5.3%	63.9%	16.6%	61.5%
Amazing	39.0%	6.4%	21.3%	0.0%
Ordinary	0.3%	35.7%	14.7%	4.4%
Adding to the island/coastal character	18.8%	0.0%	12.7%	0.0%
Detracting from the island/coastal character	17.1%	48.3%	14.6%	45.2%
Symbolic of progress towards clean energy	71.7%	16.8%	83.9%	27.2%
Cause the loss of something intangible, where all you see is the ocean	13.7%`	73.4%	20.5%	42.2%
Other	9.8%	29.2%	3.3%	23.3%

Values and Ocean Beliefs

Methods

- Intercept survey on Block Island in Summer 2015
- 624 completed surveys (visitors and full-time and seasonal residents)
- Factor analysis to identify latent variables
- Path analysis

Bidwell (2017). Ocean beliefs and support for an offshore wind energy project.
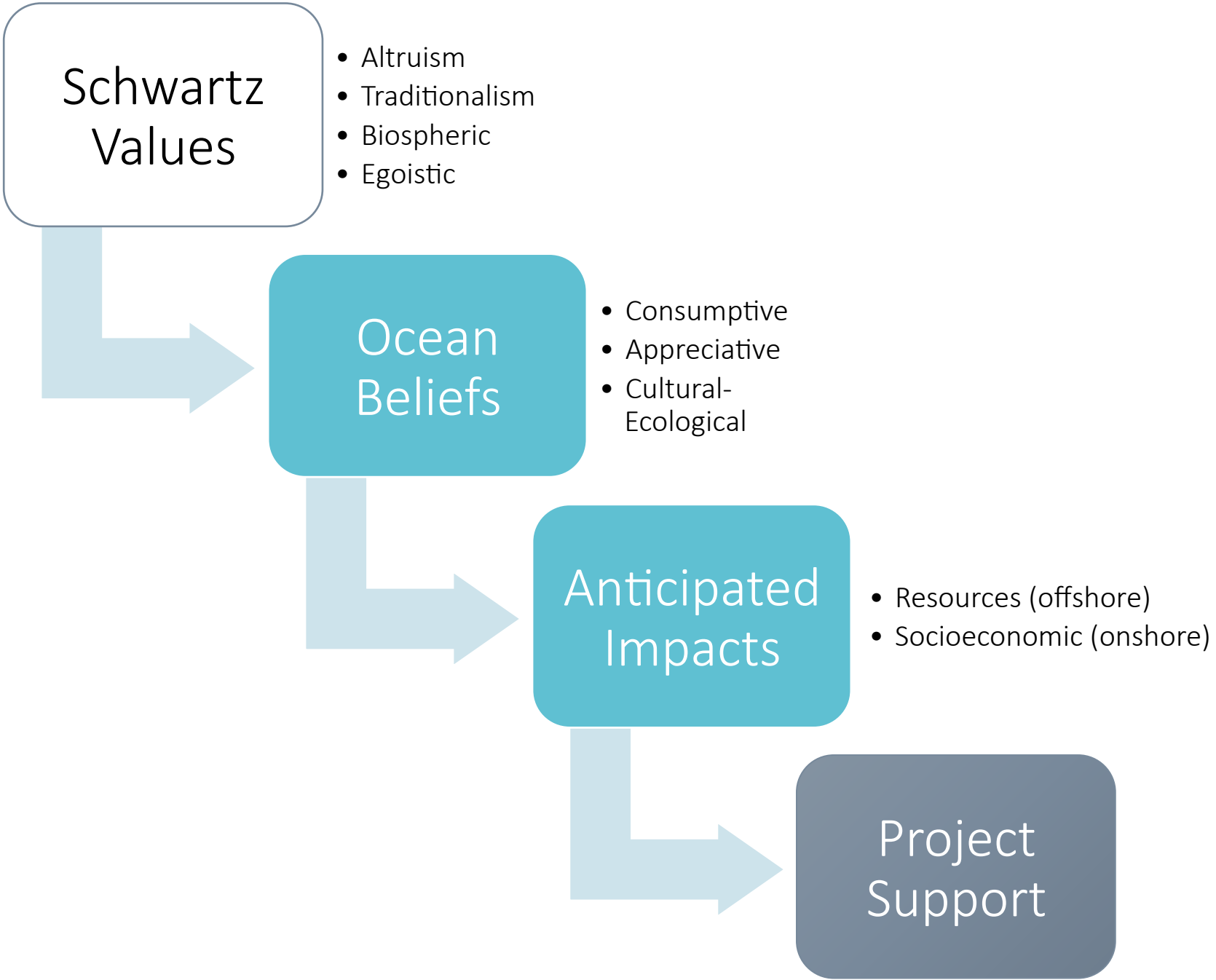
Ocean & Coastal Management 146:99-108.

