



Queen's University
Belfast

Separated by a Common Subject

University of Nottingham
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Melvin J. Dubnick

Institute of Governance, Public Policy & Social Research



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The Issue:

Why there is so little interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary work being done on the subject of accountability?



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Obstructions & Barriers

- Disciplinary and institutional barriers
- Paradigmatic incommensurability
- The subject itself:
 - Taken for granted in Anglo-American context
 - Lack of equivalent in other languages
 - Irony of transliteration: they are more likely to “appreciate” the concept (e.g., Brazil)

The Conceptual Problem

- “Family Resemblances”
 - Classic example of Wittgenstein’s language-game
 - Loose rules of play = synonyms abound
 - Tighter rules of play = forced specificity (Brazil)

Synonymic Accountability

<i>Contexts</i>	<i>Accountability: Family Resemblances</i>			
	<i>Legal Setting</i>	<i>Organizational Setting</i>	<i>Professional Setting</i>	<i>Political Setting</i>
Moral Pulls	<i>Liability</i>	<i>Answerability</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Responsiveness</i>
Moral Pushes	<i>Obligation</i>	<i>Obedience</i>	<i>Fidelity</i>	<i>Amenability</i>

Adapted from Dubnick1998

Disciplinary Foci

- Accounting => calculability
- Politics => responsiveness
- Law => liability
- Sociology => excuse-making, justification
- Social psychology => answerability within interpersonal relationships
- Ethics => moral responsibility

Other distinctions

- Epistemological (Habermas):
 - Positivistic
 - Interpretive
 - Critical
- Levels of 'governing'
 - Government
 - Governance
 - Governmentality
- All reinforced by the disciplinary paradigms

Framing some differences

Focus on:	Epistemology:		
	Positivistic	Interpretive	Critical
	Government		
	Governance		
	Governmentality		

The Big Change

- Crisis of trust => “new accountability”
 - Pervasive, with “quite sharp teeth”
 - New regulatory state => “audit society”
 - NPM => fixation on performance measures
- Democratic deficit
 - Transparency
 - Inclusion
 - Participation

New Accountability as:

- Iconic
 - Symbol with high rhetorical value
- Promiscuous
 - Promise of democracy
 - Promise of justice
 - Promise of ethical behaviour
 - Promise of performance

What is to be done?

- Need for Venues
 - Conferences
 - Publications
 - Centres
 - Online lists, weblogs, etc.
- Avoid the “grand theory” approach
 - Foster multiple and competing perspectives

Unpaid advert:

- Accountable Governance: An International Research Colloquium
 - October 20-22, QUB Belfast
 - <http://qub.ac.uk/qub2005/>
 - qub2005@comcast.net