Values → Beliefs → Norms

Schwartz Values
- Altruism
- Traditionalism
- Biospheric
- Egoistic

Ocean Beliefs
- Consumptive
- Appreciative
- Cultural-Ecological

Anticipated Impacts
- Resources (offshore)
- Socioeconomic (onshore)

Project Support

Findings

- Anticipated effects on natural resources and socioeconomics are strongest direct predictor of support.
- Consumptive beliefs about the ocean predict support for project, but also predict beliefs about impacts.
- Altruistic values buoy support, while traditional values predict less support. Similar effects on beliefs about impacts.

Tourists' Perspectives

Methods

- Intercept surveys on Block Island Summers 2015-2017
- 1097 completed surveys
  - 865 Visitors
  - 232 Seasonal residents
- Multiple regression analysis

Findings

- Moderate support from tourists (5.55/7.0). 73.8% of sample slightly to strongly support project; 10% slightly to strongly oppose it.
- Age and income predict support. Republicans less supportive than Democrats.
- Altruism associated with higher support, while traditionalism predicts less.
- Visitors are more supportive than Seasonal Residents.
- Tourists who report having seen the project during construction or operation are more supportive, as are people surveyed in 2017.

Acknowledgments

Photo: Alaina Dawson

Findings: Mail Survey

Stratum	Block Island		Border Ocean		Near Ocean	
n	112		172		128	
	Pre-installation	Post-operation	Pre-installation	Post-operation	Pre-installation	Post-operation
Oppose	15.2%	11.5%	11.4%	9.1%	5.1%	5.2%
Lean oppose	0.6%	3.5%	1.5%	1.9%	1.2%	3.2%
Neutral	1.1%	2.3%	0.3%	0.7%	2.4%	3.6%
Lean support	12.8%	11.5%	31.0%	15.4%	30.4%	17.2%
Support	70.2%	71.1%	55.7%	72.8%	60.8%	70.9%
Mean (1-5)	4.22	4.27	4.18	4.41	4.41	4.45
Mean difference	p=.73		p=.012		p=.603	

Findings: 2015 Intercepts

	Egoism	Biospherism	Altruism	Traditionalism	Appreciative	Consumptive	Ecological	Recources	Socioeconomic
Appreciative	.109	.454	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Consumptive	.161	.180	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Ecological	.123	.478	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Resources	.109	.004	.179	-.235	-.140	.377	---	---	---
Socioeconomic	.051	.057	.234	-.169	.000	.318	---	---	---
Support	.058	-.001	.258	-.229	-.042	.334	-.088	.303	.426

Standardized Total Effects

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Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Full Model
Constant	5.928	5.442	5.028	4.159	.241
Age	-.006	-.007	-.005	-.007	.000
Education	-.068	-.059	-.058	-.060	-.030
Income	-.020	.007	-.004	.016	.023
Gender (Female)	.025	-.098	-.110	-.046	-.128
Altruism Values		.518***	.515***	.470***	.201**
Egoism Values		.099	.093	.022	-.033
Biospherism Values		-.013	-.011	-.007	-.039
Traditionalism Values		-.518***	-.512***	-.457***	-.176*
Place Attachment			.027	.007	-.005
Visitor (<1 month)			.345*	.268	.007
Consumptive Beliefs				.670***	.152*
Appreciative Beliefs				.098	.112
Ecological Beliefs				-.382**	-.243*
Resource Impacts					.501***
Socioeconomic Impacts					.723***
R^2 Change		.064***	.009	.086***	.361***
R^2	.007	.071	.080	.166	.527

2015-2017 Tourists' Support for BIWF

(Constant)	4.705	.460		10.233	.000
2016	.093	.112	.028	.834	.405
2017	.578	.146	.136	3.947	.000
Seasonal Resident	-.227	.112	-.059	-2.023	.043
Female	-.159	.095	-.050	-1.673	.095
Q14_Age	-.006	.003	-.062	-2.010	.045
Q16_Education	.005	.050	.003	.107	.915
Q17_Income	-.056	.029	-.061	-1.945	.052
Seen Project	.322	.109	.102	2.953	.003
Q18_Party	-.119	.043	-.090	-2.791	.005
Altruism	.389	.070	.243	5.554	.000
Egoism	.123	.047	.080	2.601	.009
Traditionalism	-.323	.072	-.174	-4.471	.000
Biospherism	.089	.074	.052	1.203	.229

2017 Responses to the question, "How will the Block Island Wind Farm affect the likelihood of you visiting Block Island in the future?"